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- INTER - An Examination of Potential

John Cardone
Syracuse University

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- INTER -

An Examination of Potential

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at Syracuse University

John Cardone
Candidate for BFA Degree
and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2012

Honors Capstone Project in Sculpture

Capstone Project Advisor: _______________________
Prof. Marion Wilson

Capstone Project Reader: _______________________
Prof. Michael Burkard

Honors Director: _______________________
Stephen Kuusisto, Director

Date: 5/08/12
Abstract:

Nothing exists that we cannot perceive, nothing is ours that we have not made, and nothing has meaning that we have not given. In order to foster a more active participation in the collaborative act of creation in which mankind engages every day, we must engage in art practices that are completely dependent on interaction and investment. The value of artwork is not derived from its original material but from the energy invested in it and the significance that it gathers from each hand through which it passes. None of us exists in vacuum; instead, all creation relies on collaboration and exterior influence. Rather than try to isolate ourselves as individuals, we should embrace our dependency on the environment and each other. Our goal is not to make things that are new but to make anew that which already exists in our hands, our minds, and our hearts.

As Roland Barthes famously said, “The author is dead.” He was born out of capitalism and a desire to protect a monetary claim to creative endeavors, distinction between those who appreciate art and those who profit from it. But in a post-industrial society, where tools of creation are widely available, the distinction between author and reader disappears completely. This allows us to see that which has always been true, that ownership of ideas does not exist. As any true creator knows, it is the integrity of the creation that matters. Rightness takes precedence over the artist’s ego, popular trends, personal whim, or even societal prescription. Thus it becomes imperative to make work that is larger than the self and that serves the greater society at large. But before we presume to do good for a community, we must first become part of that community. Before we reach out to the marginalized or estranged, we must become estranged ourselves. Before we can help the needy, we must experience helplessness.

In April of the year 2012, we engage in project called “INTER,” a seven-day collaboration between two artists and the inhabitants of Syracuse’s Near West Side where the artists live and work for the duration of the project. The artists arrive on site with no supplies or food of any kind and they are strictly forbidden from using money, phones, or computers for the entire week. Through face-to-face interactions, they attempt to establish networks and infrastructures built solely on human capital. Armed only with a guitar, a drum, a video camera, the artists have exactly one week – 168 hours – to install an entire body of work in and around the gallery at 601 Tully using only materials they receive through the generosity of the Near West Side. This project examines the potential of human generosity and intent. No one among us has the power to create a world in 7 days, but by working together we might be able to discover one.

The artists are not autonomous creators of their own narratives but instruments of art-makery whose function is to transform the material and social potentials of the Near West Side into a work of art. The irony of this project, and of every project, is that nothing new is created. Material is undeniably transformed, but the true art of the work is the illumination of relationships and connections already in existence. The artifacts themselves are merely manifestations of these relationships. The only thing that is truly created is a chain of new relationships that will continue to support the INTER mission long after the project has ended. → www.johncardone.com
Table of Contents

Abstract ....................................................................................................................... i
Acknowledgements (Optional) .................................................................................. iii
Advice to Future Honors Students (Optional) ....................................................... iv

Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1: Syracuse ................................................................................................. 2
Chapter 2: Senegal .................................................................................................... 4
Chapter 3: Social Sculpture ....................................................................................... 5
Chapter 4: Death Self ............................................................................................... 8
Chapter 5: Collaboration ......................................................................................... 10
Chapter 6: Inter- .................................................................................................... 12
Chapter 7: -sections .............................................................................................. 14

Works Cited ............................................................................................................. 18
Appendices ............................................................................................................... 19
Summary of Capstone Project .................................................................................. 26
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Stacey Lindbloom, for her patience and support.

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Sea Diallo and Serigne Mor Gueye, my Senegalese advisors, for showing me a different way of making art.

The Inhabitants of the Near West Side, for their boundless generosity and indelible spirit.
Advice to Future Honors Students

Dear {student},

The things to do are the things that need doing, that you see need to be done. Then you will conceive your own way of doing that which needs to be done -- that no one else has told you to do or how to do it. This will bring out the real you that often gets buried inside a character that has acquired a superficial array of behaviors induced or imposed by others on the individual.

Try making experiments of anything you conceive and are intensely interested in. Don't be disappointed if something doesn't work. That is what you want to know – the truth about everything – and then the truth about combinations of things. Some combinations have such logic and integrity that they can work coherently despite non-working elements embraced by their system.

Whenever you come to a word with which you are not familiar, find it in the dictionary and write a sentence that used that new word. Words are tools, and once you learn how to use a tool you will never forget it. Just looking for the meaning of the word is not enough. If you vocabulary is comprehensive, you can comprehend both large and fine patterns of experience.

