

CREATIVE TIME PRESENTS

# DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA: THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN



Mark Tribe. *Port Huron Project 3: We Must Name the System*, 2007

## ABOUT CREATIVE TIME

A NYC-based non-profit presenter of  
“the most innovative art in the public  
realm”

34 years of New York-based projects

New national program: launched with  
Paul Chan’s *Waiting for Godot in New  
Orleans* in 2007, continues with  
*Democracy in America*

Supporting artists who make work in and  
outside New York City

Engaging the broadest possible  
audience; working in untraditional,  
disused, and landmark sites

A history of presenting political art  
projects, and a commitment to art that  
addresses social issues

Recent projects include: *Tribute in Light*,  
Doug Aitken: *sleepwalkers*, and *Who  
Cares*, a series of projects that explored  
art and social action



# DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

A MULTIFACETED PROJECT ON  
THE NATIONAL SCALE

(FROM WEST TO EAST)

OAKLAND, CA

LOS ANGELES, CA

DENVER, CO

AUSTIN, TX

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

NEW ORLEANS, LA

CHICAGO, IL

BALTIMORE, MD

NEW YORK, NY

- Town Hall Meetings: Chicago, Baltimore, LA, New Orleans, New York City
- National Commissions
  - Rodney McMillian + Olga Koumoundouros (Austin)
  - Mark Tribe (LA, Oakland, NYC)
  - Sharon Hayes (Denver, Minneapolis)
  - Steve Powers (Coney Island)
- The Convergence Center: The Park Avenue Armory, NYC
- "A Guide to Democracy in America"

# DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

## TOWN HALL MEETINGS

March–April, 2008

Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and New York City

Selected organizers, artists, and activists across a broad spectrum of cultural communities discussed five questions pertaining to strategic local and national activist concerns



DEMOCRACY IN  
AMERICA

# THE NATIONAL COMMISSIONS

SHARON HAYES, RODNEY MCMILLIAN + OLGA KOUMOUNDOUROS, STEVE POWERS, MARK TRIBE

# DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

NATIONAL COMMISSIONS

Rodney McMillian +  
Olga Koumoundouros  
*News From a Mime's Thud*

June 5, 2008  
Austin, TX

A guerrilla-theater, streetscape intervention that examined capital punishment and the Texas prison system through energetic, ad-hoc street performances in Austin. The artists and a dozen local performers traveled to various sites of power in the city, including a bank, the state capitol, a privatized mall, and a notorious intersection in a low-income neighborhood.



# DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

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**Mark Tribe**

*Port Huron Project*

July 19, 2008

Exposition Park, Los Angeles, CA

“We Are Also Responsible”

Cesár Chávez

August 2, 2008

DeFremery Park, Oakland, CA

“The Liberation of Our People”

Angela Davis

September 7, 2008

Next to the United Nations, NYC

“Let Another World Be Born”

Stokely Carmichael



A series of six reenactments of radical speeches of resistance from the New Left movements of the 1960s and '70s, staged in their original locations and named after the manifesto written by Students for a Democratic Society in 1962. Calling for meaningful social change, these powerful historic speeches were originally delivered by such provocative leaders as Coretta Scott King, Howard Zinn, Paul Potter, César Chávez, Angela Davis, and Stokely Carmichael.

[Previous Port Huron Project event: Paul Potter speech in Washington DC](#)

# DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

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## Sharon Hayes

*Revolutionary Love 1 + 2: I Am  
Your Worst Fear, I Am Your Best  
Fantasy*

*Revolutionary Love 1: I Am Your Worst  
Fear*

August 27, 2008

Denver, CO

During the Democratic National  
Convention

*Revolutionary Love 2: I Am Your Best  
Fantasy*

September 1, 2008

Minneapolis, MN

During the Republican National  
Convention



A two-part performance that took place at the Democratic National Convention and the Republican National Convention in which the artist staged mass, public recitations by members of the local queer communities.



# DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

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## Steve Powers

*The Waterboarding Thrill Ride*

August 15–September 14, 2008  
Coney Island, NYC

An animatronic sideshow installation in Coney Island, New York's gritty amusement center. After paying one dollar, visitors witness a disturbing and controversial act of torture while familiar children's television tunes and heavy metal songs blare—the same soundtrack allegedly used by interrogators at Guantanamo.

