ARTIST'S ARTICLE

The Community Is Watching, and Replying: Art in Public Places and Spaces

Anne Bray

ABSTRACT

The author describes her public-art projects and installations, in which she has employed various combinations of video, photography, audio, sculpture and performance, often in collaboration with artist Molly Cleator. The pieces spectacularize unresolved conflicts between the artists regarding what is personally truthful as compared to what society dictates, especially concerning the "three deviants": women, art and nature. The artists question who defines these related realities and how. The author has also offered hundreds of artists a forum called L.A. Freewaves, a media arts organization and festival working in traditional and nontraditional venues throughout Los Angeles, in an effort to disseminate community-empowering public art widely.

I will state up front that I am from the East Coast of the U.S.A., live on the *left* coast (in Los Angeles), hate TV, do not watch TV, listen to public radio, wish I ran a TV station or at least a program and read massive amounts of media-deconstruction theory. Public art-making, video-festival organizing and art teaching comprise my creative triumvirate. In my artwork I place intimate images into public arenas or I manipulate public, often commercial, language into personal messages. Through the video festival I set up forums in which others may express in their own language. And through teaching public and media arts, I let young people know these opportunities exist and give them the tools to make their own images. Public art, independent video festivals and education are all about speaking one's mind in the face of very large commercial structures and providing the space for others to do likewise, or at least begin strategizing to do the same. With 3,000 ads in our face per day, with only 9% of the TV directors being women and with more extra-terrestrials on TV than Asians, Latinos and Native Americans combined, there is much missing in our public pictures and many false mirrors presented to us.

Thirty percent of the content of mass media is advertisements, i.e. corporate art, pixellated, transmitted and sprayed over the world. Ads are on our orange peels, protruding from the seams of our underwear and on our doorknobs and windshields. They link the articles I read and the songs I hear and programs I do not watch. I try to prevent ads from entering my eyes, ears and pores, alienating me from my fears, desires and culture. I cut labels out. I lobby to prevent the telephone company from selling my phone number to businesses. I refuse to give salespeople my address when I make purchases and I throw my junk mail in the recycling bin so it never enters my house.

By contrast, I fantasize about an artist-run TV channel to counteract the numbing but nerve-wracking reruns of stereotypes and to fill in some of the constant omissions. Poverty and culture, for example, the homeless and the high brow, would quickly lose their sinful and alien tones. The torrential power of mass imagery and messages would be opposed, redirected, diverted, siphoned off . . . or reinvented, diversified, personalized, i.e. reprogrammed with a multicultural skew instead of a corporate bottom line. Personally, I think TV could have ended racism in the U.S.A.

Using the same instruments as the industry (cameras, decks, monitors, projectors, sound systems, etc.), an artist or activist can tap the same power in the same pop language or expand perceptions of what mass media does and can do. Art using this technology can, more specifically, assist viewers to distinguish their realities from illusion, a required skill soon to be rare, atrophied by pervasive edutainment.

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PERSONAL HISTORY

In 1970, while in college in Geneva, Switzerland, I found the 35mm still camera to be my vehicle of transition from a state of helplessness to that of creating my own visual utterances. I learned that I could respond. Eventually, however, these static images did not suffice to reflect my worldview, which came to include motion, change, language, sound and multiple viewpoints. Single frames no longer can convey sufficient complexity. Neither does video fulfill all these artistic requirements, but with the addition of slides, projectors, sound systems, 3D screens and performers, I feel I am approaching the number of elements I need to define the realities I want others to experience. Projected images and sound fill a space, enveloping

Fig. 1. Anne Bray, *It's Dizzying*, hand-painted billboard, 14 × 48 ft, 1990–1991. (© Anne Bray) This work appeared at four sites in Los Angeles and was meant to console feminist-phobic viewers. It was hand-painted by commercial billboard artists from a photographic collage, graphics materials and computer text and was sponsored by the artist space LACE and Patrick Media.

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Fig. 2. Anne Bray and Antonio Muntadas, *Media Eyes*, a billboard installation, 10 × 20 ft, 1981. (© Anne Bray) This work appeared on a commercial street in Cambridge, MA, sponsored by MIT for the SkyArt Festival. At night, changing pairs of slide projections of excerpted ads juxtaposing objects with people filled the eyeglass frames, which were blank during the day.

the audience in the artist's world, as Muzak Inc. has shown.

