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ABSTRACT and FULL PAPER SUBMISSION  
Daniel Peltz – Rhode Island School of Design, USA

## ABSTRACT

Artist Presentation [45 minutes]

*Case studies exploring the official role of the artist in governmental and financial systems*

This paper and presentation reflects on three recent social intervention projects exploring alternate roles that art can play in contemporary society. The first two projects took the form of city-wide campaigns in the U.S. cities of Denver, CO and Cambridge, MA. The project in Denver, *Participatory Democracy and the Future of Karaoke*, was built on the existing technological infrastructure of karaoke bars and designed to engender a city-wide political re-speech campaign. The project in Cambridge, *Crossing Non-signalized Locations*, conducted in collaboration with the Mayor's Office and the Department of Traffic, Parking and Transportation, involved officially implementing a series of artist designed, city-sponsored parking regulations. The third project, *Unrealized Gain/Loss*, developed during a recent residency in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, explores the intersection between the narratives of market-driven retirement planning and the symbolic systems of Indonesian batik design.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

*Participatory Democracy and the Future of Karaoke*

*Video sample: Hickenlooper in Denver, CO as Obama in South Carolina*



Commissioned on the occasion of the 2008 Democratic National Convention [DNC] as part of the curatorial project Dialog:City, this large-scale public project examined the situation of Denver residents at the time of the DNC. The people of Denver played host to an international media event but had the same access to it that anyone in the world would, through TV feeds coming from the restricted-access

convention center. Through the development of a series of custom-designed karaoke speech tracks and the establishment of a network of *Karaoke Convention Centers* [repurposed karaoke bars where residents could re-speak the words of their would be leaders], the project aimed to create a form through which the residents of Denver could interrupt the transnational flow of media by passing it through their own bodies.

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*Crossing Non-signalized Locations*  
Video sample : *Citation Salutation*



Commissioned by the Cambridge Arts Council as part of the exhibition *Of, By and For*, this project explored the latent poetics of the Cambridge Parking and Transportation Code. It took the form of a series of alternate parking regulations that appropriate the language and forms of parking control, signage and enforcement in an attempt to reflect on the structure and contents of encounters between the public and those charged with enforcing state authority.

Working over a period of one-year with the Cambridge Department of Traffic, Parking and Transportation, as their first artist-in-residence, I developed a series of non-regulatory parking regulations. They were officially implemented by the city from September-November 2010. The regulations involved each of the divisions of the office and included: *10,000 excuses* [pictured above] - a wall drawing, made by the Parking Control Officers, composed of 10,000 excuses extracted from the city's digital archive of parking ticket contestations, *Control Devices* - poetic extensions of the language of parking signage installed by the Parking Division staff, *Citation Salutation* - a new envelope for the city's parking citations featuring yogic asanas for the giving and receiving of parking tickets and *Soft Booting is in Effect* - a new "soft parking boot" and "soft booting" regulation enforced by the staff of the city's Boot Division.

*Unrealized Gain/Loss*



In a spiritual society, one spends this life preparing for the afterlife; in a secular society, one spends this life preparing for the after-work life. But how do we insure our well being in the after-work life? What to do with all this unrealized gain and loss?

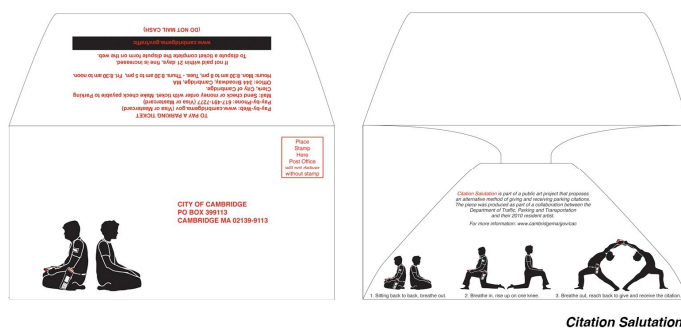
The pair of sarongs in the image above was produced through an intensive collaboration with my retirement portfolio during a residency in Indonesia.

