

ROCKET GRANTS 2010-2011

Award winners & their proposed work

A. Bitterman, also known as Pete Cowdin, plans to install a National Parks style interpretive kiosk outside his family home in Brookside. Using systematic interpretive strategies, Point of Interest will contain illustrated historical accounts of the site (going back 300 million years), interpretive discussions of the dwelling, its current inhabitants (Pete's family) and some of their notable behaviors and adaptive mechanisms.

Flyers will be posted regarding changes in weather, fire risk, and rules of engagement with the resident fauna. Informational pamphlets and small artifacts (created by his children) will be available for the taking. A short hiking trail will also be installed in the front yard and a visitors' log will be made available.

This work addresses the way that human relationships with the natural world have been mediated and distorted so that we no longer perceive nature as a place we actually inhabit, but rather a place to visit. POI also strives to regain a unity between art and life by creating a direct, and undoubtedly surprising, engagement with a random public.

Lisa Cordes: "Prop 8 On Trial" is a multi-media performance about the 2010 trial challenging California's Proposition 8 that banned same-sex marriage. Using more than 12 actors who portray over 40 attorneys, plaintiffs, and expert witnesses, it telescopes the trial's key arguments into a performance that includes video evidence submitted by the plaintiffs, and professional and amateur media coverage of the trial. It also includes The Bloggers (a composite of the many journalists and activists who live-blogged and "tweeted" the proceedings) as a sort of Greek chorus that comment on and contextualize the action.

The trial, and ensuing appeals, will go down in the history books as a landmark civil rights case and rhetorical Leviathan. By including the deeply personal stories of the gay plaintiffs and witnesses, attorneys brought a human dimension to their argument, buttressed by internationally renowned experts in the fields of history, psychology, sociology, and economics. Prop 8 On Trial is also a fascinating story about 21st century media. Performances of the final version will be presented in September of 2010, and a final script will be created that will be available to other theater artists around the country.

Kurt Flecksing: The S'mores Grant Project is a capital raising opportunity that also benefits and enriches public spaces. Kurt generates funds by selling s'mores from a street vending cart and distributes partial profits, in the form of micro-grants, to individuals or groups in the community that are involved in public art. Rocket Grants will cover the upgrading of the vehicle to be able to obtain a year-round street vending permit.

Kurt also sees the urban street environment as the optimum context for spontaneous education and information exchange, and the cart often carries pamphlets and information by other artists. This project functions in multiple public environments and opens up a dialogue around

the placement and space available for art discourse in our community. It also proposes economic structures as a medium for artists to craft and traverse.

Patrick Giroux, Jonathan Holley and Emily Lawton: Johnny America is a web site and print zine that has been published once or twice a year since the project began in 2003.

Editorially, the zine's focus is on the short (and very short) forms; the longest story they have ever run was just under 6,000 words – the briefest, less than a page. They publish fiction and humor.

The publication has an interest in sophisticated-but-handcrafted design. The team silk screens their covers, for example, and binds each issue by hand. They printed a Halloween issue with glow-in-the-dark ink, and have sewn mini-comics into the binding of their main publication.

This Rocket Grant will enable Johnny America to push their aesthetic package even further, bolster the percentage of local content in their pages, and bring more regional artists and craftspeople into the mix. They have long daydreamed about doing a "sensory issue," with scratch-and-sniff graphic elements accompanying related prose, while avoiding a prohibitively expensive sticker price, and this funding will enable them to experiment in this way.

Jane Gotch, Ke-Sook Lee, Miles Neidinger, Paul Rudy, Mark Southerland, Mica Thomas, Jason Dixon: Traditional dance performance is a one-sided transmission from dancer to audience. Protected behind the proscenium, the dancer unfolds her inner world, revealing herself to the darkness beyond. There the viewer sits — silent, passive, hidden — expecting to be awed and moved by the dancer's virtuosity. The dancer bows, the audience claps, the curtain falls. All roles are clear. Everyone knows what to do.

WE seeks to transform this performance context, disrupting and challenging roles and relationships among audience members and performers alike. Everyone will move through a multi-part visual environment created by a seven-member team of Kansas City's leading dance, visual, lighting and sound designers.

WE will literally take everyone out of the box. Dancers and viewers will be brought face-to-face, in close proximity, creating both private and communal moments in six design environments. Each individual's experience in this multi-perspective, visual setting will be unique, and even the performance itself will vary for each.

Audience size will be limited, to create an intimate scale, and in every performance, a dancer will perform one-to-one for each viewer.

Brooke Hunt, Audrey Lauber, Tomomi Suenaga: The motivation for this project is anchored in the collaborating artists' frustration with the current state of arts education in our schools. In response they have created Endless Boundless.

The program exists to awaken and heighten the creativity and curiosity in children by allowing them a non-restrictive space to explore their own minds. Lessons will be tailored to individuals and relevant to their interests. Community members, recruited for their areas of expertise, will teach interactive, interdisciplinary workshops. Students will be encouraged to express their ideas, challenged to think critically, and oriented toward collaboration.

"This Place is Crawling with Creatures" will be the first in a series of workshops aimed at building a collective body of artistic works. Students, aged 9 to 15, will work toward the creation of a biome; eventually this will encompass three independent real and/or imagined ecosystems that will mesh. Students will be presented with one core element of an ecosystem and instructed that all surrounding factors must be supplied by their imagination; they must create life forms of the ecosystem using writing, illustration, painting, theatre, Foley or other media of their choice. The project culminates with an exhibition of students' work.