You have what is most important in life – initiative – and you will find the world responding to this.

--- R. Buckminster Fuller
“Let’s talk of a system that transforms all the social organisms into a work of art, in which the entire process of work is included... something in which the principle of production and consumption takes on a form of quality. It's a gigantic project.”

-Joseph Beuys

Introduction:

We don't want to make art. We want only to make what needs to be made right here and right now. All notions of the appropriate and the proper must be destroyed and all concepts of the artist, the student, or the man, must be abolished, for these are ever the guardians of yesterday's affairs. They are tools of preservation in a time of transformation. Boundaries, borders, frames, walls, all must go until only relationships remain. In these relationships we will learn to define ourselves in the world and the world within us.

Nothing exists that we cannot perceive, nothing is ours that we have not made, and nothing has meaning that we have not given. In order to foster a more active participation in the collaborative act of creation in which mankind engages every day, we must engage in art practices that are completely dependent on interaction and investment. The value of artwork is not derived from its original material but from the energy invested in it and the significance that it gathers from each hand through which it passes. None of us exists in vacuum; instead, all creation relies on collaboration and exterior influence. Rather than try to isolate ourselves as individuals, we should embrace our dependency on each other and our environment. Our goal is not to make things that are new but to make anew that which already exists in our hands, our minds, and our hearts.
In April, 2012, we engage in a project in Syracuse's Near West Side in which the entire process of work is included. The goal of this project is to examine the potentials of creation, collaboration, and transformation within a limited geography and population. The following is an account of the project's genesis as well as its context in the larger world.

Chapter 1: Syracuse

At the start of my second year I wanted to quit. I wanted to leave college behind so I could get a job and become a real person. College was filled with phonies whose only concerns were perfecting their roles in the hegemonic systems that enslaved their existence. In my naivety, Syracuse University seemed to be no more than a city of fools trying hard (though not too hard) to be mediocre.

In an attempt to distinguish myself from the throws of blind complacency, I decided to immerse myself in the world apart from the university. By joining the Renée Crown University Honors Program, I was allowed to enroll in a seminar on Refugee Communities in Syracuse, through which I began tutoring English to Burmese Refugees. At the same time I enrolled in a Community-Based Landscape Painting class in which half of our class time was spent teaching drawing to middle-school students on the Near West Side. Through these programs I discovered the profound need but also the incredible vitality of the city of Syracuse. In the midst of my frustration, I found solace in education. Here at last was a problem to be solved, a challenge to be met, and a dream to be chased.
The following semester I enrolled in Marion Wilson's *Social Sculpture* course, a collaborative design-build class concerning the *601 Tully Project* on the Near West Side of Syracuse. This class taught me the value of making decisions, of talking less and doing more, and of communicating ideas effectively. Thanks to the extraordinary diversity of students and disciplines, I was spared the trouble of debating theoretical nuances with narcissistic art students enthralled in their own ability to be (dis)interested in art. Instead I learned to explain myself to those who share more interest than they do vocabulary, an indispensable skill for anyone who wants to live in a world with other people. Fortunately, Marion Wilson – my soon-to-be mentor – taught us a new vocabulary, that of *Social Sculpture*, a phrase coined by Joseph Beuys to mean, “the way we shape the world around us.” Beuys' view that “every person is an artist” coincided perfectly with one of my own maxims: “Every time someone arranges his world in a meaningful way, he has created a work of art.” It also illuminated an essential idea to the future of my art-making: there is no separation between artist and audience, there is only a relationship. This relationship not only supports the work of art, it becomes the work of art.

It was at this time that I became intensely interested in the immigrant communities of Syracuse. In their struggles I saw an indelible determination to take ownership of their new home but also an undeniable dependence on those around them. I knew that if I wanted to understand their relationship to the host society, I would need to step out of my comfort zone and into the realm of complete dependence.
Chapter 2: Senegal

In the Spring of my third year at SU, the Honors Program granted me a scholarship to study abroad in Dakar, Senegal for a total of five months. There I found a non-western society, a vibrant art culture, and a native language that was completely unrelated to my own. For the first month or so, I was completely incapable of purchasing food, goods, or transportation without significant assistance. I was a total foreigner, completely dependent on my host family, my teachers, and the generosity of the city's inhabitants. I learned what it means to be helpless and to be helped.

One of the core cultural values I learned in Senegal is a concept called *mbokk* which means “family” in very inclusive sense. *Mbokk* is the idea that we are all part of a family, one way or another, and there is no human alive without a family. If you came out of a woman, you have family somewhere. It is our social and moral duty to make sure that everyone is included and that everyone has somewhere to go for help. If we all look out for our families, those families can look after other families and so on. We must all help one another because we never know when we will need help ourselves.