I grew up in a large family and was trained to do social service in a Catholic setting. Between 1978 and 1982, I lived in a commune, believed in collective processes, socialized with progressives and taught large classes. Also during that period I regularly collaborated with other artists, city officials and community members to present public art events in Boston. My media aversion had crystallized by that time from contrasting the detestable sound of TV, which had permeated my childhood home, with the stimulation of 8 years living away from television in college and Europe. My political disagreements with the box, particularly mainstream news, were sharpened by work with my mentors, Aldo Tambellini and Antonio Muntadas, at Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for Advanced Visual Studies.

In 1982, I arrived in socially disconnected Los Angeles, where one's best friend is generally 15 to 60 minutes away, depending on the time of day and therefore the traffic, and where intimacy is experienced most frequently on the telephone or more recently on-line. In response, I divided my practice in two: producing individual public art projects and administering such projects as portions of the L.A. Street Scene Festival, the L.A. Festival, Suzanne Lacy's *Dark Madonna* [1] and others, particularly, since 1989, L.A. Freewaves. That same year I began collaborating again, this time consistently with one artist, Molly Cleator. Four years of working at the artist space Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) (1985–1989) taught me much about the media arts community and art administration. My public-art approach directly influenced my programming. The concerns of my own art projects, meanwhile, came to mandate the use of collective action.

Public Space

In urban streets, there is an unacknowledged battle raging between architects and media makers, with city planners as the arbitrators. Ads are sometimes bigger than buildings, and skyscrapers are topped with trademarks. As both architecture and media often dwarf the public, I try to create a more egalitarian relationship with viewers through my multimedia installations, indoor and outdoor, and through the L.A. Freewaves festival. After moving to Los Angeles, where there are fewer pedestrians than ads, I redefined public art to include media arts in order to continue to engage a large populace. I thought I could aggressively pump art into viewers' homes via television.

Vital art lives in a vernacular zone, where the individual and collective rendezvous. I find my ideas in the same places in which I exhibit them, most recently, for instance, a mall and a movie theater. My environmental works acknowledge the community as their source and return to that origin so others may perceive them. Awareness follows the perceptual changes that result and can then lead to cultural and political participation. Both art and politics rely on changes in perceptions based in our imaginations.

No matter what format, the art that I most appreciate (1) shows that we live in a media culture that can express the personal realm if programmed to do so; (2) contradicts our commercial worldviews by being exhibited without demanding a price tag; (3) reflects technology's potential use for individual and collective benefit; (4) offers audiences a challenge in a milieu that usually associates change and difference with fear; (5) relies on trust in people's potential and treats them as creative equals in a society stratified in every other way; (6) emphasizes art as an experience rather than a commodity or luxury; (7) offers a surprise; and (8) inclines audiences to reward the artists with ample feedback. As contradistinctive to prevailing practices as these ideals are, they can still be realized in mundane events and settings.

Public Projects

In general, my own public-art projects are site specific in content and form. They all contain images and texts, written or audible, in an accessible style reflective of the format. Examples include billboards, a street banner, an outdoor audio installation, a video installation in a restaurant, animation on an electronic sign, and a "white out" (erasure) of all commercial signs on six adjacent blocks. I describe the works individually below. Each one comments on the media and its wider circumstances. In some projects, I manipulate commercial images and sounds into personal messages. In other works, I insert carefully selected private discussions and images into public arenas. Personalized communication is my goal [2].

My billboard projects used varying degrees of technology. The first, *It's Dizzying* (Fig. 1), used only photography and computer graphics for the layout. I produced *Media Eyes,* a billboard installation with Antonio Muntadas on a busy commercial street in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1981, sponsored by MIT for the SkyArt Festival (Fig. 2). The 10-×-20-ft billboard featured a pair of eyeglasses that queried passersby with the text, "WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT?" At night, paired slide projections of close-

ups of ads (evolving gradually from images of people to objects) filled the eyeglass frames. A simple row of black lights nightly transformed the eyeglass image into an eye-catching question mark.