Seth Johnson, Ashley Miller: : C.A.T.A. will be an experimental public think-tank used to host performances, lectures, workshops, free-school programming, and as-yet unimagined experiments. The foundation of C.A.T.A. will be the architectural and environmental design elements, which will mediate interactions in the space. A heavy emphasis will be placed on cultivating curiosity, uncertainty, and self-awareness.

The centerpiece of the architectural strategy will be the installation of CalmDome 3.0, a 10' tall, distended geodesic sphere. It contains a multi-sensory trance environment that has the ability to play pre-programmed video and sound compositions or to be controlled in real time by the user. It will be available for use by the public as a platform for audio and video works.

The C.A.T.A. will also include a small research library and a retail component focusing on hand-made ephemera. With a goal of understanding and creating alternate systems of exchange, the artists will focus on creating some form of barter system as an integral aspect to the infrastructure of the project.

Jarrett Mellenbruch: : Jarrett will create a beehive with a form reminiscent of a rural farmhouse, but milled on a CNC router table out of pristine white Corian, fusing rustic tradition to the technological and industrial present.

The beehive is also a kind of memorial, speaking to recent alarming collapses in global honeybee populations (over 90% of the wild honeybees in the U.S.), and the possible devastating loss of our symbiotic relationship with these pollinators of nearly one-third of our country's food supply.

"Deep Ecology 1" is a working sculpture, specifically created to house a colony of hygienic *Apis mellifera*, a breed whose habits better control the devastating mites largely responsible for the current crisis. An entirely new kind of beehive, "Deep Ecology 1" is designed solely for the benefit of the bees and not for the harvesting of their products. The tall post allows the hive's placement in urban settings while providing the public comfort with its proximity, and Jarrett hopes this may be a model for similar hives across the country.

Informational plaques inform passersby of the sculpture's mission and direct those who want to learn more to an associated website.

Lee Piechocki, Aaron Storck, Jeffrey Isom: : Inspired by interdisciplinary trends in contemporary art, these artists will print a series of publications aimed to engage the art, science, and philosophical communities.

From an artist's perspective the disciplines of art, science, and philosophy are rife with compelling connections as well as disconnects. How often, though do members of these communities interact, debate, collaborate, and share ideas? This publication would be a platform to activate this relationship.

Each issue will consist of essays, interviews, theories, data, and images - by artists, scientists, and philosophers – based on a specific curatorial theme. Issue number one will be titled ASP. Its theme will involve dangers, crises, concerns, and fears relevant to the contributing writers and their fields. Issue number two, SPA, will focus on triumphs, discoveries, and hopes. Issue number three, PAS, will focus on French thinkers, the unknown and the future.

The paper will be disseminated locally as well as nationally. It will be free, and the artists would also like to create a web-site with a free, downloadable PDF version.

May Tveit: PRODUCT PLACEMENT is a series of site-specific, sculptural, public art interventions/happenings to be executed in urban, suburban, and natural landscape contexts in Kansas City and the surrounding region.

The works will consist of 36" diameter, round, red, white and blue, helium filled, latex balloons with a single word of text printed onto them. A sculpture will be created by precisely installing (planting) in a minimalist grid in a farming field in Kansas. The subtle or dramatic shifts in weather conditions will animate this work in provocative ways.

In a series of public art interventions, May plans to take other balloons on various urban/suburban walks and drives. Some will be embedded as text-balloon product-surrogates in and among the products at Costco, and May will go through the actions of shopping, acquiring, purchasing, transporting & consuming.

The balloons are objects that contain language and ideals of our times and reference the psychology of consumption. They recall the times when President Bush urged all Americans to fulfill their patriotic duty and shop. This body of work allows the product-surrogates to enter into society and the fabric of everyday life in multifaceted ways.

Jaimie Warren, Cody Critchelo, Peggy Noland: These three artists are all strong advocates for the Kansas City arts community, and have chosen to work in highly collaborative ways.

Their Rocket Grant will fund a brand new, large-scale video project tentatively titled "The Kansas City Christmas Special". The goal of the project will be to highlight collaborations

between Kansas City artists and national video, fashion, music and performance artists such as New York City-based video artist Shana Moulton & Los Angeles-based “krumper” and community activist Tommy the Clown.

They will put out a public call to Kansas City artists and collectives from similar genres, to invite their participation. Collaborations will range from set designs to new musical pieces, fashion shows, skits, and re-enactments of Christmas-related programs and events throughout film and music history. This will also be a collaboration with the children of Operation Breakthrough, an after-school organization for low-income families.

The overarching intention of the project is that the relationships cultivated throughout the duration of the filming, and the high profile of the visiting artists, will continue to spread the word about Kansas City talent on a national and international level.

Leralee Whittle, Paul Sprawl: Leralee identifies the institutionalized body in her series of videos shot in gyms across America. She filmed herself making art in 20 work-out environments, and generated body languages based on institutional forces at work. Compositions were inspired by visual, sound and kinesthetic elements specific to sporting facilities.

Leralee will use her Rocket Grant to create "WorkArtOut", a performance installation featuring those videos. In it, she'll construct environments with film, bodies, text and soundscape. She'll identify work-out and sports institutions as microcosms of American attitudes and behavior reflected in our relationships to health and narcissism.

Sound design for "WorkArtOut" will be composed by musician, Paul Sprawl, and everyday people of Lawrence and Kansas City will rehearse and perform sparse gym landscapes and sculptural scenes with their bodies and work-out props.

Some of the questions this work proposes are: What is health? How have we adopted such dumbed-down physicality? Why are competitive sports more widely accepted than artistic expressions? And, why aren't more of us perverting such dismal institutionalized settings with art?