[Steve Powers talks about his installation](#)



DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA:  
CONVERGENCE  
CENTER

# THE MOBILE PROJECTS

CENTER FOR TACTICAL MAGIC, ANGEL NEVAREZ + VALERIE TEVERE

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA:  
**CONVERGENCE  
CENTER**

MOBILE PROJECTS

2 PARTICIPATORY PROJECTS AT 3  
NYC LOCATIONS IN SEPTEMBER:

**Prospect Park, Brooklyn:  
September 13**

**Flushing Meadows—Corona Park,  
Queens:  
September 14**

*Democracy in America*  
**Convergence Center: September  
21-27**



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**CENTER**

MOBILE PROJECT

## The Center for Tactical Magic

*Tactical Ice Cream Unit, 2005-2008*

TICU rolls through the city in an act of intervention that replaces cold stares with frosty treats and nourishing knowledge.

With every free cone handed out, the sweet-toothed citizenry also receives printed information developed by local progressive groups.



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CENTER**

MOBILE PROJECT

Angel Nevarez +  
Valerie Tevere

*Another Protest Song: Karaoke  
with a Message, 2008*

[Another Protest Song website](#)



DEMOCRACY IN  
AMERICA

# THE CONVERGENCE CENTER

AT THE PARK AVENUE ARMORY

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA:  
**CONVERGENCE**  
**CENTER**

September 21–27, 2008  
Park Avenue Armory, NYC

EXHIBITION, PARTICIPATORY SPACE, AND  
EVENT SERIES WITH OVER 40 ARTISTS  
INCLUDING:

