



In the right light, at the right time, everything is extraordinary

LIGHTS ON  
TAMPA

Art Program Catalogue 2009





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*Downtown Tampa by Carlton Ward, Jr. Tampa Bay Living Waters: Carlton Ward, Jr. (right)*

## From The Mayor: Lights on Tampa 2009

Welcome to a glimpse inside Lights On Tampa 2009, a program of the City of Tampa's Art Programs Division. This award-winning program is a public/private partnership that showcases Tampa as a city that celebrates the arts. It has also been recognized by the Americans for the Arts for having the some of the best Public Art in the nation. Lights On Tampa is a biennial that began in 2006, and returned in January 2009 – just in time for the City of Tampa's hosting of Super Bowl XLIII.

Lights On Tampa brings the arts right into the urban core through completely accessible outdoor art installations that create an engaging environment drawing and entertaining residents and visitors alike. A blend of art and technology, the program features the talents of local, national and international artists commissioned by Tampa's Public Art Program, the private sector and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the State of Florida's Division of Cultural Affairs.



*Mayor Pam Iorio*

Lights On Tampa is both a cultural and educational undertaking that has been made possible through the leadership and support of a number of Tampa businesses, organizations and volunteers. Both beautiful and dramatic, it also offers students and teachers a unique opportunity to experience and explore art in a different light.

I encourage you to learn more about Lights On Tampa 2009 through this catalogue and look forward to seeing you at Lights On Tampa 2011.





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## Overview from Art Programs Manager



*Robin Nigh*

The Art Programs Division creates and maintains numerous programs with the objective of providing free access to artistic excellence to Tampa residents and visitors. The Division completes some of these programs through partnerships. The primary criteria for partnering is that they be free and accessible to the public; that the projects or programs have a wide range of interest; that there is an educational component; and that the initiative strive for the best possible quality and end result.

One such partnership is Lights On Tampa, a shared initiative involving the public and private sectors. This unique and award winning program recognizes that culture is not fixed or isolated; that we are a vibrant and diverse community; and that collectively, we are a visual culture. These qualities make fertile ground for innovative programming.

Part of the criteria for Lights On Tampa is that it be experiential, educational and engaging. This is based on the premise that citizens should be provided opportunities to experience and engage exceptional contemporary art in the public realm. The Lights On Tampa Program strives to present a diverse selection of artists and artworks, with some artworks being temporary and others becoming permanent fixtures for Tampa. Some of these artworks are challenging, some are fun, but all include an educational component. The 2008 study Learning, Arts and the Brain sponsored by the Dana Foundation, reported that training in general aesthetics fosters the personality trait of openness, that it literally changes our brains, positively impacting our emotional development and lengthening our attention spans. Everyone will like some things more than others, but we hope you are open to engaging the concepts and some of the new ideas presented by all of these Lights On Tampa artists.



*Casa Magica*

## Introduction *by Megan Voeller*

Any introduction to Lights On Tampa 2009 calls for mentioning the biennial's debut in 2006. (To coincide with Super Bowl XLIII, the program's organizers extended the delay before its sophomore installment to three years.) The necessity of acknowledging Lights On Tampa 2006 springs less from the significance of continuity to this long-term effort to bolster the area's arts and cultural offerings than from the striking degree to which the inaugural showcase of electronic and light-based public art remains a touchstone in the collective memory of Tampa Bay residents. Mention the January night three years ago when Jorge Orta's multimedia projection lit up the exterior of the University of Tampa's historic Plant Hall, and many a Tampa resident can confirm that it was unusually chilly as people stood outside watching. Reflect on Erwin Redl's cascade of color-shifting LEDs at the Rivergate Tower, or Wendy Babcox's videos of Wikkee Wachee mermaids displayed along Ashley Drive, and remembrances turn to the artworks' literally traffic-stopping lure.

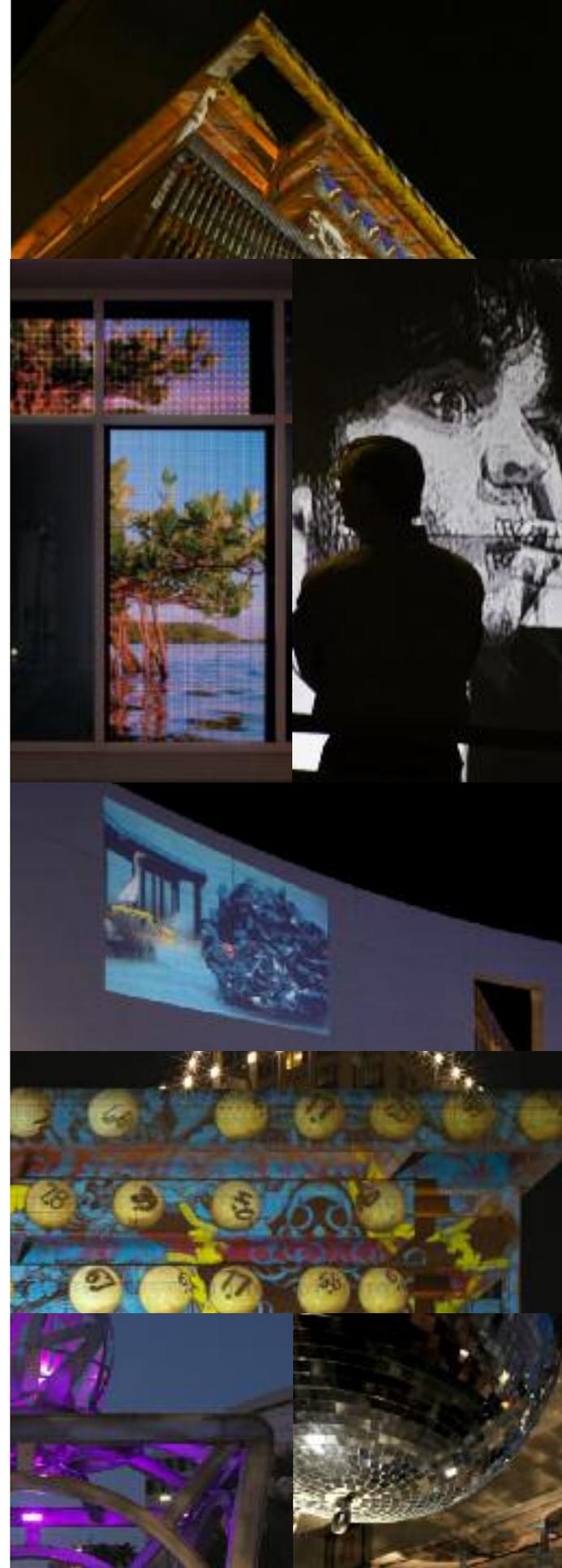
Such moments of shared consciousness stand out all the more against the particular backdrop of Lights On Tampa: a fledgling urban core only now beginning to recover from the density-destroying effects of mid-century urban renewal. In the midst of sprawl, downtown Tampa (like downtown Clearwater and its neighborly rival, downtown St. Petersburg) struggles to form a multi-dimensional identity, even as city leaders see it as the region's future hub. Creating a new 'brand' to reflect Tampa's 21st century incarnation requires taking up the broader challenge posed by the shift from an industrial economy to an information and service-based economy. This city (or any city), in the eyes of current and potential visitors and residents, is no longer simply the sum of its physical architecture—it's an experience; it has a personality. The urgency of communicating that experience is as real as the need to attract an educated workforce and the companies that want to employ them. Lights On Tampa, by offering outstanding public art experiences, is a way of broadening the definition of Tampa to encompass more than palm trees and sports franchises.