Single-handedly, a 40-second animation (1989) (Fig. 3), appeared every 6 minutes on a 20-×-40-ft electronic billboard over ultra commercial Times Square in New York. The work was sponsored by the Public Art Fund. In it, 30 hand-drawn frames were entered into a graphics computer and then programmed to be animated. Its text read, "I DON'T BUY IT, BUT I PAY FOR IT." The images were scenes of a hand removing ads on a billboard, electronic readout, newspaper, audio cassette player and TV. Next, the hand faced presented its palm to the viewer for the first time and waved good-bye while removing the words "BUY" and "THE PRICE IS ALIENATION." That lightboard has since been replaced by a giant video screen, and five other kinetic signs now share the same building facade.

Fig. 3. Anne Bray, *Single-Handedly*, 40-sec animation on a 20-×-40-ft electronic billboard, 1989. (© Anne Bray) The piece appeared every 6 minutes over Times Square in New York. It was sponsored by the Public Art Fund. Thirty hand-drawn frames were entered into a graphics computer and then programmed to dissolve, cut and generally animate. The drawn hand dismissed a commercial billboard, radio, TV, newspaper and LED readout and commented that the price of ads was alienation.

Since I favor ideas over format, some projects only used technology indirectly. In *White Out,* the commercial signage (Fig. 4) for 42 adjacent stores, approximately 500 signs, on both sides of two busy intersecting streets were temporarily covered in white or "erased." After months of negotiations, the store owners gave their consent for me to blank out all signs and ads for half a day at Lincoln and Broadway in Santa Monica, adjacent to Los Angeles, in 1985. Ironically, eight TV stations, newspapers and magazines covered the event, which incidentally brought technology into an otherwise very low-tech project and fortuitously disseminated its ideas far and wide. During this same time period, I performed a test and discovered that one person (I, for example) could remove 5,000 ads posted on public property if she spent only 4 hours a day at the task, i.e. maintained her other commitments as well. Doing this felt like housecleaning a city.

I chose to show *Arm Me,* an indoor billboard composed of fiberboard, fluorescent paint and black-and-white photos, in the Faculty Exhibition at the University of California Santa Barbara in 1989, because no art organization or billboard company would display it outdoors (Fig. 5). It had, however, been previously shown as a temporary outdoor slide projection as part of *Projections in Public* by Foundation for Art Resources, L.A. Institute of Contemporary Art and Installation Gallery in San Diego. A 10-×-20-ft image featured a Japanese-American woman's face and cropped shoulders in the center with the words "Arm" and "Me" on either side, big and bold, against a fluorescent red background. The words were intentionally juxtaposed to the image to stir a particular swarm of related issues: festering feelings about past Pacific wars, gun control, media manipulation of women and socially tolerated degrees of feminism. While showing her lack of power, it basically asked why the viewer would not give this woman a gun. Viewers potentially confronted their own xenophobia, misogyny, militarism and commercialism.

Collaborative Installations

Since 1989, I have collaborated with Molly Cleator, a West Coast native, who watches TV, performs in Hollywood films and TV shows, reads magazines and

Fig. 4. Anne Bray, *White Out,* 1985. (© Anne Bray) Approximately 500 signs on 42 adjacent stores on both sides of Lincoln and Broadway, two busy intersecting streets in Santa Monica, were temporarily covered in white or "erased." After months of negotiations, storeowners consented to allow this for half a day. The work was sponsored by the UCLA Art Council with Wight Art Gallery in 1985 and covered by six TV stations and newspapers.

Fig. 5. Anne Bray, *Arm Me*, indoor billboard, 8 × 16 ft, 1989. (© Anne Bray) Shown at University of California Santa Barbara and previously shown as an outdoor slide projection by F.A.R., L.A.I.C.A. and Installation Gallery. The piece basically asked viewers why they would not give the depicted young Asian American woman a gun.

needs to be plugged into pop culture; in other words, my opposite. Our projects combine my interest in politically selected personal material appearing in public spheres and my history of creating media installations with her interest in autobiographical material and her experience as a performance artist and actress in film, theater and television. Through our work, we confront our cultural alienation and enter different sectors of the mainstream to explore, clarify, evaluate and come to some understanding of the dialectic of selfhood and social participation, which refers back to the audience. We examine other polarities as well: male/female, class divisions, pop versus fine art. Their synthesis or nonresolution is assumed to be a process individual to each observer.