This attitude could not be more different from American individualism, in which citizens are expected to engage in rigorous self-censorship and isolation. We seem to feel that if every man looks out for himself without getting distracted by others, society will function in the proper way. Worry about *your* grades, *your* job, *your* dreams, *your* taxes, *your* house, *your* body. How can *you* cut corners
and cheat the system so that you can maximize intake while minimizing output? Despite what American infomercials might tell you, people do not starve in the streets of Senegal. Those who have food give to those who don't, it's that simple. No one is left out.

Upon returning to the US, I realized that the Senegalese model carried more truth about the way we live than the American ideology. A true individual knows that his individuality can never be taken from him, but he also knows that he can never exist in isolation; rather he is always and undeniably dependent on those around him. Consequently, a true society knows that its strength lies not only in its autonomy but in the interdependence of itself.

**Chapter 3: Social Sculpture**

In May 1974 Joseph Beuys landed in LaGuardia Airport in New York City. Without setting foot on U.S. soil, he was rushed by ambulance to a gallery in Manhattan where he was carried in, wrapped in felt, and placed in a cage with a wild coyote for eight hours a day, three days in a row. The audience watched as the coyote approached him, ripped his felt blankets, pulled at his clothes, inspected him, and, eventually, grew tolerant of him. With no food or shelter to speak of, each eight hours was spent in virtual helplessness.

That same year, three thousand miles away, Marina Abramovic entered a gallery in Naples with a box of seventy-two objects. Spreading the objects out on a table, Abramovic began a six hour performance in which the audience was encouraged to use any of these objects in a manner of their choosing while the
artist would remain completely still. Once the audience was sure she would not retaliate, they began to use the objects liberally to interact with the immobile artist, some to bring pleasure, others to inflict pain. One man even put a loaded gun to her head.

In both performances, the artist has made him/herself vulnerable – Beuys to the coyote, and Abramovic to the onlookers. Helplessly, the artists risk their own lives for the sake of their art while the audience looks on with both guilt and morbid fascination. As viewers they are intensely aware that these pieces are not mere representations or facsimiles of human experiences; these moments are real. The power of a human body in performance cannot be ignored, and the viewers cannot help but relate the artist's struggle. In doing so, they become integral to the work of art. More importantly, the artists become completely dependent on their audience.

This dependency emerges as a cornerstone for both artists. In another of Abramovic's performances, the artist hurled herself into the center of a burning ring of flame, where she soon fell unconscious for lack of oxygen. Several minutes later, thanks to an attentive doctor in the audience, several spectators removed Abramovic from the treacherous flames. In Beuys' 1982 piece 7000 Oaks, the lawn of the Kassel Art Museum was littered with 7,000 flagstones that could not be moved except by the artist. Beuys declared that he would remove one stone for every volunteer who agreed to plant an Oak tree in the city. Five years later, not a single stone remained. The strength of these pieces lies not in their “newness” or their material value – indeed one would be hard put even to
find an element of craft in either work. No, what makes these pieces successful is that they force a connection between the viewer and the artist where one is able to step inside the shoes of the other. Neither artist is making something primarily “new.” Instead they poetically rephrase those peculiar truths that we hold dear in our collective conscience.

Although Marina Abramovic calls herself a performance artist, I consider her work to be Social Sculpture because of its necessarily interactive nature. Many cynics use the argument that all “good” art should have a social function and thus most art could be considered Social Sculpture, thereby rendering the term a meaningless distinction. Let me be very clear then in saying that Social Sculpture is not a distinction of medium or process but one of perspective. Social Sculpture will almost always formally resemble some other genre of art. What separates is from the others is the notion that there is no separation between artist and audience; there is instead a necessary relationship between the two and it is within this relationship that the true work of art lies. When Joseph Beuys coined the term Social Sculpture, he did not invent a new genre of art objects or even a new way of making art. He merely emphasized the need for art to engage in a relationship to its audience. Beuys did not care what form the final product took as long as it involved the audience in its production.

Many artists today demonstrate this critical distinction without every identifying themselves as Social Sculptors. When, Krzysztof Wodiczko facilitates live open dialogue amongst victims of tragedy, disaster and murder, all accompanied by monumental projections of those involved, it is the dialogue and
not the monument that carries the artwork. When William Pope L. crawled the length of Manhattan, it was his interactions with bystanders, and not the documentation, that made it art. When Allora and Calzadilla left giant pieces of chalk in a central square in Lima, Peru, it was the messages written by protesters, and not the chalk itself, that embodied the work. The common thread linking these pieces is the demonstration of each person's ability and responsibility to invoke social change. In effect, notion art as an end unto itself is replaced by art as a vehicle for reflection and social change.