As befits its location at the intersection of such complex concerns, Lights On Tampa stands in contrast to historically typical modes of public art. It does not partake in the dreaded arbitrariness of 'plop art' (large-scale outdoor sculpture placed without regard to context); nor does it take the ostensibly populist forms of lamppost banners or chalk drawings. Lights On Tampa assumes a curious, open-minded audience (or audiences) and doesn't pander by seeking to provide art that everyone will like but that, paradoxically, no one will love. Boldly risk-taking, the program invites the expression of opinions—not just from experts but from the general public—by providing much needed conversation pieces in its latent urban milieu. For some viewers, those sights (described in more detail below) may require a suspension of their presuppositions about art—but never a suspension of their intellectual curiosity, enthusiasm for playful engagement or enjoyment of beauty in multifarious forms.

Perhaps the most notable, overarching characteristic of the program's 2009 projects is that they tend to demand even more sustained interactions than their 2006 counterparts. Two emphasize environmental themes: Marina Zurkow's animation, *Slurb*, though sweet in tone, conjures a disturbing story of ecological destruction; less overtly, Carlton Ward's documentary photography portfolio, *Tampa Bay: Living Waters*, also draws attention to the balance between nature and civilization. Will Pappenheimer and Chipp Jansen's *Tampa Public Mood Ring* invites viewers to visualize their emotions (particularly as related to Super Bowl XLIII) through the sculpture's interactive interface online, while Chris Doyle's comparatively low-tech installation of mirror balls, *Ecstatic City (Tampa)*, electrifies an ordinarily staid space. And Casa Magica's distinctive marriage of image projection with architecture, *Revamp Fort Brooke*, takes Tampa residents on a fragmented tour of our own history. Selected by a trio of esteemed judges—art critics Dave Hickey and Jerry Saltz, along with Anne Pasternak, executive director of Creative Time—these are the projects of Lights On Tampa 2009.

### A Sense of Place

Urban theorist Jane Jacobs famously described cities as having a "social life," enabled by elements of the built environment—e.g., broad sidewalks, a mix of old and new construction, an organic conglomeration of diverse businesses—that encourage communication between inhabitants. Downtown Tampa, particularly the area where the Lights On Tampa 2009 projects are situated, would have troubled Jacobs. Built to accommodate car traffic rather than foot traffic, the swath of development from the Tampa Convention Center to Channelside gives pedestrians the cold shoulder with its oversized scale and general lack of storefronts. Though residents are beginning to fill newly constructed condominiums, the city's southern waterfront in particular re-



*(from top to bottom)* Revamp Ft. Brooke, Casa Magica, Tampa Bay: Living Waters, Carlton Ward, Jr., untitled, Michael Reynolds, Slurb, Marina Zurkow, Revamp Ft. Brooke, Casa Magica, Tampa Public Mood Ring, Will Pappenheimer & Chipp Jansen, Ecstatic City (Tampa), Chris Doyle



Ecstatic City (Tampa), Chris Doyle: Photo By Charlie Samuels

mains primarily a destination for visiting conferees (or the established residential population of nearby Harbour Island), though the recent expansion of the Riverwalk and the growth of parks and cultural attractions along the waterfront are slowly beginning to alter conditions. Into this improving void, Lights On Tampa lures hundreds of pedestrians to a remarkable experience.

Virtually all of the selected artists have chosen to address the idea of Tampa, or urbanity in general, in their projects. Doyle, whose past work has often taken the form of video installations, seeks instead to animate an immersive environment surrounding the convention center with the off-the-shelf mirror balls, suspended from palm trees and the building's portico. Pappenhimer and Jansen's mood ring plays on the paradigm of monumental public sculpture but turns the reins over to the public, who choose the color of LED lights atop the steel structure. Zurkow's animated post-apocalyptic vision recalls Katrina, coaxing viewers into a paradoxically disturbing-yet-pleasurable fantasy about Tampa's very real susceptibility the consequences of global warming and turbulent weather. Carlton Ward's photography, of course, reveals Tampa Bay's natural beauty, while Casa Magica's digitally collaged imagery riffs surreally on themes from its past.

Given the widespread belief that screen culture is largely to blame for the contemporary attitude that "where one is has less and less to do with what one knows and experiences" (because of the availability of so much information and, increasingly, social interaction online), it's a particularly delightful irony that these (for the most part) new media-based public art projects constitute one of Tampa's most promising endeavors to generate a distinguishing sense of authenticity. On the relatively blank canvas of the Fort Brooke municipal parking garage (Casa Magica) or Cotanchobee Park (Pappenhimer and Jansen), the projects open the door for people to experience a new set of environmental relationships and behaviors specific to encountering each artwork

at its site. On the other hand, Lights On Tampa 2009 also transcends its physical location, inviting the public to access several of the featured works online as well (Tampa Public Mood Ring, during the run of the program, and Slurb, indefinitely afterwards). By bridging the gap to the Internet, the program explores yet another avenue of outreach.

### The Challenges of Populism

Lights On Tampa's simply-stated mission—to make artistic excellence widely accessible—belies its complexity. The types of art showcased by the innovative program—light-based and new media works—remain underrepresented in traditional art exhibition contexts including museums and the public realm. For some, the proximity of such art to commercial media and popular culture remains a hurdle to acceptance, despite the increasing relevance of digital media to everyday life. As a juried biennial only partly dependent on city funding, Lights On Tampa retains the autonomy to make unconventional choices that stand in contrast to the play-it-safe mentality of committee-driven public art programs. It envisions populism as a concerted effort to engage diverse audiences in a sophisticated, progressive conversation about public art rather than catering to the least common denominator.