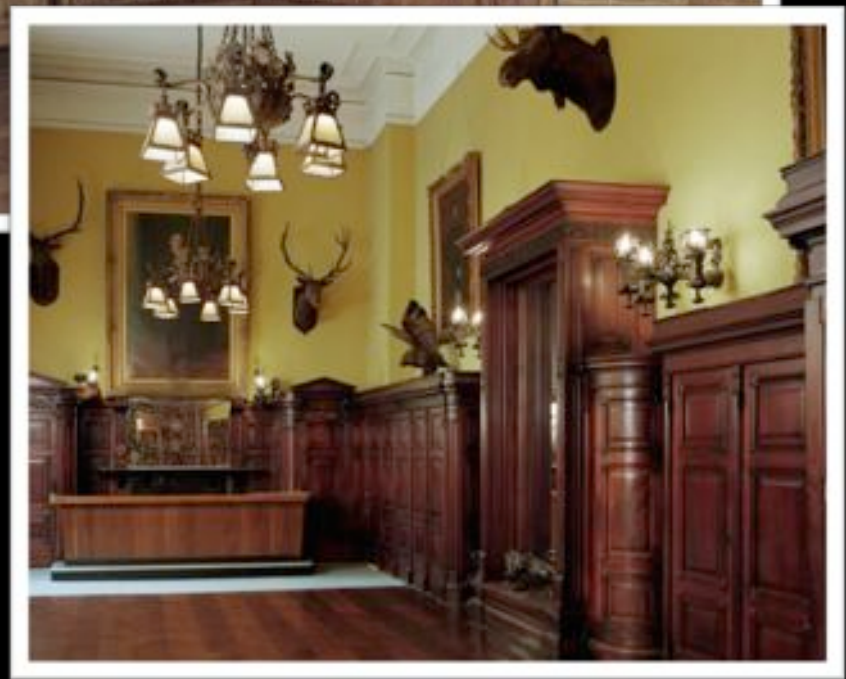
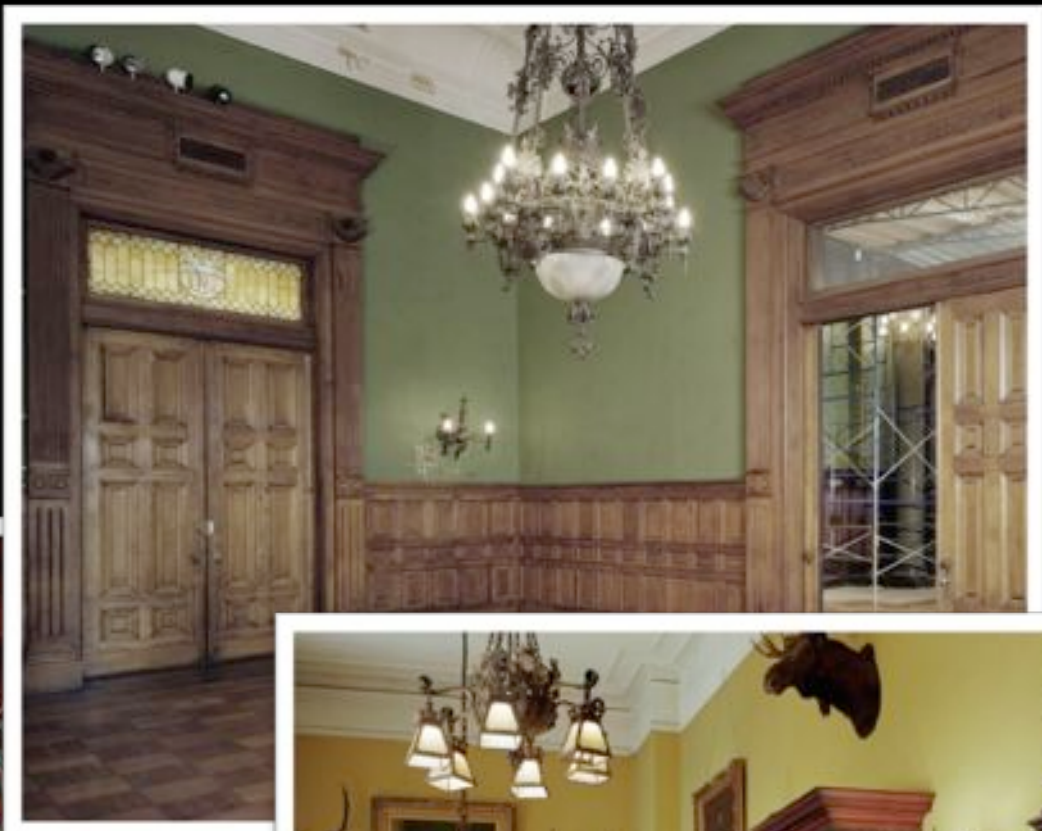
Erick Beltrán, Center for Tactical Magic,  
Critical Art Ensemble and Institute for  
Applied Autonomy, Annabel Daou,  
dBfoundation, Hasan Elahi, Feel Tank, Luca  
Frei, Chitra Ganesh + Mariam Ghani, Group  
Material, John Hawke, Sharon Hayes,  
Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung, InCUBATE,  
Magdalena Jitrik, Matt Keegan, Jon Kessler,  
Olga Koumoundouros + Rodney McMillian,  
Steve Lambert, Ligorano/Reese, Pia  
Lindman, Rachel Mason, Carlos Motta,  
Angel Nevarez + Valerie Tevere, Trevor  
Paglen, Cornelia Parker, Jenny Polak, Steve  
Powers, Greta Pratt, Paul Ramírez Jonas,  
Red76, Duke Riley, Martha Rosler, Dread  
Scott, Allison Smith, Chris Sollars, Chris  
Stain, Mark Tribe, United Victorian Workers,  
Chu Yun



The Park Avenue Armory Drill Hall, 643 Park Avenue at 66<sup>th</sup> Street

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA:  
**CONVERGENCE**  
**CENTER**

September 21–27, 2008  
Park Avenue Armory, NYC





DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA:  
**CONVERGENCE**  
**CENTER**

KEY TALKING POINTS

- Title comes from Alexis de Tocqueville's book *Democracy in America* (1835)
- Exhibition featuring work by over 40 artists
- The Convergence Center is more like a “counter-convention” or a public park than a museum exhibition: it is a place where the people present produce a political community and the projects call for active participation
- Includes documentation from all four national commissions
- Speakers' series
- Special performances
- Activist and community info tables
- “A Guide to Democracy in America”

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MAJOR THEMES AND SELECTED PROJECTS

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THEME 1

“State of Exception”

- A phrase that has been used to describe the last 8 years of the Bush administration
- Refers to the spaces and times where/when basic rights that we have as citizens no longer apply

Examples:

- Guantanamo Bay/Torture – e.g. Steve Powers commission
- The “black world”/hidden operations – e.g. Trevor Paglen
- Wiretapping/Surveillance – e.g. Jenny Polak, Jon Kessler, Hasan Elahi
- Artists being prosecuted for freedom of speech – e.g. Critical Art Ensemble