Our first joint effort, entitled *Easy Chair, Electric Chair* (1992) (Fig. 6), was staged inside a 5,000 square foot gallery [3]. Our facial images were shown on two portable TV sets mounted on two computer-controlled, motorized wheelchairs [4]. The subject of our unscripted but outlined one-hour recorded conversation was communication and the mediation of information and imagination through mass media. Sculpture and cinema verité–like dialogue combined in a motorized dance to reveal the psychic displacement we experience as we try to negotiate our way through the world, accepting or rejecting the dominant culture and its imposed values.

Cleator presented her conception of mass media as a powerful and potentially communicative forum. I insisted that mass media blocked communication and inhibited self-knowledge.

Video, performance art, and installation merge both formally and conceptually in *Easy Chair, Electric Chair.* The initial intimacy of our conversation and our references to autobiographical material were impinged upon by the trajectory of the mechanized chairs, whose seemingly random and aimless meandering interrupted and shattered communication. The contrast between the live, performance-based imagery and our conversation was mediated by the TV frames in which our images appeared. The monitors undercut both of our arguments regarding television, reminding viewers to decide for themselves.

The installation encouraged participation. The wheelchairs were ringed by 165 assorted chairs lent by the local community as they collided, conversed, zigzagged and swiveled in an open-ended, videotaped dialogue. Viewers first chose their subjective positions among dinette, patio, reclining, beanbag, office-swivel, director's, barber, student, auditorium and many other single or collective chairs, which we saw as absent human forms ready for viewers to fill. We offered the viewer this choice of chairs as comfortable but challenging new positions from which to form their judgments, observations and projections onto our visual and verbal dialogues.

In 1993, in conjunction with Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, we produced *The Gap,* an unguarded installation (Fig. 7) in an unleased retail space in Santa Barbara's downtown shopping mall. From an inside vantage point, the mall's doors framed the passing consumers in their social/cultural/recreational milieu, while audio loops provided a soundtrack to the scene. The shoppers' recorded dialogue was contrasted with personal statements about our own self-worth, fears and desires as opposed to hasty, judgmental projections upon random passersby. Shoppers became the subject, object and audience for this piece: we discussed them, placed them at center stage and provided seats for them. Everyone who passed participated in the piece, whether they merely walked by or sat, listened, climbed the walls (as some children did) or spoke back.

In our 1994 work *What Can I Say* (Fig. 8), part of an exhibition about public art and collaboration [5], we instigated a cultural-personal exchange with female art patrons who were among the sponsors of the exhibition. In individual meetings in the homes of nine affluent white volunteers, we addressed each other's power, alienation, conformity, stereotypes and other psychological conceptions. Our intentions were to discuss art's role in each of our lives, to discover our similarities and differences as cultural volunteers, to develop more communication across the gulf between artists and supporters and to explore class differences in the arts.

The "public" participation in this exhibition was narrowed to the exhibition's nine local patrons and the two artists as a microcosmic educational process that all viewers could experience at the final exhibition. The result was an installation of life-size photographs, chairs, personal possessions and two soundtracks comparing woman as object with art as object. One track, a poetic list of objects noted during visits to each other's residences, encountered during the project, was recorded by all participants and emanated from speakers placed among the objects; the other track was a list of negative, positive and neutral terms referring to women and emanated from speakers aimed at our portraits. A viewer could sit in each chair depicted in the photographs and reflecting each of our social positions and thus experience each of us personally and collectively.

Our 1996 piece *God Doesn't Have a Mouth* (Fig. 9) also used familiar chairs, audio, video and photographs. This time, we created a world in which every prop and costume was either black or white: a black judge's robe, a white lifeguard

chair, a black witch's hat, a white bridal veil, a black-and-white polka-dot dress, a houndstooth circle skirt, etc. While again inviting viewers' psychological projections onto our work, we literally projected slides and video onto 3D objects that further multiplied their interpretations and judgments. For example, the word "nobody" was projected rapid-fire among other terms for women on Molly, who was wearing a gown and lying in an odalisque pose. Concurrently, live spoken text investigated the differences of our opinions regarding the negative and positive intrinsic qualities of power. From our perspectives as women, we examined definitions of power in order to create new relations to the powerful and powerless within ourselves and others. Some definitions and questions regarding power directly and indirectly included within the piece were:

- Power determines how much time and space others allot you.
- Power is the ability to have others heed your definition of reality.
- Power and powerlessness are intrinsically neither good nor bad.
- Power can be both creative and destructive.
- Everyone ultimately feels powerless.
- Power may be merely the feeling of kinship with the powerful.
- One can be unqualified to have the power that one has or wants.
- Powerlessness is relative: Is it everything short of omnipotence?
- Is power getting one's way *or* bringing about changes in other people's actions/conditions?
- Can powerlessness be eliminated? Or can power be universalized?

