

CREATIVETIME

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Freedom of Expression National Monument
Foley Square, Lower Manhattan
August 17 – November 13, 2004

Media Preview/Speeches/Performances:
August 17, 9:00am – 10:30am

This Election Season, Creative Time and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Invite You To Visit *Freedom Of Expression National Monument* — and make your voice heard

(July 26, 2004, New York, NY) “You are cordially invited to step up and speak up,” reads the plaque adorning ***Freedom of Expression National Monument***, a public artwork by architect **Laurie Hawkinson**, performer **John Malpede**, and visual artist **Erika Rothenberg**, presented by Creative Time and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. From August 17 through November 13, 2004, this enormous red megaphone will occupy Foley Square in Lower Manhattan. Nestled between the bustling federal, state, and city courthouses, *Freedom* will provide a platform for people to speak their minds during the upcoming election season.

A modern day soapbox, *Freedom* entices passersby to climb its sloping ramp and embrace the megaphone to voice their thoughts, poetry, grievances, and hopes. Offering a public forum for dialogue on the dynamics of free speech, power and powerlessness, and a multiplicity of social and cultural concerns, the artwork directly addresses public frustration over getting its voice heard. Both celebratory and ironic, *Freedom* evokes the struggle involved in making change, while reflecting the public’s desire to break through mass media and partisan politics where individual voices tend to diminish.

Freedom was originally installed in 1984 for *Art on the Beach* (1978-1985), Creative Time’s annual program that featured collaborations between architects, performers, and visual artists on the Battery Park City Landfill created by the construction of the World Trade Center. The piece captured the imagination and quickly became one of New York’s most cherished artworks. For one memorable summer, thousands seized the megaphone on the windswept beach to vent, sing, rage, and recite poetry. *Freedom* brought contemporary issues to the fore — the AIDS pandemic, homelessness, human rights, economic disparity, the environment — and asserted the importance of standing by our right to express ourselves.

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Although a great deal has changed since then, the artists point out that much has stayed the same. The range of issues for the public to weigh in on — from globalization to widening wealth inequality to the War on Terrorism — has never been as vast. Nor have the stakes been as high. As presidential campaigning got underway last year, Creative Time recognized *Freedom of Expression National Monument's* continued relevance. We weren't the only ones. Architecture critic Herbert Muschamp proposed in *The New York Times* last year that *Freedom* be rebuilt at Ground Zero. He wrote, "The need for such a public platform has never been greater than it is now." (NYT, 8/31/03)

In both form and experience, *Freedom* disarms and empowers. Drawing on the iconography of Soviet agit-prop, the artists designed *Freedom* as a playful and approachable object. The structure, made of plywood, steel, and rolled sheet metal, is painted a bright red that radiates from a distance. By climbing the twenty-one foot long ramp to the six-foot tall platform, the visitor is elevated to a position of importance and power. Once there, the speaker embraces, and is simultaneously overwhelmed by, the exaggerated megaphone that sends his or her message to the world.

Freedom also challenges our assumptions about the role of civic architecture, which the artists gesture towards by naming the artwork a "national monument." Unlike Washington D.C.'s monuments, this temporary intervention is constructed on a human scale with affordable materials. Rather than venerate great men and enduring institutions, *Freedom* honors the ordinary and everyday.

Freedom will resonate just as strongly this election year as it did two decades ago by drawing our attention to the ways in which first amendment rights intersect with our daily lives. Its proximity to courthouses, for example, alludes to how easily a privilege that we take for granted can be ensnared in a complex legal web like the Patriot Act. Furthermore, *Freedom* reclaims Foley Square as a public space in the classic sense – a town square where ideas can be openly shared and debated.

Creative Time and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council have invited a wide range of visual artists, performers, writers, politicians, community activists, and individuals to engage with *Freedom*. Participants include: John Malpede, Fringe Theatre, Bowery Poetry Club, Urban Word, Martha Wilson, Sheryl Oring, PS 122, and many others. For a list of events, dates, and times, please go to www.creativetime.org/programs.