Fortunately, artists are not the only people capable of creating such “masterpieces.” By imposing order on the chaotic nature of society, any person can become both architect and painter of his own universe. For this reason, Social Sculpture is not an art for the elite or well educated, nor is it an art for the individual. It is truly an art of people, by people, and for people.

Chapter 4: The Death Self

Artists often make the distinction that, unlike many members of society, they are active contributors to something larger than themselves. In most cases this “thing” is society itself. I would argue that if we are to take ourselves seriously we must realize that we are all contributors to a society larger than ourselves. Thus, if we take our work seriously, we have no choice but to take a vested interest in that society and a very real responsibility for our role within it. Without a doubt it is within our individual self-interest, as well as our societal group-interest, to realize our profound capacity for altering and shaping the world
in which we live. If we do this we can all become artists regardless of our professional capacity.

If we can fully realize that our so-called self-interests are absolutely inseparable from our group interests, we will become much less interested in what “I want to do right now” and much more interested in what is “the best thing to do right now.” As Buckminster Fuller famously stated in his book *Critical Path*, “The things to do are the things that need doing.” If we are truly interested in art, design, government, etc., we will always concern ourselves with that which makes the most sense. Caught up in a narcissistic cycle of self-affirmation, it’s quite easy to indulge ourselves in the folly of endless academic debate, otherwise known as inaction, instead of concerning ourselves with what artist Leon Johnson calls “the problems worth having.”

In all professions that engage society (which is in fact all professions) the work must take precedence over the ego, and although the ego can never be fully destroyed, it is especially crucial for artists to learn to silence it. By removing oneself from the “I,” one becomes an instrument of something greater. The Sufi mystics refer to this as reaching a state of grace, becoming a vessel for divine truth or a channel of love. Many artists refer to this as a being inspired or being “in the zone.” In her years of collaboration with Ulay, Marina Abramovic talked about what she called the *Death Self*, a state of liberation from the self in which her body became a servant of the art devoid of ego and impurity. In this state, the mind ceases to censor the spirit and the work begins to resemble the divinity of nature. This is where the real art occurs.
Once we accept this state of grace, a whole world of opportunities opens up before us; collaboration, transformation, and re-appropriation are no longer merely permissible, they are desired. Plagiarism, the act of stealing another’s intellectual property, is no longer a concern because anything worth stealing is worth sharing. If the property is indeed intellectual, then it is already the property of all who can appreciate it. Roland Bathes was quite right in saying that “the Author is dead.” And now that he is dead we can see clearly that he was born only when certain members of society found themselves in a position to profit from those particular ideas that they had “invented” (read “claimed”) for themselves. It took society quite a long time to realize that all thought is derived from and influenced by other thoughts and that I have no more right to these thoughts in writing them than you have in reading them. (Moreover, these thoughts would be utterly meaningless if you were not here to read them so if anything I should be thanking you for any significance they happen to take on.) In sum we must accept that the artist is never solely responsible for the work of art. This is what Joseph Beuys meant when he spoke of “a system that transforms all the social organisms into a work of art, in which the entire process of work is included... something in which the principle of production and consumption takes on a form of quality.” With this understanding, every person is not simply an artist, but the artist.

Chapter 5: Collaborations

It is no secret that two heads are better than one, so it should come as no surprise that four eyes can see more than two, four hands can lift more, four feet
can travel further, and four buttocks can balance a see-saw. We now know that all work is collaboration in some shape or form, yet many still prefer to work “alone” because they find it easier to make decisions under one mental roof. However, I contend that although not all couples are suited for problem-solving, a well-matched pair is more efficient at making decisions – and at a higher quality – than their solo counterparts. As the Buddhist intellectual Alan Watts so beautifully stated, “It is only through the other that we come to know ourselves.” So it is with artistic endeavors; it is only through the view of others that we come to know what we are making. And just as a young man asks his friend which neck-tie is best for the school dance – only so he can disregard the advice – so even the most egotistical artist asks his neighbor's opinion on his new painting if only to disregard the advice. Whenever we make a work to be shown, we invest in the opinion of others. If this investment is taken seriously, the work will always take on collaborators even in the most rudimentary of decisions. Furthermore, these collaborators need not be of similar mind. In fact, a disparate viewpoint is often far more useful in foiling one's own perspective in order to arrive at a more developed and nuanced conclusion. Therefore, it only makes sense that artists benefit from partnering with other artists.