The issue of power is appropriately addressed using technology to amplify our capacities to question power, often narrowly defined by mass media as money and might. One way I define power is my ability to make effective art for audiences accustomed to media bombardment. Another is my ability to question these issues with the public without a personal trust fund, which leads me to my other project, L.A. Freewaves, a nonprofit media arts organization.

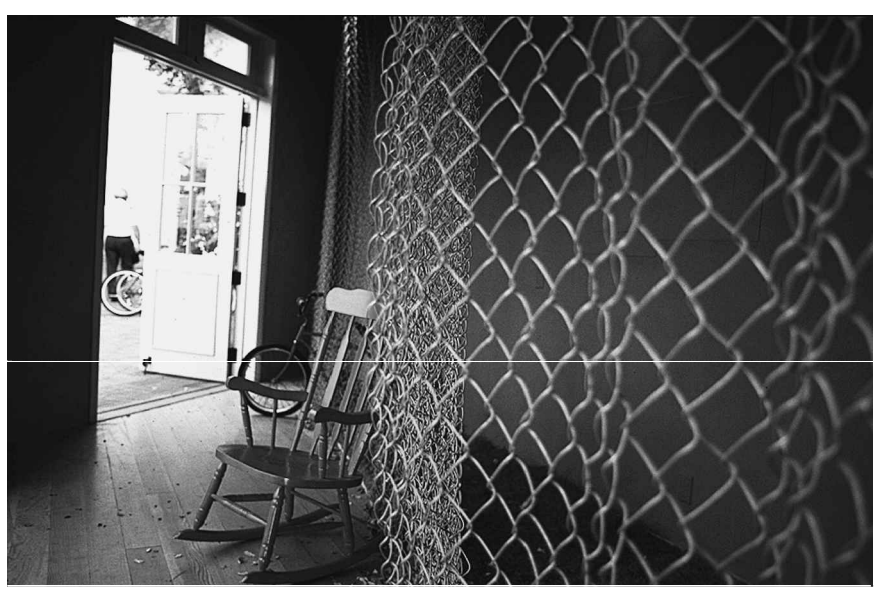
L.A. Freewaves

In reply to the gushing media hose aimed at each of us, I conceived of, founded and continue to direct an organization in which media and public art intersect. Most people venture beyond their cultural boundaries only through film and TV [6]. Where they may venture is then determined by where film and TV companies allow them to go. Many cultures have no feature-length self-images (i.e. movies) but do have at least short inexpensive, independently produced videotapes. L.A. Freewaves works hard to get those tapes to the same cultures that made them and to their neighbors, i.e. the rest of us.

In April 1989, a coalition of regional arts and community organizations met and identified the need for a democratically run, pluralistic festival celebrating the diversity of independent video in Southern California. In November of that year, L.A. Freewaves's 1st Celebration of Independent Video took place, with 35 different exhibitions and 31 repeated screenings of 185 tapes at 30 sites, plus 8 hours of programming on 14 cable systems. Screenings were held at galleries, museums, cafes, cable outlets and com-

Fig. 6. Anne Bray and Molly Cleator, *Easy Chair, Electric Chair*, kinetic video installation, 1993. (© Anne Bray) Two motorized wheelchairs were each mounted with video-projected talking heads discussing their mutual alienation and contrasting their respective embrace and rejection of mass media during a one-hour unedited intimate conversation at the Santa Monica Museum of Art in 1992 and at Banff Centre and Images du Futur in 1993. The work's 165 chairs offered many social positions from which to see the piece.

Fig. 7. Anne Bray and Molly Cleator, *The Gap*, audio installation, 1993. (© Anne Bray) This work appeared in a mall as part of *Backtalk, Women's Voices in the 90's*, curated by Marilu Knode and Erica Daborn; a 20-minute two-track audio loop played in the rafters of this unguarded storefront installation, discussing fears and desires incited by shopping.