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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

Trevor Paglen

*Patches from Classified Military  
Projects, 2008*

Military patches from the “black world”—the world of classified programs, projects, and places, whose outlines, even existence, are deeply-held secrets

[Paglen on National Security Agency  
Blacksites](#)



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**CONVERGENCE**  
**CENTER**

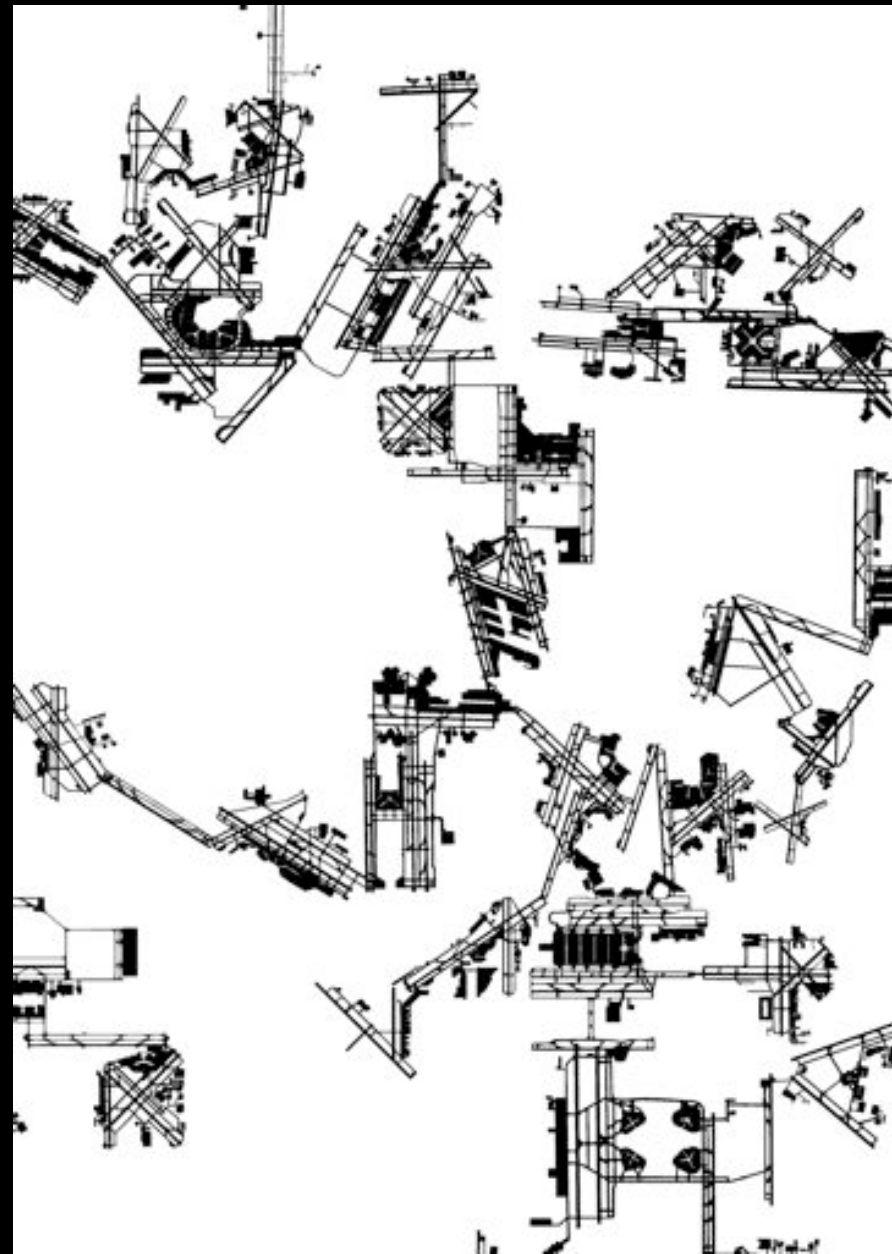
ARTISTS' PROJECTS

Hasan Elahi

*Airstrip One v2.1, 2008*

Hybrid architectural sculpture of a  
“global airport”

[Elahi on the Colbert Report](#)



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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

