

“Sands of Time” Hourglass Series from “Leap of Faith”

Statement for “Groundworks: Environmental Collaboration in Contemporary Art”@ Carnegie Mellon University Gallery, New Media Section, travels

“Leap of Faith” is a body of work that illuminates the different perspectives of several participants involved in a wetland preservation project. The Great Pond Wetlands ecosystem has spawned yet another ecosystem - the forces of preservation – fighting for its own survival. The wildlife, plants, and predators have generated a parallel web of interdependence that encompasses politics, conservation hierarchies, and real estate interests. We are partners with the environment in much the same way as we collaborate with the participants in the process.

“Sands of Time“ is a series of 5ft tall hourglasses with digitally manipulated video and sound projected on the interior sand. Each hourglass reflects the unique perspective of multiple participants, the images are fleeting and often abstracted, but become a visual diary of the co-operative effort. Time is running out on these fragile, highly priced properties and without forging unusual partnerships, they may soon not be sustainable. The other manifestation of these ideas, “GO ECO” functions as an interactive spatial installation in the form of a large board game. The concept is loosely based on the ancient Japanese game of GO, where strategies are used to capture territory through balancing tactics like "Connection and Separation". Both forms of “Leap of Faith” present the video viewpoints of biologists, landowners, birds, government officials, and neighbors. This multiple stakeholder process, one of Joseph Beuys’ main theories of Social Sculpture, encourages committed community involvement.

“Leap of Faith” is based on an ongoing community project that is preserving a 12-acre wetland in Southold, NY on the Eastern end of the rural North Fork between Long Island Sound and Great Pond. This globally rare "Maritime Freshwater Interdunal Swale" includes native cranberries, varied wildlife, and the endangered *IRIS PRISMATICA* that are all being threatened by development. (Newspaper articles, botanical reports, and maps for support info on the preservation process are available on request). Progress has been made in developing community awareness and we have already preserved the first lot with the Peconic Land Trust. The Southold Town Trustees have just revoked a permit granted 3 years ago which would have allowed building in the center of the targeted preservation area. Both Suffolk County and town government have now agreed to contribute substantially

to future preservation acquisitions in this area if and when the landowners are willing to sell. My Civic Association Wetland Committee in conjunction with the non-profit PLT has also been given a restoration (invasive species removal) and education (community outreach) grant for this unique area.

The surprisingly successful result of these efforts reaffirms faith in the democratic process. This experience has shown how crucial it is to speak out, especially when taking into account diverse viewpoints about preservation.

Lillian Ball 7/2005

Lillian Ball is an activist artist working in NYC and on Long Island's North Fork.

Requirements:

“Sands of Time” requires a slightly darkened space or corner of the room, and could be effective with at least one of the Hourglasses, though more than one would be preferred. Each of the series video viewpoints is approximately 3 min. long and loops. The extremely small electronics, an In Focus LP120 projector and mini DVD player, could be loaned for the initial installation in Pittsburgh. If the exhibition travels, I would suggest presenting one or two video viewpoints projected on white sand on the floor. The projector, DVD player, and speakers could then be supplied by each of the other venues if crating and shipping an Hourglass is unfeasible.