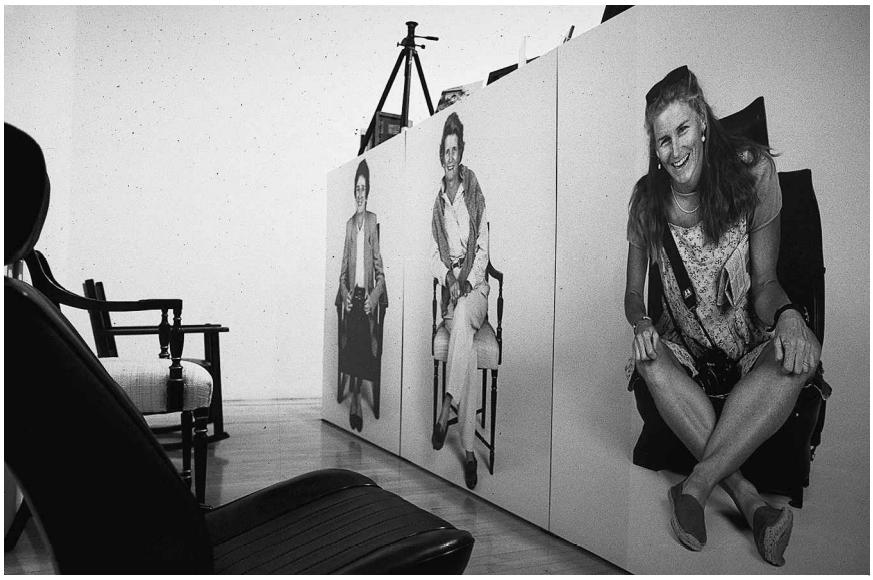


Fig. 8. Anne Bray and Molly Cleator, *What Can I Say*, audio-photo installation, 10 chairs, 10 sets of objects and 10 photos, 1994. (© Anne Bray) Two audio tracks opposed the images of eight art collectors and the two artists. Viewers could try "walking in the shoes," i.e. sitting in the chairs, of these 10 women, while women as objects were compared to art as objects. The work appeared at The Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena, CA, as part of Collaborations, curated by Karen Moss.

munity centers in four counties. Four thematic programs, called Road Shows, traveled to most parts of the city, to many audiences who had never seen independent material by makers of their own culture or any other. The results varied from dead-silent respect to yawning indifference to thrilling cheers.

L.A. Freewaves's debut became the country's most extensive video festival. Its scope and public reception brought together individuals and organizations from grassroots to high profile into an ongoing media alliance of Los Angeles's social, cultural and economic diversity.

In 1991, our 2nd Celebration of Independent Video caused our budget, bookings and press coverage to double. Curated video programs appeared at 104 art and media venues, school and cable stations throughout Southern California. In 1992, despite having the same budget, L.A. Freewaves's 3rd Festival expanded its exhibitions, screenings and broadcasts to include nearly 425 local venues and 330 international video makers with a live audience of 29,000 and a broadcast audience of 25,000.

The year 1992 was also a pivotal one for video in Los Angeles: Home video captured the beating of Rodney King by police, TV aired it thousands of times, cable TV showed the trial and broadcast TV inflamed the violent reaction to the not-guilty verdict. In a highly emotional situation, many viewers saw live coverage that lacked the perspective that time and/or familiarity provide. Merely months after the civil unrest in the city, L.A. Freewaves's network of contacts produced two 1-hour programs, which aired and screened in all parts of the city to give very different, less class-biased and distant views of these events and situations than TV did. In our 3rd Celebration of Independent Video, L.A. Freewaves toured showing these two programs and two other programs about racism to all parts of the city, generating very lively discussions. This hot-off-the-presses material offered thoughtful, inside perspectives that were desensationalized, eclectic, youthful, less defensive, personal instead of institutional, and revealed their biases blatantly instead of subconsciously. They helped to render the information comprehensible and mend the information gap that incited so much of the telecast misinformation, omissions and distortions.

In 1994, L.A. Freewaves formalized its democratic curatorial process. We contracted 10 very diverse curators to select the festival's programs for our 4th Celebration of Independent Video. Although designed as an experiment in multi-ethnic programming, it evolved into far more, incorporating inter-generational, multi-genre, hetero/homosexual perspectives, replacing the old model of curation by categorization, and the consequent ethnic, age and gender ghetto-ization that was common at that time.