The next step for artists is to partner with their audience. If artists do not partner with their audiences they run the risk of disenfranchising them and possible causing them to disdain art as an elitist charade. Simply put, audiences are not interested in work that is not interested in them. It is absolutely crucial that artist has a profound consideration for his audience, especially since it is they, not
he, who give meaning to the final piece. Fortunately there is no limit to the ways we can engage an audience. It can be done through any medium at any time in any place. However, one strategy that is often ignored in historical art practices is that of audience-investment. Whether we are gazing into the eyes of the *Mona Lisa* or participating in anarchist performance art, emotional attachment is key to our understanding of the work, and the more we are engaged in the production of the work, the more invested we are in the final product.

**Chapter 6: Inter-**

After my return from Senegal in the summer of 2011, I vowed to develop an art practice that was at once collaborative, interdependent, audience-investing, community-building, and non-egocentric. I became obsessed with this idea of inter-prosperity, a more intense form of interdependence, in which we are not simply in need of one another but we are actually much better off when we're together. I decided to partner with my good friend and fellow sculptor, James Redenbaugh, and together we brainstormed possible trajectories for our interdisciplinary project.

Our first thought was to lock ourselves in a gallery on campus for an entire week attempting to make art using only that which we could procure from the outside without actually venturing out ourselves. We would forbid the use of phones and internet leaving only our interpersonal skills to carry us through. We soon realized that this project would be more of an investigation of our knowledge of the university and of the friendliness of its occupants than an
examination of interdependence. The idea was thrown out, only to be re-hatched a few weeks later in its current form, as follows.

*In April, 2012, we engage in project called “INTER,” a collaboration between two artists and the inhabitants of Syracuse’s Near West Side where the artists will live and work for the duration of one week. The artists will arrive on site with no supplies or food of any kind and will be strictly forbidden from using money, phones, or computers for the entire week (except to add daily updates to the show’s website). Through face-to-face interactions, they will attempt to establish networks and infrastructures built solely on human capital. Armed only with a guitar, a drum, and a video camera, the artists will have exactly seven days – 168 hours – to install an entire body of work in and around the gallery at 601 Tully using only materials they receive through the generosity of the neighborhood. At the very least, the artists hope to explore the complexities of pre-existing communities of the Near West Side and to examine the potential of human intent.* → [www.johncardone.com](http://www.johncardone.com)

The week played out better than we ever expected. On the first day alone we received four separate donations from complete strangers. Building on recommendations, we made our way around to rest of the neighborhood, meeting more friendly faces as we went. By the end of seven days our bellies were still full and we had more materials than we knew what to do with. Our website received nearly 1500 hits in seven days and over a hundred people arrived for the opening where they were all well-fed thanks to full catering by Nojaim Bros. and
the Welcome Inn. After all the guests had left, we realized that they were the best work of art in the show.

The Near West Side was the inspiration and the impetus for a work of art about itself. The artifacts we created were merely the detritus of our experiences over the week. No matter how “good” any of the pieces are, they will never be able to adequately describe the real work of art which was the series of relationships we formed over seven days. However beautiful the show was to the people we met, it pales in comparison to the work of art that we discovered the Near West Side to be.

**Chapter 7: -sections**

Descartes paved the road for isolated individualism when he claimed “Cogito Ergo Sum (I think therefore I am).” What he failed to take into account, was that his statement was meaningless without an audience, just as Descartes is meaningless without some else to listen to him. If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, well then how do we know it fell at all? Existence always depends on an exchange. It is not in the “Cogito” (cognition) but in the re-cognition by another that existence takes place. In a talk on eastern philosophy, Alan Watts explained, “We can't have an I without having an Other,” which one might abbreviate like so, “I cannot without another.” Thus we amend Descartes’ quote: “Nos Communicare Ergo Sunt (We communicate, there we are).”

In our seven-day journey through the Near West Side, we learned that inter-dependency is absolutely universal. Throughout the project we operated
under “contrived limitations” to into a more dependent role with our environment. The humor in this is that these limitations exist without being contrived. While we relied on Paul Nojaim for food to sustain us, Paul Nojaim relies on an extensive list of suppliers who in turn rely on an even lengthier list of farms and manufacturers and so on and so on. When we requested donations, we weren't simply asking individuals for their kindness, we were asking to participate in a vast network of relationships that extends far beyond the boundaries of the neighborhood.