Support

Freedom of Expression National Monument is co-presented by Creative Time and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

Freedom is made possible, in part, with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; the New York State Council on the Arts, a State agency; New York City Council Speaker Gifford Miller; New York City Councilmember Christine Quinn; New York State Senator Thomas K. Duane, and with private funds from The Gunk Foundation and Mr. Steven Horowitz.

Freedom was produced with the cooperation of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation and the Office of the Mayor. Parks' temporary public art program has consistently fostered the creation and installation of temporary art projects in parks throughout the five boroughs. Since 1967, collaborations with arts organizations and artists have produced hundreds of public art projects in City parks, from international exhibitions in flagship parks to local, community works in neighborhood parks.

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Artist Biographies

Laurie Hawkinson is a partner of Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects - a New York City-based architecture and urban planning firm founded in 1983. Ms. Hawkinson's work derives from an ongoing investigation into the general culture of architecture - its history, as well as, its complex and changing relationship to society and contemporary ideas. The firm has conceived public and private projects across the United States, ranging from institutional commissions and parks to corporate buildings, housing, public transportation terminals, theaters and museums. Recent and current projects include the \$62 million expansion of Corning Glass, a planning study for LMDC entitled "Strategic Open Space: Public Realm Improvement Strategy for Lower Manhattan", The Museum of Women's History in Battery Park, the Wall Street Ferry Terminal at Pier 11, and an outdoor cinema and amphitheater at the North Carolina Museum of Art. Her team was a finalist for the NYC 2012 Olympic Village, and her firm will exhibit in La Biennale di Architettura di Venezia in Italy, in September 2004.

John Malpede founded the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD), a theater comprised of homeless people. "Olympic Update: Homelessness in Los Angeles", was developed and performed for the *Freedom of Expression National Monument* in 1984, and marked the beginning of his involvement with poverty issues. As a director and performer he has been the recipient of numerous awards, including Dance Theater Workshop's Bessie Creation Award, the San Francisco Art Institute's Adeline Kent Award, and a LA Theater Alliance Ovation Award. Current projects include direction of "RFKinEKY" a site specific performance that retraces the 200-mile route of Robert Kennedy's 1968 investigation of poverty in Appalachia; performing the role of Antonin Artaud in Peter Sellars' production of "An End to the Judgement of God," and direction of LAPD's "Agents & Assets".

Erika Rothenberg is a visual artist whose work takes many forms, from paintings and drawings to museum installations to large-scale public sculpture. She has been exhibited at museums and galleries around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Documenta IX, Kassel, Germany, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Her newest public artwork, "The Road to Hollywood," was lauded by the Los Angeles Times as "an exceptional work of public art...it ranks among the best public art projects in L.A." Rothenberg lives in Los Angeles and is represented by Zolla/Lieberman Gallery in Chicago and Rosamund Felsen Gallery in Los Angeles, where in 2005 she will exhibit a new series about cemeteries and memorialization.

Creative Time

As New York City's most adventurous non-profit public arts presenter, Creative Time has taken arts of all disciplines by international artists virtually everywhere in the cityscape over the last 32 years. From the landmark Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage and Times Square to artist-designed skywriting, fireworks and *Tribute in Light*, the lauded temporary light memorial to September 11, 2001 in the skies over Manhattan, Creative Time delights and provokes millions each year. www.creativetime.org.

Lower Manhattan Cultural Council

Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) is an essential part of Downtown's cultural landscape and principal player in its redevelopment-as it has been since 1973. Through cultural planning, artist workspace programs, art services and funding opportunities, and free events in the performing, visual, and new media arts, LMCC takes a holistic approach to enriching New York City's creative capital. Following the loss of their office, studio and programming venues at the World Trade Center, LMCC has re-emerged as a new and improved cultural force. Find out more about LMCC at www.lmcc.net.