The radical proposition of such a populism is the creation of an expanded sense of possibility. For even if, as will inevitably be the case, not everyone agrees upon the 'greatness' of the artworks included in Lights On Tampa 2009, the likelier consensus that as a cultural happening the program says something 'great' about Tampa suggests that its value is more than the sum of its parts. (Compare Lights On Tampa to Christo and Jeanne-Claude's, *The Gates* (2005), a series of 7,503 saffron-colored fabric gateways installed in Central Park for 16 days. While the project's visual aspects provoked a mixed reception, even critics embraced its impact as a cultural phenomenon, and one writer suggested that "The Gates resonated with an optimism missing from New York since the tragic day of September 11, 2001.") By taking temporary form, Lights On Tampa periodically recharges the downtown landscape with artistic energy, harnessing the power of 'buzz' to engage residents and visitors in dialogues about contemporary art, technology, urbanism and Tampa's future—as well as, at times, its history.

The artists featured in Lights On Tampa 2009 evince an occupation with some of the most pressing questions being investigated by the arts today. How can artists speak to the conditions of our existence, including climate change? How do art and entertainment, culture and kitsch, relate? What makes contemporary audiences wonder, laugh, contemplate and pay attention? To pose such questions, under the umbrella of the program, in a medium-sized city (a context where public art is not always wanted or welcomed) exemplifies, above all, a commitment to the viewer.

### The Big Game

Finally, Lights On Tampa 2009's concurrence with Super Bowl XLIII gives the public art program a chance to reach an audience exponentially larger than its local base. Featured projects sit in purposeful proximity to Super Bowl media headquarters at the convention center; Pappenhimer and Jansen's Tampa Public Mood Ring even serves as a backdrop for ESPN's portable production setup in Cotanchobee Park. Strategically positioned to leverage media coverage, Lights On Tampa 2009 is unique in its potential to reach a wide and diverse public via broadcast media.

In forging a friendly relationship with the Super Bowl Host Committee, the program sets an example of cooperation between public art-producing entities and private enterprise. That cooperation, in turn (while providing media with colorful cutaways and the Super Bowl with an opportunity to benefit the host community) reflects a more cosmopolitan image of Tampa than is perhaps commonly held outside the area. With Lights On Tampa 2009 on display, the city—and, by extension, the region—greatly improves the odds that, as the world briefly turns its eyes to Tampa Bay, people will be intrigued by what they see.

*Richard Florida, The Rise of the Creative Class (New York: Basic Books, 2003), xiii-xxvi.*

*Cf., Richard Florida, Who's Your City? (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 1-16; 161-186.*

*Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Random House, 1961), 55-73, 143-221.*

*Joshua Meyrowitz, No Sense of Place: the Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), vii.*

*Ibid., 35-40.*

*Cher Krause Knight, Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 35.*

## Ecstatic City (Tampa) *Chris Doyle*

If, as Michel de Certeau contends, “the memorable is that which can be dreamed about a place,” then Chris Doyle’s Ecstatic City (Tampa) invites passersby to take a piece of the city with them. As pedestrians walk the boundaries of the Tampa Convention Center, 45 mirror balls hang aloft on palm trees—a striking sight unto themselves. But what captivates (after dusk, at least) is the swirling, scattered light reflected onto sidewalks below and adjacent surfaces. (By day, its effects are less noticeable, except in shady spaces like the building’s portico, where a dozen more of the globes are suspended.) Subtly disrupting the urban landscape’s emotional monotone, the dancing light imbues the surrounding area with the energy of an altered state. Dynamic glimmerings transform quotidian concrete, opening the door to imagination and laying the groundwork for memory.

In its context surrounding the convention center, Ecstatic City (Tampa) lies in wait for a mix of conventioners, tourists, downtown workers and local residents. Its position at the junction of two bridges (the Platt Street bridge and the entrance to the Harbour Island residential community) and near the terminus of the TECO electric streetcar place it in a relatively heavily trafficked area—though one notable for its almost antiseptic orderliness. Home to corporate hotel chains and Starbucks, the convention center’s surroundings have only recently begun to offer pedestrians a distinctive enticement with the opening of a nearby segment of the downtown Riverwalk. (So it’s particularly significant that a portion of Ecstatic City (Tampa), the portico mirror balls, will remain in place permanently.)

Into this problematic-but-improving environment, Doyle’s installation attempts an activation or animation of social space. Reflective of an understanding of the city—any city—as a system of experiences more than a collection of buildings, Ecstatic City (Tampa) performs a quality-of-life intervention by triggering imagination within a space designed to support the operations of business and consumption. By integrating into an iconic site (the function of which is clearly defined as economic development), Doyle aims to create a systemic shift—modest, perhaps, but difference making—in collective feeling: the coalescence of enthusiasm and interest where little was inspired before. In the spirit of Certeau, emotional and intellectual movements (i.e., responses to Ecstatic City (Tampa) and what its presence implies about Tampa, broadly) interlace with physical movements (pedestrian trips) to create an “urban fabric” and unique ‘sense of place,’ the product of shared experience and collective feeling rather than steel and concrete.