Critical Art  
Ensemble

*SEIZED*, 2006-2007

Trash and artifacts left behind in  
Steve Kurtz's home by federal  
investigators during the 2004 FBI  
investigation on the charge of "bio-  
terrorism"

[Trailer for "Strange Culture" \(film  
about the Kurtz investigation\)](#)



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THEME 2

“Artists Interrogating History”

Appropriating material from the American tradition and subverting it

e.g. Chris Stain, Ligorano/Reese, Rachel Mason, Allison Smith, Duke Riley, Annabel Daou, Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung, Greta Pratt

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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

**Chris Stain**

A 40-foot backdrop will frame the speakers' area of the Drill Hall in a social realist scene rendered through the technique of hand-cut stencils





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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

**Ligorano/Reese**

*In Memory of Truth, 2008*

A multi-media installation including a printed banner of Bush being informed of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, and a micro-projection (on the head of a pin) of Hollywood war films that are viewed through magnifying glass



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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

Rachel Mason

*Kissing President Bush, 2004*

Rachel Mason's double portrait/  
self-portrait bust portrays herself  
and the commander in chief in an  
intimate kiss

Plaster, **cloth**, and **wood sculpture**



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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

Allison Smith

*Hobby Horse*, 2006

Allison Smith's *Hobby Horse* was constructed in San Antonio, Texas during the fall of 2006 and was inspired by a hand-carved wooden rocking horse the artist found at a county fair in England. Blown-up to a monumental scale, the piece references the form of equestrian statuary typical in war memorials.



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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

