

Dialogues With Mother Earth: A Journey Through Time and Space.

An interactive installation that provokes reflection on the relationship between our 21st century societal values and the ways in which they have contributed to the degradation of our environment

OVERVIEW

This project has been created in response to accelerating and irrefutable evidence of climate change. It is aimed specifically towards young people, as they are the ones about to inherit a global disaster. Using an immersive form of installation and theater, the project directs the audience's response to climate issues through a comparison of ancient and modern information technologies. Central to the production is a series of ten mural-sized narrative drawings in charcoal that record fictitious historical events related to climate change and appear to have been drawn directly on the walls.

THE ACTION

Year 2051: the action places the audience in the sensory overload of a futuristic multi-image media room where they learn that a series of strange drawings has been recently discovered in a derelict building. TV crews are not allowed in to film the discovery but this "selected" audience is going to have access. Leaving the intensity of the media room, they crawl slowly through a long, low tunnel wearing protective coveralls and headlamps, gradually reconnecting with a slower and more contemplative mindset. Entering a series of rooms covered in murals, a Werner Herzog style narrator poses speculative questions about the images, evoking deep reflection. Who did these? Why? How did they get here? Listening to him, as they scan the walls, the group learns how previous decades of disregard for the ecosystem outstripped the planet's resources to the point of no return; and that society's focus on profit and growth, rather than interconnectedness, led to famine, conflict, and death.

HOW IT WORKS TO RAISE AWARENESS

Through a combination of theatre and visual art *rather than scientific information* viewers are challenged to examine the deeper causes of climate change. The project engages viewers both intellectually and experientially, by first jettisoning them into a fast-paced technologically dominant environment (THE FUTURE), then forcing a slow crawl back into a quiet, cave-like space (THE PAST). The FUTURE -- a sensory overload Media Room -- reduces the ability to think or respond intelligently due to a profusion of images and overlapping, loud voices, a case of Too Much Information. The PAST provides physical engagement with the environment through restricted movement and limited light source while simultaneously offering primitive static images that play on intuition and history.

Finally a resting place in a pleasant low light quiet room, the silence only broken by occasional animal and bird cries (THE PRESENT) provides viewers with an

opportunity to offer their own thoughts provoked by the experience in the form of letters to "Mother Earth".

WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT?

The project will raise awareness and offer opportunity for reflection to a concerned public. A non-art venue such as a derelict building in a city center would help create an ambience of mystery and surprise. I anticipate the installation functioning as a fulcrum around which scientific and related events can be programmed. The elements of entertainment in the project - the suiting up, the tunnel to the cave -- will provide a circus- like atmosphere, appealing to a broad audience, and especially young people. As it travels on to other cities, the ancillary events will expand and change according to local interests.

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

The murals explore, in a non-alarmist, story-book manner, those aspects of contemporary living that have impacted the environment including consumerism, depletion of natural resources, the ravages of the meat industry, disposable plastics, etc. Because the project is experiential (as opposed to an Al Gore-style lecture) it aims to reach beyond the converted to a broader audience including one that has been resistant to the subject. It also offers a teaching tool for schools and colleges. The intention is to encourage people who have not thought much about these issues to recognize, to take action and to prepare for the global crisis that is looming.

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