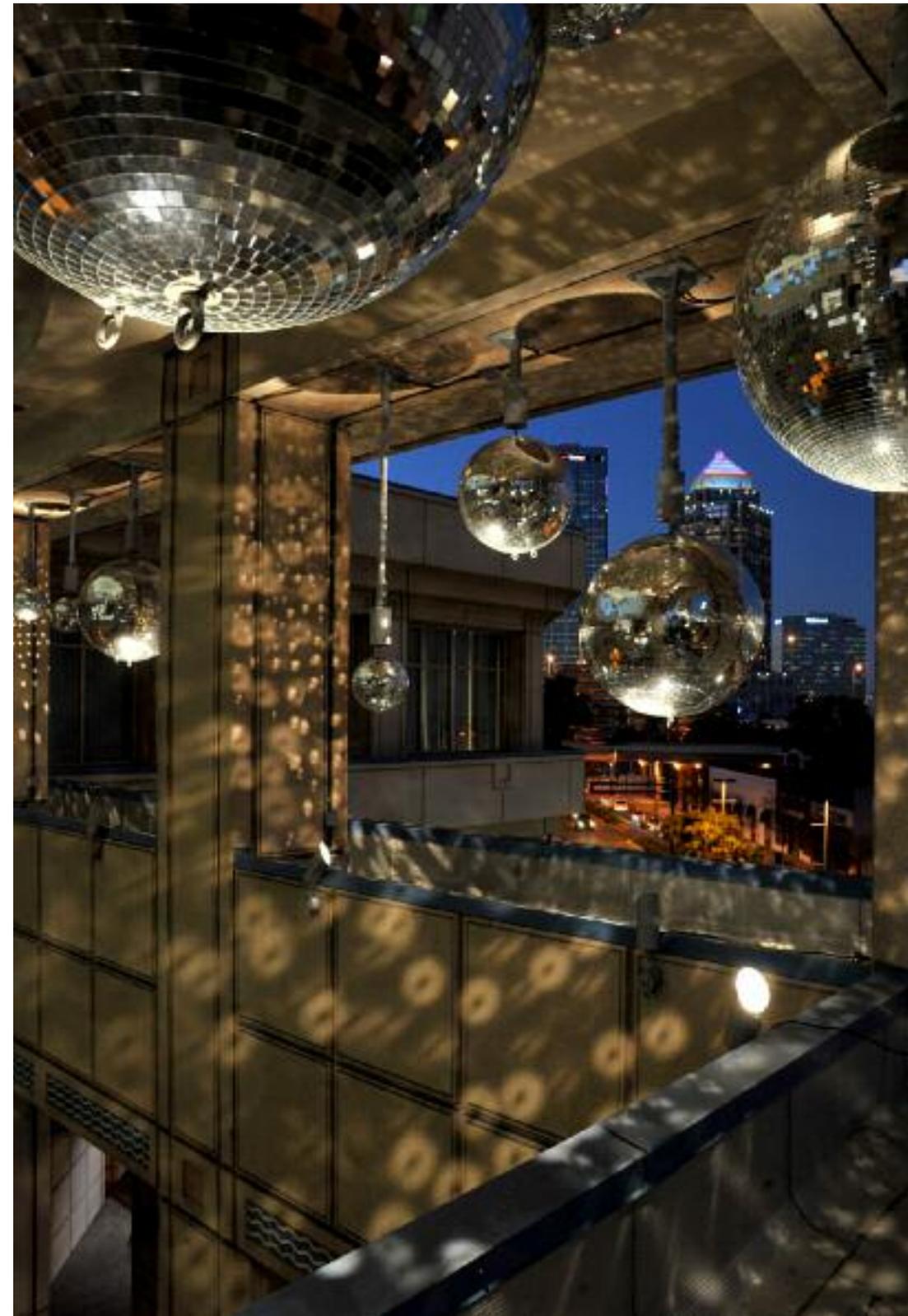
For Doyle, this type of urban intervention is nothing new, though the form his work takes for Lights On Tampa 2009 marks a shift in the artist’s tactics. Utilizing video, his past public art projects have engaged residents in playful performances—e.g., leaping or appearing to fly in videos and animations displayed in Melbourne (Australia), Kansas City and New York—which, like Ecstatic City (Tampa), suggest a creatively liberating sense of possibility. Working, more often than not, in medium-sized cities where public art may be comparatively rare, Doyle renders his installations accessible by evoking humor and delight—and reflecting residents’ own images back to them in novel form.

His decision to eschew an image-based practice for Ecstatic City (Tampa) and use readymade mirror balls instead recalls the Situationist tactic of détournement, described as “the rearranging of popular sign-systems in order to produce new meanings.” While historical examples of détournement include the Situationists’ use of appropriation and collage of mass media in two-dimensional images, Ecstatic City (Tampa) hinges on a three-dimensional object and its environmental light effects. The kitsch mirror ball—or disco ball—is re-contextualized on the city street, where it effects a variety of emotional shifts and intellectual reactions, from wonder and excitement to disbelief and scorn. While Situationist International, a European group, responded with ironic protest to the increasing commercialization of mass culture in the mid-20th century, Doyle engages the complexities of 21st century urbanity in a more open-ended fashion.

A related Situationist practice, the *dérive*, bears mention as well. Conceived as “a short meandering walk determined by one’s desires,” the *dérive* aims to resist the orderly flow of a city through the physical expression of unprescribed impulses. It is precisely this action that Ecstatic City (Tampa) invites visitors to perform—improbable visitors, like business conventioners, as well as residents—by inhabiting the Tampa Convention Center’s surrounding environs in a new frame of mind. “Both tactics, *dérive* and *détourné*, take trespassing as their essential character”. Into the too-dy convention district, the immersive installation inserts an uncontainable element.



*Chris Doyle*



Ecstatic City (Tampa) at the Tampa Convention Center, *Chris Doyle*; Photo by *Charlie Samuels*



Ecstatic City (Tampa) at the Tampa Convention Center, Chris Doyle;  
Photo by Charlie Samuels



Through Ecstatic City (Tampa), Doyle invites visitors to collaboratively ‘complete’ the conditions of détournement and dérive. Passersby are, in essence, propositioned: stop a while—if you please—to gaze, dream, wonder or otherwise repurpose this altered space. (One member of Brand Tampa, a local social networking website, has already posted a video of herself dancing in the space. Undeveloped possibilities include staging outdoor convention receptions within the permanent installation’s boundaries, or using its lights for theatrical effect during performances.) By purposely refraining from providing an image or other cue as to the meaning of the space’s transformation, the artist invests visitors (i.e., participants) with the agency to determine the installation’s use and interpretation, however fleetingly. Resulting encounters with the artwork might be conceived as uncanny brushes with the possible; an elusive ‘something’ about Ecstatic City (Tampa) suggests a space imbued with indeterminate potential. (In fact, despite its relatively low-tech setup—with small motors powering the rotation of the spotlighted mirror balls—it conjures nothing so much as a life-sized virtual space.) Rather than an instance of creative ‘expression,’ which audiences are expected to passively receive, the installation serves as a catalyst for “the possibilizing activity of imagination,” which “opens up an experiential domain that would not otherwise have been available to either the artist or the spectator.”

Paradoxically, the subtle sense of what might be associated with Ecstatic City (Tampa) bears a peculiar resemblance to the viral enthusiasm that local leaders (in any mid-tier city, but certainly in Tampa) often hope to spread

through tightly controlled marketing campaigns or master plan development. The thrill of Doyle’s installation stems from its disruption of such order and its mischievous repurposing of the site. In that moment of collective freedom, visitors can share a moment of joy—ecstasy, even—about this place.

*Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 109.*

*Conversation with the artist, Oct. 31, 2008.*

*Guy Debord, The Society of the Spectacle (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 110-117.*

*Certeau 1984, 103.*

*Nato Thompson and Gregory Sholette (eds.), The Interventionists: Users’ Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 16.*

*Ibid.*

*Brand Tampa website, <http://www.brandtampa.com/video/me-dancing-at-lights-on-tampa>. Checked May 27, 2009.*

*Edward Casey, Imagining: a Phenomenological Study (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 206.*



Tampa Bay: Living Waters *Carlton Ward Jr.*



Tampa Bay: Living Waters, *Carlton Ward, Jr. (above & right)*

One of downtown Tampa's most striking features is its waterfront. But until recent years, that natural resource has also been one of the city's most underappreciated features. Like a number of American metropolises (notably Boston), Tampa has begun the decades-long process of reclaiming its waterfront by opening it to the public. Public-private partnerships have brought cultural institutions, including the Tampa Bay History Center and the soon-to-open Tampa Museum of Art, to nest along its banks and have grown the downtown Riverwalk that connects them. With the development of more riverfront parks and the arrival of increasing numbers of residents to the downtown core, Tampa's waterfront is on its way to becoming a defining characteristic of the region's urban experience.