We also learned that, despite popular belief, humans are generous creatures. Given the right opportunity, most people will shower you with gifts. The problem is that most people don't seek out opportunities to give. Instead they want it delivered to their door. A few years ago, a good friend of mine took a bike tour around the U.S. Each night he would knock on strangers’ doors asking for a place to pitch his tent in their yard. At first most people seemed hesitant, if not suspicious. Often they told him to find a place in the far corner of their property where he wouldn't bother them. But then, a few hours later, they would show up outside his tent with a hot meal.

When it comes to facilitating generosity, human presence makes a difference. Week after week we are tele-bombarded with new ways we can donate to worthy causes with the touch of a button – easy to give, and easier to ignore – but walk by a man on the street with his palm open and suddenly this opportunity becomes harder to ignore. Better yet, see a man selling exquisite paintings of post-tsunami Japan saying that all proceeds go directly to disaster relief and your
heart jumps! People love to support good ideas. Those who refuse to give are not always greedy. Sometimes they're just waiting to be convinced. Fortunately for us, the residents of the Near West Side were all eager to be persuaded. Unfortunately I can't say the same about university folk.

In the early stages of its conception, the project was met with heavy skepticism. Aside from the usual concerns of starvation and personal hygiene, many people were suspicious of the project's motives and ethics in the realm of art. Unfortunately many artists/critics of the past have portrayed Social Sculpture as a dubious art practice that fetishized the mythical “community” as a new world of artistic treasure ripe for exploitation. Let us be clear then in establishing our sensitivity to these issues.

On more than one occasion, skeptics asked whether it was entirely appropriate for “two middle class white guys to go and ask poor people for food.”

We find this question insulting to all those involved. First, let us not make assumptions about people's personalities based on their incomes. Second, let us not assume that groups of individuals will behave according to classifications that we've opposed upon them. There has never been anything wrong with a healthy exchange between two human beings, and there is certainly nothing wrong with inviting individuals, of any economic background, to voluntarily participate in a work of art. It is with the greatest humility and respect that we ask for assistance in our project and we trust that this respect transcends race, gender, and class. Far from being exploitive, this work establishes useful connections between groups of individuals while providing them free publicity on the project website where each
supporter is given a profile. In addition, each supporter received a personalized, hand-made piece of artwork as a thank-you. In the entirety of the project, we did not meet a single individual who was not pleased to be involved, and none were more pleased than those who came to the show and encountered their fellow participants.

In this project, the artists were not autonomous creators of their own narratives but instruments of art-makery whose function was to transform the material and social potentials of the Near West Side into a work of art. The irony of this project, and of every project, is that nothing new was created. Material was undeniably transformed, but the true art of the work was the illumination of relationships and connections already in existence. The artifacts themselves were merely manifestations of these relationships. The only thing that was truly created was a chain of new relationships that will continue to support the INTER mission long after the project has ended. → www.johncardone.com
Works Cited


Krzysztof Wodiczko, *St. Louis Projections*, (Central Public Library, St. Louis), 2004.

Jennifer Allora & Guillermo Calzadilla, *Chalk*, (Lima, Peru), 2008


Appendices

Sample pages from website: www.johncardone.com
**Inter: an Examination of Potential**

Inter is a seven-day collaboration between two artists and the residents of Syracuse’s Near West Side where the artists lived and worked for the duration of the project. The artists arrived on site with no supplies or materials of any kind. They had no money, no phones, no computers, and no way of contacting the outside world. Through face-to-face interactions, they established networks and infrastructures built solely on human capital. Armed only with a guitar and a drum, the artists had exactly one week – 168 hours – to install an entire body of work in and around the gallery at 601 Tully. However, their ability to make work necessarily depended on the generosity and participation of their neighbors on the Near west Side. On the 168th hour of installation, the show was opened to the public and remained on display until Saturday April 28th.

The project is an examination of the potential of human generosity and intent, as well as an exploration of the complexities of the pre-existing communities on the Near West Side.
Wednesday, 4/11/12

A very busy day today, lots of art making so we’ll have to keep it brief. People have been incredibly generous these past five days. We have a ton and a half of supplies and materials. Now is the time to put it all together into a real art show.

We paid another visit to the Refstore and picked up a few more essentials. Mark Pevinelli surprised us with some more key elements. The Welcome Inn agreed to cater our opening and so did Paul Nojaim. Paul also offered to take us out to dinner. On the way he gave us an extensive tour of the neighborhood and the surrounding areas. Paul’s family has ran a grocery store in this neighborhood for 93 years. It was quite a treat driving around with Paul hearing about the changes this area has undergone. He’s definitely enriched our understanding of the Near West Side. We return home, our minds and bellies expanded, well prepared for a long night of art creation.