During the screening of over 400 entries, a number of hidden, simplistic or erroneous perceptions by curators about unfamiliar communities came to light and were quickly rectified by other curators. This disparate group combined video art, narrative, documentary and animation, thus creating a more inclusive definition of independent video as well as many new thematic ways to combine tapes. For example, one program included tapes by single heterosexual women and gay men, illustrating that issues about the body among feminists and gay males were parallel. In two other programs, young video makers examined sexual issues without the moralizing of their elders, while another explored different sizes of turf, from individual to intergalactic. Despite many risks, the democratic process generated 10 provocative exhibitions and a model for better programming in future festivals.

Driven in part by increased access to desk-top video technology, video has become more diversified, with new aesthetics emerging daily from home workspaces, schools and art centers. As a culmination of its 4th Celebration of Independent Video, L.A. Freewaves presented a new spectacle event, *TV at Large,* at Los Angeles County's outdoor amphitheater, projecting independent videos on a large scale, describing artists' critiques of television as well as their proposed alternatives. We published and distributed 30,000 guides to over 100 media resources throughout the Los Angeles area, which are now available via our web site.

In 1995 and 1997, L.A. Freewaves had librarians and teachers repackage the latest festivals into exhibitions for Los Angeles's 74 major public libraries and 40 public high schools. Teachers of language arts, social studies, American studies and interdisciplinary teams selected subjects such as immigration, racism, gender formation and labor issues. Each subject was difficult to find information about outside of mainstream material. The librarians selected work that others had censored, to reflect with their long-standing commitment to upholding free speech. The 90s Channel (now called Freespeech TV), Deep Dish TV and Moscow TV aired L.A. Freewaves programs nationally and internationally.

The 5th Celebration of Independent Video Etc. in 1996, entitled *Private TV and Public Living Rooms,* turned the conventional living-room television viewing experience into an idiosyncratic rethinking of our personal and public relationships to TV. In the enormous Geffen Contemporary Annex of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), 12 artists designed "living-room" installa-

tions that complemented, interpreted and contextualized L.A. Freewaves's programs of videos, CD-ROMs and web sites by 140 artists about home, girlhood, longing, masculinity, culture jamming, media, economic issues and current urban myths. After one weekend the video programs dispersed to 50 other venues and public-access TV stations.

The introduction of web and CD-ROM art to the festival mirrored L.A. Freewaves artists' growth into these formats. The curators wanted to offer a model to museums for their future presentations of these new formats. They therefore curated the works thematically and showed them both on-line and one piece per computer at the museum. The festival itself produced a CD-ROM and distributed it widely for free to provide access for people unfamiliar with the Web. It contained manifestos, copies of web sites, shareware for web browsing and web authoring, and an updated list of Southern California media-arts resources, including low-cost new-media services and the new wave of youth-access centers.

The 1998 and 2000 festivals, *All Over the Map* and *Air Raids,* returned to MOCA with screenings, CD-ROMs and web sites there, yet dispersed throughout the city again, this time via video tour buses, cable shows, public television, video installations at other venues and a web site with links to selected artists' sites at <http://www.freewaves.org>. Each festival brought a borderless public new works by over 150 artists. One illustrative video bus tour traveled past Latino vernacular architecture and graffiti art while two documentaries shown on overhead monitors described the street issues and aesthetics presented outside the windows. ADOBE L.A., an alternative architectural group, re-read and translated murals and signs along the route, after which some of the writers of this graffiti went on the bus and explained their pieces at a major graffiti yard.

L.A. Freewaves is still a growing democracy of 65 arts organizations, 68 schools, 74 libraries, 32 cable stations, 35 programmers and over 2000 videomakers. The coalition produces a major festival every 2 years, an extensive follow-up tour, new media workshops and a web site. L.A. Freewaves has shown experimental video and new-media works by over 2,000 artists, presenting attitudes, stories, facts, aesthetics and angles unseen in mass media.