Along with greater awareness of the waterfront's value as a tourist destination and an amenity for residents has come more emphasis on stewardship of the region's ecosystem and the interconnectedness of its parts. Carlton Ward Jr.'s documentary photography portfolio for Lights On Tampa 2009, Tampa Bay: Living Waters, highlights the many 'faces' of Tampa Bay and its associated waterways. From the Bay's tip in upper Pinellas County to its outlet into the Gulf of Mexico near Bradenton, the portfolio of 75 images represents nearly 30 diverse locations. Some images, like one of roseate spoonbills in flight at Audubon Alafia Bank Sanctuary (which boasts one of the largest bird colonies in the state and one of the most diverse in the continental U.S.) aim to capture nature undisturbed; others, like a striking aerial shot of dense suburban development packed onto Apollo Beach, emphasize the relationship between human activity and the environment. In Ward's images—as in life—water, land, plants, animals and other natural phenomena converge to create an integrated environmental backbone for the region, providing for a multitude of human needs from jobs to recreation to drinking water. An over-arching message is clear: the health of one affects the health of all.

For Ward, an eighth generation Floridian whose grandfather served as the state's 25th governor, the value of the region's natural heritage may be particularly clear. Known for his work documenting Florida's cattle ranching culture (and its inherent environmental stewardship), Ward has spearheaded LINC [Legacy Institute for Nature and Culture], a nonprofit conservation advocacy group, since founding the organization in 2004 in addition to pursuing a career as an environmental photojournalist. His project for Lights On Tampa 2009 marks his first foray into public art. At the corner of Platt and Franklin Streets—directly across from the Tampa Convention Center and Chris Doyle's Ecstatic City—the 75 images of Tampa Bay: Living Waters loop in an ongoing slideshow displayed on custom LED panels fitted into a storefront window. (The installation serves as a prototype for a series of LED 'portals' to be located intermittently along the Riverwalk for the display of educational material related to three subject areas: environment, well being and arts and culture.) Though the method of delivery is new, the aspect of public education is very much in keeping with Ward's prior work.



As a documentary photography portfolio, *Tampa Bay: Living Waters* is the rare *Lights On Tampa* 2009 project that doesn't wear its adherence to the avant garde principle of aesthetic disruption on its sleeve. (Its goal isn't to jar viewers out of their conventional modes by recontextualizing familiar images or objects, or by proffering an opportunity to play.) Nevertheless, the unexpected perspectives that the photographs provide—for many viewers, visions of Tampa Bay as they've never seen it before—trigger a shift in awareness. To see, for instance, the seemingly untouched (by human development) expanses of Double Branch Creek—a locale Ward aptly likens to the Thousand Islands—is to visit another world, though the protected land sits not far north of the busy Courtney Campbell Causeway. To peruse pictures of professional fishermen at work just miles from the region's rapidly growing urban and suburban centers is to witness a declining way of life.

Given the images' similarity to the glossy commercial photography found in the pages of *National Geographic* or *Smithsonian* (the latter a publication Ward contributes to regularly), viewers could be forgiven for assuming that these are glimpses of 'exotic' Africa or the Amazon. The project also plays against the visual tropes of tourism bureau photography and its carefully calibrated representations of local life. Instead of neatly conforming to either iconic form, Ward's subtly unconventional juxtapositions gently tweak those stereotypes, resulting in a portfolio of images that encompass the familiar and the visually foreign—sometimes in the same frame. In one view, St. Petersburg's skyline (typically portrayed in full sunshine) is dwarfed by sublimely ominous storm clouds; in another, a vessel stacked with shipping containers (an eyesore, to some) becomes a study in form and color.

At the outset of the project, Ward met with community stakeholders, including representatives from the Florida Aquarium, the Southwest Florida Water Management District (commonly referred to as Swiftmud) and the City of Tampa, who suggested concepts to convey through the portfolio. For the outdoor LED display, he paired the images with educational texts to drive home the connection between environmental health and human quality of life. (Emphasizing, for example, the importance of flourishing waterways to the region's economic sustainability or river flows to wildlife diversity.) In addition to the still photographs—21 of which have been printed and framed for display in city buildings—Ward produced a pair of time-lapse animations illustrating the daily lifecycles of Cockroach Bay and Egmont Key, two of the area's most beautiful natural tracts. With any luck, the experience of seeing Tampa Bay as never before—and, significantly, as living—will instill in viewers a profound appreciation for the region's environmental richness and the determination to conserve it.

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*Audubon of Florida website. [http://www.audubonoflorida.org/specialplaces\\_sanctuaries\\_tampabaycoastalands\\_where.html](http://www.audubonoflorida.org/specialplaces_sanctuaries_tampabaycoastalands_where.html).  
Checked May 22, 2009.*

*Conversation with the artist, May 13, 2009.*



*Tampa Bay: Living Waters,  
Carlton Ward, Jr.*



*Carlton Ward, Jr.*

## Tampa Public Mood Ring *Will Pappenheimer & Chipp Jansen*

On the evening prior to Super Bowl XLIII, viewers of ESPN catch a glimpse—perhaps unwittingly—of one Lights On Tampa 2009 project on the air. Behind the glaringly lighted sportscasters in fitted suits, behind a mass of rowdy fans hoisting signs into the air, behind a row of palm trees bedecked with blue and green lights, the glowing football atop a giant ring-shaped steel frame radiates cool blue. For a moment, as thousands of viewers watch from homes, restaurants, bars, Laundromats, etc., around the country, the ring becomes one more symbol of their oversized hopes and dreams. Amid the network's swirling motion graphics and anticipation of the mediated spectacle of tomorrow's big game, the sculpture briefly channels orgiastic Super Bowl fandom.

