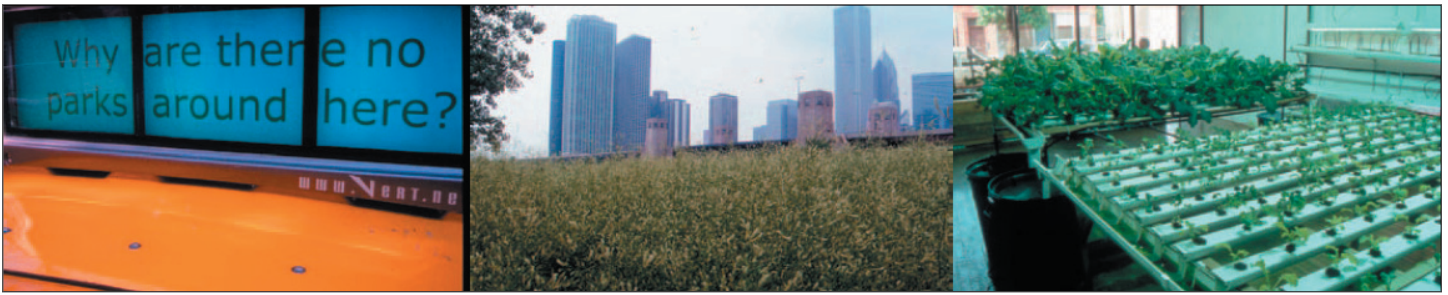


A. LAURIE PALMER (Chicago, Illinois)



Laurie Palmer's interdisciplinary practice includes sculptural and public art projects, writing, and collaboration with the artists' collective Haha, with whom she has worked for twelve years. She has exhibited both individual and collaborative work in the US and in Europe, recently completing a text-based public art commission in Linz, Austria, investigating the linked histories of countries along the Danube through fictional excerpts. She is currently an Assistant Professor in Sculpture, at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Past projects like "3 Acres on the Lake: DuSable Park Proposal Project" (2000-03) and "Flood" (with Haha, 1993-95) were built as open-ended structures – a certain conceptual autonomy accompanied by indeterminacy as to how, and to some extent if, each project would develop. With Flood, a hydroponic community garden in a storefront space in Chicago growing vegetables for people with AIDS, the question was how (and whether) participants might use the garden space beyond its initial intentions, how they/we might extend its initial timeframe by finding new energy (and resources) to keep it going, and/or invent new structures from it. All of this happened, partially – though the garden as initially conceived no longer exists.

With "3 Acres..." (a public art project calling for proposals for an undeveloped plot of public land) the question was how (and whether) the exhibition and publication might influence the trajectory of the land's actual development, without having to be sucked dry by the deadening city politics involved in promoting any one specific proposal. The 65 speculative proposals remained autonomous, free and clear of constraints based on safety or maintenance, while the project overall has accompanied, and amplified, efforts by activists to draw attention to the city's abnegation of its promise to develop the land and to commemorate a black historical figure. The project has intercepted and changed the situation that provided its initial platform, while retaining a degree of the volatile virtual—or whatever you want to call it – a mote unhampered by the logic of "sense."

A primary goal (along with insisting on the value of doing things that don't make sense in an era of rationalized efficiency) is to create situations with multiple points of access – theoretical, social, material, spatial - that aim towards negotiation of very different conversations simultaneously. It takes time for indirect and qualitative projects to gather enough critical participation to contribute to their course; it takes time for potential to realize itself through indirection. Unsensational fragments accumulate insistence over time, allowing not just for "execution" but for evolution, participation, growing wisdom, changing understandings, shifting participants – development, but not along a pre-determined narrative – and surprise.

What if our first response to a radical proposal was not "that's impossible," but rather, "what does impossibility offer?" The possible involves what we can already see; the impossible is a link to what we don't know (yet).