Peace and Love

JbkJ

Meeting with John, owner of the Welcome Inn
Gift List
Gifter / Location / Time / Date

Joanna Spitzner / her house / 3:45 PM / 4.06.10
  • time lapse camera

Amanda / Davis St. Market / 11:45 AM / 4.07.12
  • 2 journals (college ruled)
  • 2 tins of talcum powder
  • can tuna fish
  • 1 can chef boyardee
  • 2 pencils (one mechanical)

Curtis / Davis St. Market / 11:50 AM / 4.07.12
  • 2 zebra cakes

Fatima / Davis St. Market / 11:55 AM / 4.07.12
  • 1 plastic grocery bag
  • 2 cans green beans
  • 1 box rice
  • peanut butter
  • strawberry jelly
  • 1 loaf wheat bread

Found List
Location / Time / Date

St. Lucy’s Church on Gifford St. / 10:45 AM / 4.07.12
  • alien space dude

Bard Bakery Park on Shonard St / 11:00 AM / 4.07.12
  • pink fox figurine
  • orange reflector

Grace and Messina Park on Grace St. / 11:30 AM / 4.07.12
  • shiny chain
  • Daycare registration card

Merriam Ave / 12:05 PM / 4.07.12
  • box of broken glass
  • orange ball

603 Tully Sidewalk / 6:20 PM / 4.07.12
  • carpet (blue)
  • plastic blue triangle with holes in it
  • throttle trigger and handle
  • pink plastic sphere

Sidewalk at Otisco and Oswego / 7:00 PM / 4.07.12
Seven Day Time Lapse (14:37)

Feel free to supplement video with ambient music of your choice...
Some friendly suggestions:
- The Album Leaf
- Shpongle
- Sigur Rós
- A Silver Mt. Zion
- Mozart
Supporters

Mac Bros. Boiler Works

Jim Hueber has spent the past 27 years as the owner of Mack Bros. Boiler & Sheet Iron Works Co. Inc., a local family-owned business since 1887. Today the crew of 6 takes on projects in steel fabrication, installation, construction, or boiler repair anywhere within a 100 mile radius. As Jim jokes, "We're not picky about what we do because we like to eat."

Jim was kind enough to donate some motor oil, a compass, two hammers, and some steel scraps to the project. This is not the first time Jim has assisted local artists. For the past year or so he has provided studio space and assistance to Brendan Rose, the Syracuse Public Artist in Residence.

Nojaim Bros. Supermarket

description coming soon...
Summary of Capstone Project

At the start of my second year I wanted to quit. I wanted to leave college behind so I could get a job and become a real person. In my naivety, Syracuse University seemed to be no more than a city of fools trying hard (though not too hard) to be mediocre. In an attempt to distinguish myself from the throws of blind complacency, I decided to immerse myself in the world apart from the university.

By joining the Renée Crown University Honors Program, I was allowed to enroll in a seminar on Refugee Communities in Syracuse, through which I began tutoring English to Burmese Refugees. At the same time I enrolled in a Community-Based Landscape Painting class in which half of our class time was spent teaching drawing to middle-school students on the Near West Side. Through these programs I discovered the profound need but also the incredible vitality of the city of Syracuse. In the midst of my frustration, I found solace in education. Here at last was a problem to be solved, a challenge to be met, and a dream to be chased.

The following semester I enrolled in Marion Wilson's Social Sculpture course, a collaborative design-build class concerning the 601 Tully Project on the Near West Side of Syracuse. This class taught me the value of making decisions, of talking less and doing more, and of communicating ideas effectively. It was through this class that I was introduced the concept of Social Sculpture, a phrase coined by Joseph Beuys to mean, “The way we shape the world around us.” Beuys' view that “every person is an artist” coincided perfectly with one of my own maxims: “Every time someone arranges his world in a meaningful way, he has created a work of art.”

It was at this time that I became intensely interested in the immigrant communities of Syracuse. In their struggles I saw an indelible determination to take ownership of their new home but also an undeniable dependence on those around them. I knew that if I wanted to understand their relationship to the host society, I would need to step out of my comfort zone and into the realm of complete dependence.

In the Spring of my third year at SU, I studied abroad in Dakar, Senegal for a total of five months. There I found a non-western society, a vibrant art culture, and a native language that was completely unrelated to my own. I was a total foreigner, completely dependent on my host family, my teachers, and the generosity of the city's inhabitants. I learned what it means to be helpless and to be helped.