### Touchdown

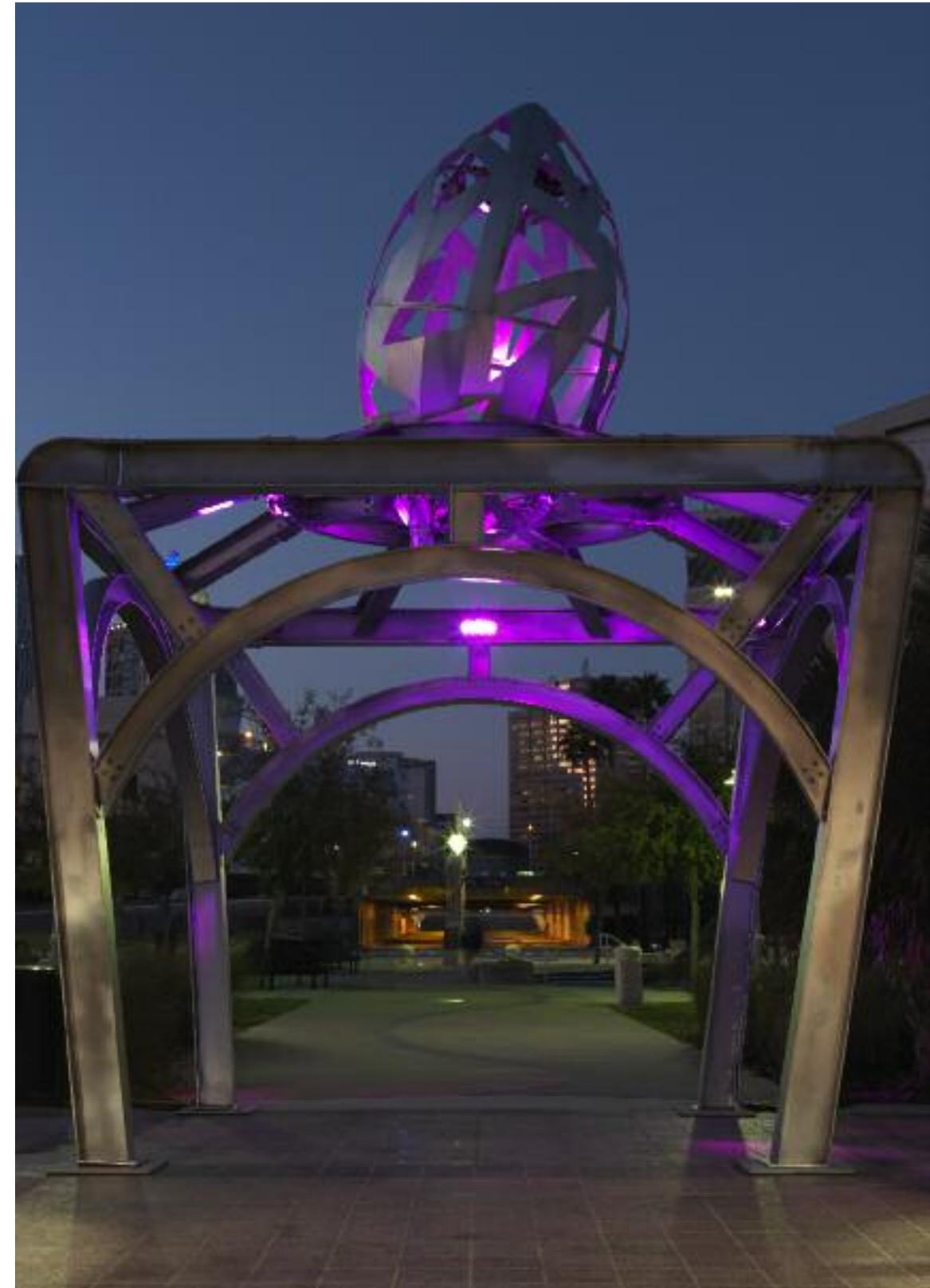
More than any other project featured in Lights On Tampa 2009, Will Pappenheimer and Chipp Jansen's Tampa Public Mood Ring embraces the biennial program's concurrency with Super Bowl XLIII. Adopting a physical form reminiscent of both a Super Bowl Championship Ring and a conventional mood ring but wholly faithful to neither, the 25-ft. tall public sculpture rises above Cotanchobee Park—part Oldenburgian Pop Art intervention, part Las Vegas strip icon. Its attendant online presence, the website [Tampapublicmoodring.com](http://Tampapublicmoodring.com), is equally populist in its appeal. A spinning, animated football seems to spiral towards the screen like a pass, greeting visitors who come for a chance to change the color of LEDs (light-emitting diodes) on the sculpture by clicking on a hue representative of their emotional reactions to Super Bowl-related news online. A live webcam displays the results.

Uniquely hybrid in concept and form, the TPMR stands out for its convention-bending characteristics: its earnest engagement with an atypical contemporary art audience (football fandom); its over-the-top appearance, reminiscent of environmental advertising; and its integration with Super Bowl-related media. Designed by Pappenheimer, programmed by Jansen and built by sponsor Gerdau Ameristeel, the work incorporates collaboration from inception to realization. Rather than an articulation of the artists' singular vision, the TPMR comes to fruition by virtue of input and feedback from its various collaborators—especially the online visitors who create content for the ring and website by changing its color, leaving comments and choosing emoticons to reflect their moods. Through this unusual confluence of interests, the TPMR bridges public sculpture, relational aesthetics and digital technology.

As public sculpture, the TPMR sits in ironic proximity to the much-derided tradition of “heavy metal” public art or “plop art,” the large-scale, context-independent sculpture frequently deposited into urban landscapes by local governments. Though its hulking steel frame evokes the specter of plop art, its tongue-in-cheek iconicity and offer of play break with convention. By linking control over the ring's appearance—at least, the color of its glowing ‘gem’—to an interactive interface online, Pappenheimer and Jansen attempt to mitigate the perceived arbitrariness public sculpture by enlisting their audience as collaborators. This collaboration in turn engenders a sense of psychological co-ownership, as evidenced by visitor behavior like competition over the ring's color. By incorporating interactive digital media, the artists bypass the traditional model of a passive public art audience and undermine a paradigm of art consumption in which “detachment is necessary because art is constantly in danger of being subsumed to the condition of consumer culture or ‘entertainment’.”

Such a rejection of detachment is characteristic of works that explore the territory Nicolas Bourriaud has described as relational aesthetics, or art that concerns itself with “the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space.” Instead of striving to create an idealized locus free from the taint of consumer culture and entertainment, the TPMR engages the highly commercialized context of Super Bowl XLIII without passing judgment on those who revel in it. Implicitly critiquing a culture in which “we are reduced to an atomized pseudo-community of consumers, our sensibilities dulled by spectacle and repetition” with its exaggerated form and pop art aesthetic, the ring also acknowledges the pleasures of participation in consumerism and

*Will Pappenheimer  
& Chipp Jansen  
(above)*



Tampa Public  
Mood Ring,  
Will Pappenheimer &  
Chipp Jansen



football fandom. While past iterations of the project (e.g., Public Mood Ring at ISEA 2006 ZeroOne San Jose) have placed equal importance on the visualization of public sentiment, only the TPMR has done so at the nexus of a host of other complications: asking users to express emotion within the context of hyper-masculine sports culture, where displays of feeling are frequent yet carefully prescribed; attempting to create a space of free expression for users within the context of a painstakingly-produced national media event.