**Duke Riley**

*The Acorn Submarine, 2007*

**Working replica of America's first submarine which was used in the Revolutionary War**

Wood, fiberglass, resin, with metal hatch and base

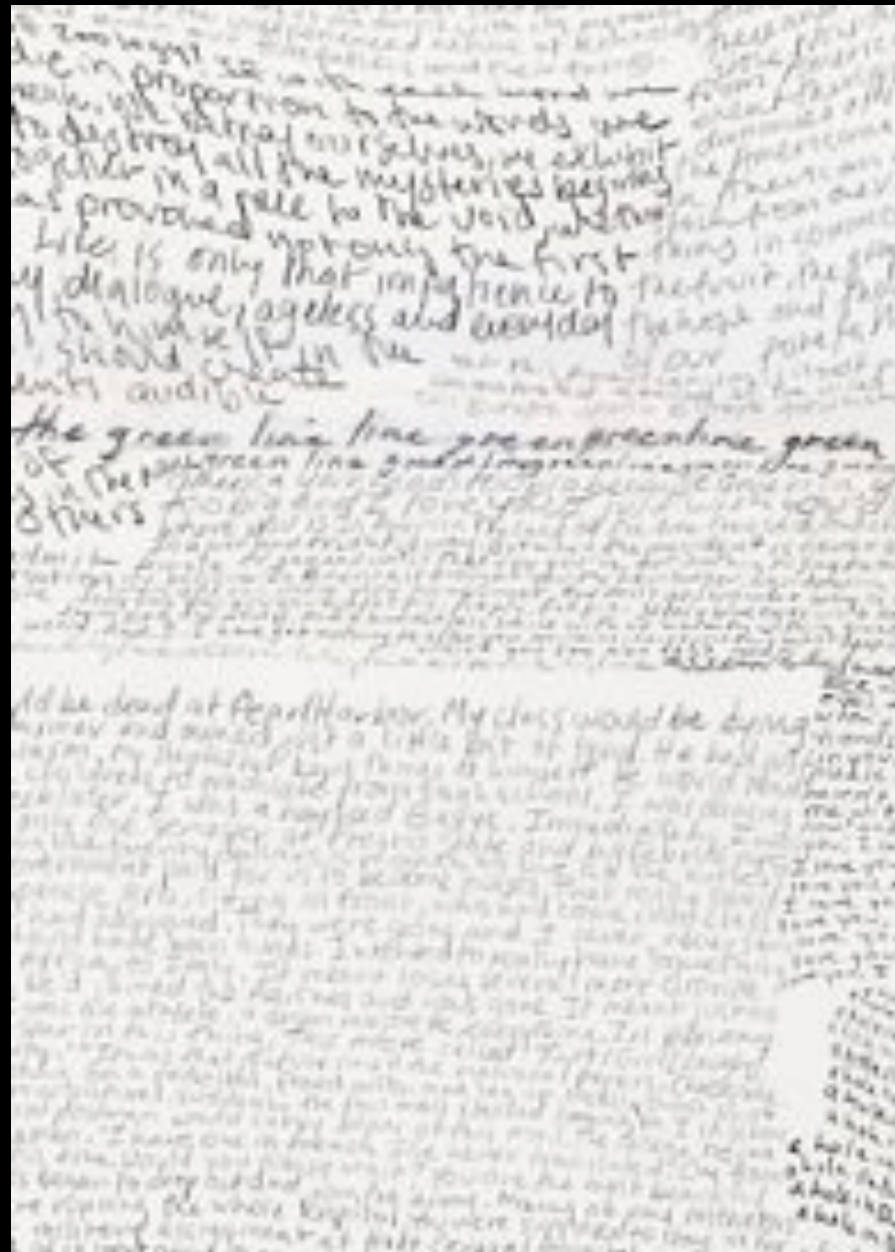


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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

Annabel Daou  
*America, 2008*

Hanging drawing of seminal texts in  
American history



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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

Kenneth Tin-Kin  
Hung

*Residential Erection, 2008*



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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

Greta Pratt

*Flag a Day, 2007-2008*

366 photographs of flags

[Project website](#)



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THEME 3

“Democracy as a Form”

In these participatory projects (many by artist collectives) democracy is the method of production

e.g. InCUBATE, Steve Lambert, Pia Lindman



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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

## InCUBATE

*Sunday Soup Grant, 2007-2008*

InCUBATE will feed hungry visitors as part of their Sunday Soup granting program. Participants will be invited to become grant jurors for projects happening across the country and contribute to the InCUBATE "Archive of Other Options," their ongoing research into participatory structures of funding and resource-sharing for artists and arts organization.



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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

Steve Lambert

*Of the people, by the people,  
for the people, 2008*

A drawing project where participants  
can re-organize the pentagon and  
decide how to allocate its budget

## The Department of \_\_\_\_\_

**Building:**

1 400 feet across. 7 floors – 5 above ground, 2 below. 6.5 mil sqft of floor space.

**Funding:**

2007 \$439,300,000,000

(not including funds for war in Iraq and Afghanistan, DOE nuclear weapons spending, or black budget)

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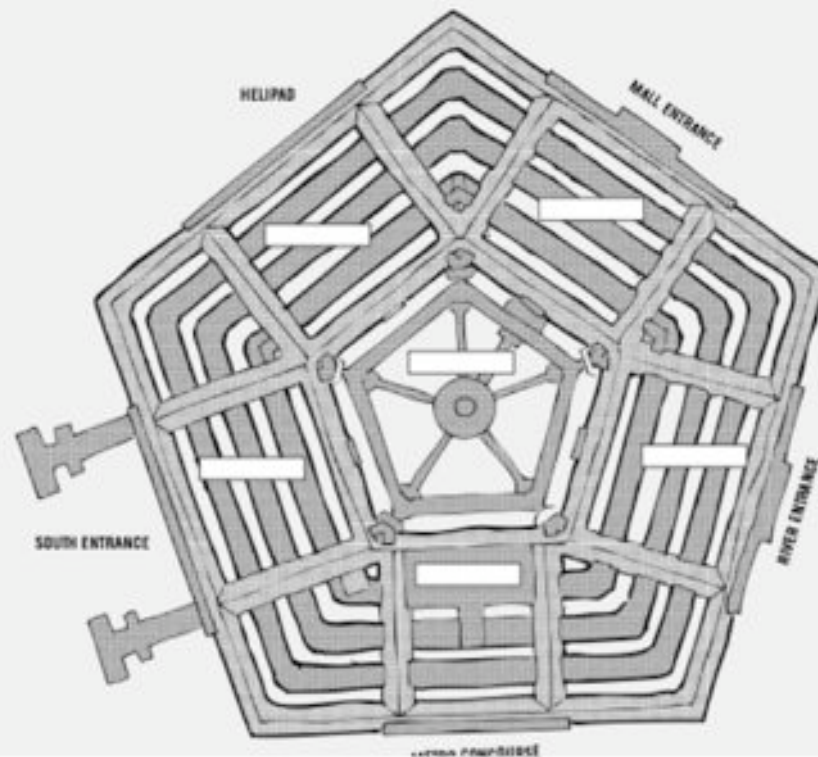
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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