One of the core cultural values I learned in Senegal is a concept called mbokk which means “family” in very inclusive sense. Mbokk is the idea that we are all part of a family, one way or another, and there is no human alive without a family. If you came out of a woman, you have family somewhere. It is our social and moral duty to make sure that everyone is included and that everyone has somewhere to go for help. If we all look out for our families, those families can look after other families and so on. We must all help one another because we never know when we will need help ourselves.
This attitude could not be more different from American individualism, in which citizens are expected to engage in rigorous self-censorship and isolation. We seem to feel that if every man looks out for himself without getting distracted by others, society will function in the proper way. Worry about your grades, your job, your dreams, your taxes, your house, your body. How can you cut corners and cheat the system so that you can maximize intake while minimizing output? Despite what American infomercials might tell you, people do not starve in the streets of Senegal. Those who have food give to those who don't, it's that simple. No one is left out.

Upon returning to the US, I realized that the Senegalese model carried more truth about the way we live than the American ideology. A true individual knows that his individuality can never be taken from him, but he also knows that he can never exist in isolation; rather he is always and undeniably dependent on those around him. Consequently, a true society knows that its strength lies not only in its autonomy but in the interdependence of itself.

Artists often make the distinction that, unlike many members of society, they are active contributors to something larger than themselves. In most cases this “thing” is society itself. I would argue that if we are to take ourselves seriously we must realize that we are all contributors to a society larger than ourselves. Thus, if we take our work seriously, we have no choice but to take a vested interest in that society and a very real responsibility for our role within it. Without a doubt it is within our individual self-interest, as well as our societal group-interest, to realize our profound capacity for altering and shaping the world in which we live. If we do this we can all become artists regardless of our professional capacity.

If we can fully realize that our so called self-interests are absolutely inseparable from our group interests, we will become much less interested in what “I want to do right now” and much more interested in what is “the best thing to do right now.” As Buckminster Fuller famously stated in his book *Critical Path*, “The things to do are the things that need doing.”

It is no secret that two heads are better than one, so it should come as no surprise that four eyes can see more than two, four hands can lift more, four feet can travel further, and four buttocks can balance a see-saw. Although not all couples are suited for problem-solving, a well-matched pair is more efficient at making decisions – and at a higher quality – than their solo counterparts. As the Buddhist intellectual Alan Watts so beautifully stated, “It is only through the other that we come to know ourselves.” So it is with artistic endeavors; it is only through the view of others that we come to know what we are making. Whenever we make a work to be shown, we invest in the opinion of others. If this investment is taken seriously, the work will always take on collaborators even in the most rudimentary of decisions. Therefore, it only makes sense that artists benefit from partnering with other artists. The next step for artists is to partner with their audience, especially since it is they, not he, who give meaning to the final piece.
After my return from Senegal in the summer of 2011, I vowed to develop an art practice that was at once collaborative, interdependent, audience-investing, community-building, and non-egocentric. I became obsessed with this idea of inter-prosperity, a more intense form of interdependence, in which we are not simply in need of one another but we are actually much better off when we’re together. I decided to partner with my good friend and fellow sculptor, James Redenbaugh, and together we designed what we think to be a worthwhile piece.

In April, 2012, we engaged in project called “INTER,” a collaboration between two artists and the inhabitants of Syracuse's Near West Side where the artists lived and worked for the duration of one week. The artists arrived on site with no supplies or food of any kind and were strictly forbidden from using money, phones, or computers for the entire week (except to add daily updates to the show’s website). Through face-to-face interactions, they attempted to establish networks and infrastructures built solely on human capital. Armed only with a guitar, a drum, and a video camera, the artists had exactly seven days – 168 hours – to install an entire body of work in and around the gallery at 601 Tully using only materials they received through the generosity of the neighborhood. At the very least, the artists hoped to explore the complexities of pre-existing communities of the Near West Side and to examine the potential of human intent.

The week played out better than we ever expected. On the first day alone we received four separate donations from complete strangers. Building on recommendations, we made our way around to rest of the neighborhood, meeting more friendly faces as we went. By the end of seven days our bellies were still full and we had more materials than we knew what to do with. Our website received nearly 1500 hits in seven days and over a hundred people arrived for the opening where they were all well-fed thanks to full catering by Nojaim Bros. and the Welcome Inn. After all the guests had left, we realized that they were the best work of art in the show.

In this project, the artists were not autonomous creators of their own narratives but instruments of art-makery whose function was to transform the material and social potentials of the Near West Side into a work of art. The irony of this project, and of every project, is that nothing new was created. Material was undeniably transformed, but the true art of the work was the illumination of relationships and connections already in existence. The artifacts themselves were merely manifestations of these relationships. The only thing that was truly created was a chain of new relationships that will continue to support the INTER mission long after the project has ended. → [www.johncardone.com](http://www.johncardone.com)