Against the backdrop of these potential conflicts, the TPMR offers an open-ended opportunity to its audience. Visitors, free from any obligation to respond to Super Bowl news items on the TPMR website provided by the St. Petersburg Times, frequently repurpose the ring to their own communicative desires. Typed comments voice enthusiasm about the artwork or disembodied moods; emoticons, modeled after emotional states frequently expressed by sportscasters, take on new shades of meaning. E.g., ‘Mike from Tampa’ (emoticon: “Unstoppable”) explains his politically motivated color choice in a comment on the website: “A blue ring in a blue city in a blue county in a blue state in a blue country.” In exchange for their online ‘labor,’ the ring offers online participants the gratification of seeing their selection change the color of the sculpture’s LEDs via live webcam,



a feature that encourages them to linger for an average of about four minutes. Visitors to the physical site, in turn, pose under the webcam—often while speaking on a cell phone, as if soliciting a remote viewer to appreciate the novelty of telepresence or evidence of their pilgrimage. If any of these modest experiences of visitor agency ripples out to affect another human being, Pappenheimer and Jansen have accomplished the fundamental goal of relational art, per Bourriaud: “learning to inhabit the world in a better way.”

In the case of sponsor- and media-collaborators, leverage exercised over the project sometimes tested the artists’ intentions. Over the course of the project’s development, consultations and compromise with Gerda Ameristeel determined details of the sculpture’s shape (e.g., the tilt of the football shaped gem) and attached signage, which came to exceed the boundaries of what is generally regarded as acceptable for corporate sponsorship of art. As a condition of cooperating with ESPN—a collaboration facilitated by Leder Public Relations on behalf of Gerda—the ring’s interactivity was temporarily halted so that the sculpture could illustrate the results of the network’s online polls and serve as a matching backdrop to the production. In inviting so close a collaboration with corporate entities problematic in the context of the art world, the artists risked leaving themselves open to accusations of uncritically representing the interests of ESPN, Gerda, Leder or the Super Bowl. However, in the context of a culture permeated by commercialism, that risk is best seen as a mutual parasitism that enabled the TPMR to create a space for public engagement and creativity within a tangle of corporate interests.

*Comment by Pappenheimer at the Lights On Tampa Artist Symposium, Jan. 8, 2009.*

*Miwon Kwon, One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002) cited in Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents,” Artforum, Feb. 2006, 178.*

*See Roberta Smith, “Public Art, Eyesore to Eye Candy,” New York Times, Aug. 22, 2008.*

*A widely referenced, though complex, example is Richard Serra’s Titled Arc, which was removed from New York City’s Federal Plaza in 1989 following complaints about its relationship with the surrounding environment. Cher Krause Knight, Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2008), 8-14.*

*To turn the ring red on the night of the Super Bowl in honor of the Arizona Cardinals’ victory. Conversation with the artist, Feb. 2, 2009.*

*Grant Kester, “Another Turn,” Artforum, May 2006, 22. (Kester’s letter appeared as a rejoinder to Bishop’s Feb. 2006 article.) In his book, Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), Kester describes modern art theory’s reliance on the opposition of inscrutable, avant-garde artworks to “advertising, political propaganda, kitsch, and so on. . . . By extension, any work of art that makes itself too accessible, that attempts to solicit the viewer’s interaction too overtly, runs the risk of being assimilated by the malevolent forces of consumer society. This paradigm (in its various permutations) has made it difficult to recognize the potential aesthetic significance of collaborative and dialogical art practices that are accessible without necessarily being simplistic.” (Kester 2004, 13)*

*Nicolas Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics (Dijon: Les presses du reel, 2002), 14.*

*Grant Kester, Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) cited in Bishop 2006.*

*Pappenheimer’s website: [http://www.willpap-projects.com/Docu/Projects\\_List/MainProjectsFrameset.html](http://www.willpap-projects.com/Docu/Projects_List/MainProjectsFrameset.html), accessed Feb. 23, 2009.*

*Conversation with the artist, Jan. 12, 2009.*

*Email from the artist, Jan. 26, 2009.*

*According to Nielsen, the average visit to a web page lasts just under one minute. Source: [http://www.nielsen-online.com/press\\_fd.jsp?section=pr\\_netv&nav=3](http://www.nielsen-online.com/press_fd.jsp?section=pr_netv&nav=3), accessed Feb. 23, 2009.*

*Bourriaud 2002, 13.*

*Conversation with the artist, Feb. 2, 2009.*

*Ibid.*

*See Kester 2006.*

## Revamp Fort Brooke Sabine Weissinger & Friedrich Foerster

Taking the relatively grim façade of Fort Brooke municipal parking garage as its canvas, Casa Magica's projection renders an eye-popping visual mash-up of Tampa history. In place of a stout, gray garage, viewers observe a mirage-like presence—horizontal tiers, exactly mimicking the building architecture in form but composed of colorful, collaged imagery. Seeming to imbue the inanimate structure with a kind of consciousness—specifically, memory—the illuminating 'skin' hugs every angle of the building. Though the technology behind the effect is straightforward, an encounter with Revamp Fort Brooke—or any other Casa Magica project, for that matter—presents viewers with a singular experience of space and time.

To create this experience, Tübingen, Germany-based artists Friedrich Förster and Sabine Weissinger begin by approaching their site—in this case, one chosen specifically for its allusion to the city's history—as researchers. Gathering information about the building as well as its broader context in Tampa Bay, they embark on a process of collecting related imagery (primarily by photographing objects reflective of the site's significance) and combining the images into digital compositions shaped to conform to the building's contours when projected. Perhaps because of their status as cultural outsiders rather than in spite of it, they bring to the image editing and assemblage process a precise eye, carefully layering a rich, abstract narrative about place that fuses past, present and future—and invites the associative musings of viewers.

Previous projects have taken the artists around the world to create distinctive Casa Magica experiences, typically in the form of temporary, site-specific events that interface seamlessly with existing structures. Since 1996, Förster and Weissinger—the former an artist with a long-standing practice in electronic media, the latter an architecture critic and former curator—have collaborated to create the intricate displays. Perhaps most notably, their work lights up the pyramids of Giza and the Great Sphinx in a 10-minute show coupled with a soundtrack available in eight languages, during which the famed monuments function as a screen for the artists' imagery. In cases except Giza, where their show has run regularly since 2003, the transience of a Casa Magica project adds to the thrill of experiencing it: once it's over, only documentation and memory remain.