Pia Lindman

*Soapbox Event, 2008*

Participants are given one soapbox  
each, which entitles them to one  
minute of free speech



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THEME 4

“International Perspectives on Democracy”

e.g. Erick Beltrán, Carlos Motta

“Foreign Correspondents”

Curator Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy organized the inclusion of work by four international artists—Erick Beltrán (Mexico City/Amsterdam), Luca Frei (Malmo), Chu Yun (Beijing), and Magdalena Jitrik (Buenos Aires)—that will offer incisive viewpoints on the notion of democracy and some of its core principles: nation building, freedom of speech, and labor rights

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA:  
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**CENTER**

ARTISTS' PROJECTS

Erick Beltrán

*Fear*, 2005/2008

10,000 double-sided paper signs with  
the word "FEAR"

Will be displayed in the second-floor  
hallway



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ARTISTS' PROJECTS

**Carlos Motta**

*The Good Life, 2005-2008*

Between 2005 and 2008, Carlos Motta recorded over 350 video interviews with pedestrians on the streets of 12 cities in Latin America. He presented interviewees with six questions—covering topics such as United States foreign policy, democracy, leadership, and governance—which resulted in a wide spectrum of responses and opinions according to local situations and the specific forms of government in each country.



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SPEECHES AND PERFORMANCES

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA:  
**CONVERGENCE  
CENTER**

SPEAKERS' SERIES

SPEECHES AND SPECIAL  
PERFORMANCES IN THE ARMORY  
DRILL HALL

A diverse group of political thinkers, writers, theorists, and activists will be invited to deliver speeches on various subjects—including local city politics, the war on “terror,” the art world, and cultural production. Speeches will occur throughout each day the Convergence Center is open, punctuating the activity of the Drill Hall’s participatory projects and social space



The Yes Men. Photo from a public action in Calgary, 2007. The artists will deliver a speech during the Convergence Center.



DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA:  
**CONVERGENCE**  
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SPEAKERS' SERIES

SPEECHES AND SPECIAL  
PERFORMANCES IN THE ARMORY  
DRILL HALL

Sunday, September 21

6 pm: Speech by Tanya Fields  
7 pm: Speech by Steve Kurtz  
8 pm: Performance by Rachel Mason  
9 pm: Speech by Reverend Billy

Monday, September 22: We Will Not Accept the War on Terror

6 pm: Speech by Aarti Shahani, Families for Freedom  
7 pm: Speech by Trevor Paglen  
8 pm: The Nation Institute Presents a speech by Elizabeth Holtzman  
9 pm: The Nation Institute Presents a speech by Matthew Diaz

Wednesday, September 24: Ethics in the Art World

7 pm: Speech by Brian Holmes  
8 pm: Speech by Karen Finley  
9 pm: Performance by GuerillaGirlsBroadBand

Thursday, September 25

7-9 pm: Open Rant Night

Friday, September 26: Cultural Production + Neoliberal Capital

12 to 3 pm: Performance by Pia Lindman  
9 pm to 11 pm: Live music series organized by Angel Nevarez + Valerie Tevere  
Featuring bands Nutria and Taigaa!

Saturday, September 27

1-3 pm: Performance by GuerrillaGirlsBroadBand  
3-6 pm: Performance by Pia Lindman  
6 pm: The Nation Institute Presents a speech by Camilo Mejía  
7 pm: Speech by David Harvey  
8 pm: Speech by W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy)  
9 pm: Speech by the Yes Men

DAILY (except Tuesday)

6:30 to 10 pm: Angel Nevarez and Valerie Tevere's *Another Protest Song: Karaoke with a Message* (first-floor hallway)

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA:  
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A GUIDE TO DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

# A GUIDE TO DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

A reader containing artists' projects and written contributions that address the political art and activism of the past eight years will be released on September 21 at the Convergence Center

Includes:

- Essays by Nato Thompson, Yates McKee, Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy, Doug Ashford, and Daniel Tucker
- Interviews with Steve Kurtz, Trevor Paglen, and Rene Gabri + Ayreen Anastas
- Visual and written contributions from every artist in the show
- Transcripts of the Town Hall Meetings



Ligorano/Reese. *The State of Things*, 2003/2008.

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COMING SEPTEMBER 21