Composed of a symbolic system derived from charts documenting the performance of my assets and allocations, each motif that makes up these ceremonial cloths is a modification of an existing one in Indonesian batik design. The sarong pair, a set of vessels and accompanying rituals for their use are utilized as part of a series of human resources workshops on retirement portfolio planning. The first workshop in the series, *"The Market Goes Up the Market Goes Down: exploring the sensations of gain and loss"* will be held at the Rhode Island School of Design in 2012.

## METHODOLOGICAL CASE STUDY

Whether something is "art" or not is rarely a concern in my making. More often, I ask myself, what does the notion of "art" make possible? I tend to think of it as a strategy rather than a category. I frame works as "art" and myself as an "artist" when these categories are structurally useful in prying loose the boundaries of acceptable behavior within seemingly rigid social systems. I am much more interested in the productive capacity of peoples' imaginings about what "art" is than in policing its borders. For example, in a recent project in 2010, I implemented and inhabited an artist residency in the City of Cambridge, MA within the Department of Traffic, Parking and Transportation. I was first invited to make a piece of public art for the city in 2009, when I met with the curator at the offices of the Cambridge Arts Council, I discovered that they shared a building with the parking administration. In fact, the path to their public gallery was through the lobby where you come to contest or pay your parking citations. This locational convergence coincided with an interest in parking regulations that had separately emerged in my own practice. During a IASPIS residency in 2008 in Sweden, I'd begun a series of walks with parking officials, engaging them in conversation about their lives. My first entry into the world of parking administration was relatively informal, motivated by an interest in those who occupied this very public role that was subject to a great deal of disdain and occasional aggression.

In developing the project with the Cambridge parking officials, I deployed the construct of an "artist-in-residence," working with them to create a somewhat amorphous space for me to exist formally within their administration. This structural choice was inspired, in part, by the work of Merle Ukeles and of the Artist Placement Group. I was interested in how an artist-in-residence role could function within the hierarchy of the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Division. Was the role of the artist a high position or a low one? What kind of authority did "the city's artist-in-residence" have? Could they make new parking regulations? If they did, what happened when the city "spoke" [through these regulations] in the voice of their artist-in-residence? What would it feel like for the artist-in-residence to be subject to the disdain and aggression usually reserved for parking officials?



In the case of this project, I worked with the senior officials in the department and all the members of their staff to negotiate and officially implement four new "parking regulations." I drew the name of the project from section 11.5 of the city's parking code, *Crossing Non-signalized Locations*. I was interested in the process of

making real whatever we imagined, that is to say it was critical me that these new regulations go beyond the realm of conceptual proposition and be implemented and authorized through the body of city governance. This created critical meetings, such as when the head of the parking division met with the mayor of the city to discuss the new parking ticket envelope that had been designed by me their artist-in-residence. I wasn't present at this meeting, as I was a subordinate to the head of the division, but I was situated as an employee of the city and the idea I presented went to the mayor as a proposal *from* the parking and transportation department. The mayor and the director of the parking and transportation department had an interesting meeting. I was drawn to the director's report of what sounded like a complex conversation between them about the nature and function of art and the specific meaning of the proposed gesture. This is one place where the model of art I'm pursuing comes alive for me but I'm equally interested in the invisible, quieter encounter between a citizen and an ambiguous, disruptive gesture in the supposedly rational, regulatory language of the city.

I remain curious about the insider/outside position that the artist embedded in society occupies. Even as I forge a function for myself as an artist inside dominant social structures, I remain always, at least partially, held apart from those structures by nature of the cultural imagination, which often defaults to a view of the artist and art as separate/apart from society. To me this is not necessarily a problem, it is an opening, a space held by two tensions: the desire to accept, to understand, to incorporate, co-existing with a desire for otherness, for separation and difference. It seems worth at least noting the ways in which all this is distinctly reminiscent of the position of the cultural anthropologist in "the field." What happens when we view social structures as the "field" of the contemporary artist?

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

Daniel Peltz  
Associate Professor  
Department of Film/Animation/Video  
Rhode Island School of Design  
2 College Street  
Providence, RI 02903  
o - 401.489.2029  
dpeltz@risd.edu  
[www.danielpeltz.net](http://www.danielpeltz.net)