The festival is one means of presenting such work, but there are others adaptable to all interests and professions. Some others are:

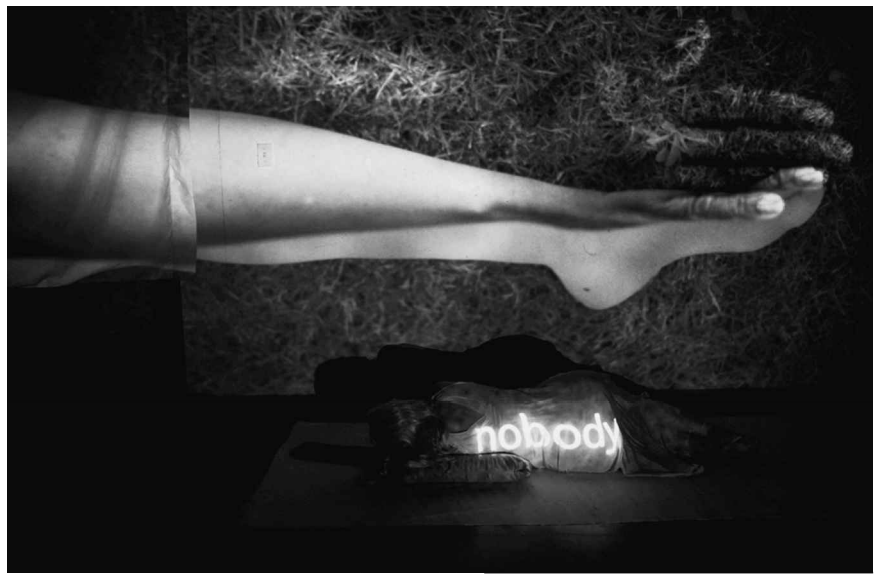


Fig. 9. Anne Bray and Molly Cleator, *God Doesn't Have a Mouth*, installation-performance, 1996. (© Anne Bray) This 1-hour piece at Civitella Ranieri Center in Umbria, Italy, used audio, video, slides and two performers to explore definitions of power from our perspectives as women, to create new relations to the powerful and powerless within others and ourselves.

- teaching media literacy in the schools in all grades
- encouraging video productions by people living within cable districts
- wide access to Internet production and information via libraries
- dissemination of independently made tapes through video stores and libraries
- placing artists and activists in charge of well-publicized satellite TV programs
- letter writing, negative and positive, to stations and advertisers, and
- uncensored yet sensitive publicly visible art.

Conclusion

I produce an intracity media-arts festival in Los Angeles to test my theories about communication in a centerless city filled with people from more than a hundred cultures. How will we negotiate our future across so many layers of differences, topped with many shared problems? Artists are producing new images, sounds and texts to offer us new understandings of the past and future, to assist us across our own mental borders. During this era of the privatization of culture, I advocate vigilant protection of access to free-speech avenues and venues for the public. This technology could be the antidote to the centralization of the entertainment industry into a handful of mega-corporations. Art could provide spiritual strength, physical presence, political voice, perceptual change, information exchange, community truths and financial force—the power of consciousness.

References and Notes

1. L.A. Street Scene was a very large, traditional, city-run festival in Downtown Los Angeles in the 1980s. L.A. Festival was an unconventional citywide festival coordinated twice by Peter Sellars, in 1990 and 1993. Suzanne Lacy's *Dark Madonna* was a one-night performance culminating a race-and-gender–based series of discussions among women.

2. These temporary public-art projects have been commissioned by art venues and city agencies: Armory Center for the Arts, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions with Patrick Media, The Public Art Fund, L.A. Community Redevelopment Agency, Side Street Projects, University of California Los Angeles Art Council, First Night Inc., New York Avant Garde Festival, Cambridge Arts Council and others.

3. The piece debuted at the Santa Monica Museum of Art. It was later shown at Images du Futur in Montreal in 1992 and at Banff Centre's exhibition Angles of Incidence: Video Reflections of Multimedia Art Works in 1993.

4. The computer interface was designed by Guy Marsden of Art Tec (formerly of Santa Monica and Oakland).

5. The exhibition was curated by Karen Moss for the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena, California.

6. Gerald Yoshitomi, *LA in the Year 2000,* report by the 2000 Partnership, 1991.

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Anne Bray is an artist and teacher and the executive director of L.A. Freewaves, a media-arts organization and festival in Los Angeles. She exhibits her temporary installations in public sites and art venues, combining personal and social positions via video, audio, slides and 3D screens. She teaches new-media arts at Claremont Graduate University and public art at the University of Southern California.