During Lights On Tampa 2009, Revamp Fort Brooke transforms the fortress-like parking garage—named for the mid-19th century military outpost once located where the Tampa Convention Center now sits—into an ethereal stage for imagination. From a distance, two large-format projectors elevated off the ground cast a total of six slides—six distinct image compositions—onto the side of the building, one by one. Viewers circulate behind the projectors, discussing and deconstructing the spectacle. For whether Casa Magica takes on a natural mountainside or a baroque cathedral (as they have done in past projects) or a parking garage, observers can never be quite sure of just what they're seeing.

Casa Magica, Artist Collective



Sabine Weissinger



Friedrich Foerster



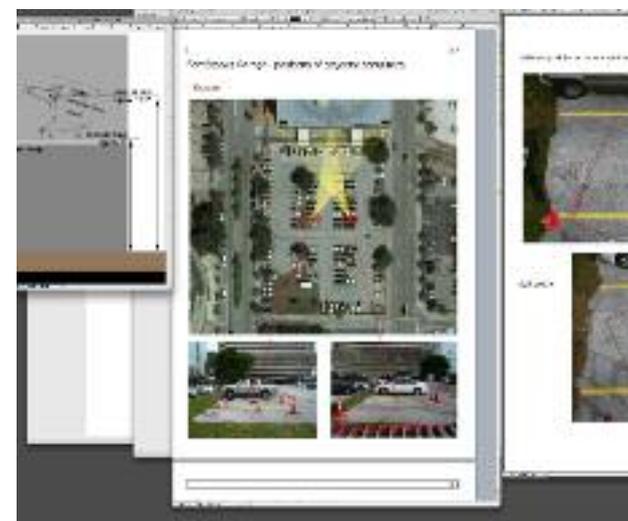
Revamp Fort Brooke, Casa Magica



*(from top to bottom): South façade of garage before projection; projection depicting: football, alligator, bollito balls, pattern from historic coat of arms, pinball meter; projection depicting: palm tree trunk, submunition, pattern from pursuit fighter (Phantom), “Desert Storm” teddy bear; projection depicting: Seminole patchwork, Jeans zipper, Seminole coontie plant-rasp, beef*



*Computer screen shots from the production of slides for Revamp Fort Brooke.*



In Revamp Fort Brooke, imagery related to Tampa’s military heritage takes center stage. A variety of motifs, from antique uniform buttons that evoke Fort Brooke’s role as the site of a minor Civil War battle to a teddy bear covered in desert camouflage, spin a narrative thread of historic and present conflicts. Spears and helmets reference the conquistador culture that made Tampa Bay one of the first landing sites in North America for Spanish explorers. A row of bombs neatly skins the garage’s broadest tier, striking for its sleek, formal beauty, while a massive football (gripped by alligator claws) alludes lightheartedly to recreational battles.

Tampa’s multicultural heritage—particularly its blend of Italian, Hispanic and Cuban cultures—is also a focal point for the project. Though painted Spanish tiles and a massive ship’s boom play dramatic roles in two of the compositions, the most arresting evocation of the city’s ethnic history comes in the form of larger-than-life, hand-numbered bolito balls arranged in rows across the garage’s top tiers. The lottery-style gambling game, typically fixed to the benefit of mafia overseers, conjures memories and myths of Ybor City’s checkered past. An expanse of tattooed skin, present in another slide, may allude to its more recent incarnation as a Bourbon Street-style entertainment district.

Simply enumerating Revamp Fort Brooke’s imagery does little to describe the most profound ‘special effects’ generated by Casa Magica’s architectural projection: the resulting acts of imagination. With each transition from one slide to the next, viewers launch into a new game of discovery and interpretation—locating familiar and unfamiliar textures and forms along the building’s façade. (In fact, the visual density of each slide is such that spectators during Revamp Fort Brooke’s debut sometimes did not realize they were seeing the same images repeated.) Despite the relative realism of each collaged element, shapes remain indeterminate due to altered scale or lack of context (a spear perhaps evokes a cigar, a button resembles a shell). As a result, meaning is decidedly open-ended and entails considerable collaborative labor on the part of each viewer.

Ultimately, its playful activation of perception—partly taxing, partly toying—is what makes Revamp Fort Brooke so engrossing. The projection proffers viewers a uniquely phenomenological experience of history—a collision of images that invoke memory and association arranged in space and time. Six still compositions, experienced on a monumental scale, put minds in motion.



From its onset, Marina Zurkow's *Slurb* presents viewers with an array of mesmerizing tensions. Against a melancholy backdrop of unending seawater and rain, brightly colored characters populate the 18-minute animation. Afloat in boats and on piles of debris, the figures—endearing freaks, from human-animal hybrids to carnivalesque personalities—listlessly repeat diminutive gestures. (Perhaps most memorably, one woman—her outline gently quivering like the others'—paddles a boat forward with poignant automatism, occasionally using her foot with unconscious efficiency to guide the oar.) Lending a deceptive sense of progress to this purgatory, a steady scrolling movement leftward brings ever more deluged landscape into view. Meanwhile, in a soundtrack by composer Lem Jay Ignacio, electronic sound and human voice coalesce, alternately piercingly sad and ardently hopeful. Improbably charming despite the pall that hangs over it, this troubled world unfurls a problem. Before viewers know quite what to make of it, the animation begins again.

In contrast with its tremulous sweetness, *Slurb* weaves a dystopian narrative about the real possibility of environmental cataclysm. The cause of this destruction is ambiguous, even overdetermined: rising sea levels triggered by global warming; the inevitable "Category 5" hurricane; pollution and overuse of natural resources; or some combination thereof, unstoppable in its complexity. The results, however, are comparatively clear: the submersion of Tampa Bay's built environment and the apparent dissolution of civilization as we know it. This vision—on the one hand eerily plausible, on the other, unrepentantly surreal—proffers a parable about the uneasy imbalance between nature and human development increasingly evident in everyday life. In *Slurb*, natural forces, exemplified most conspicuously by water, reassert control, evoking a return of the repressed. Having breached the city's boundaries and settled the score for a now-broken paradigm of human dominance, the deluge signals the arrival of a state of affairs where prior normalcy has dissolved and all bets are off.

Yet *Slurb*'s implications ought not be taken merely as bleak since the animation suggests, along with the passing of an established system of relations, the emergence of another (though perhaps unnerving in its unfamiliarity). Equal parts apocalypse and birthing, the winding narrative incorporates characters from real and mythical liminal tribes who embody experiences of transition. These 'freaks'—some social outliers seemingly native to the region (mermaids, a carnie, a ranting evangelist), others truly hybrid creatures with animal heads and human bodies—become survivors. In a role reversal that upends conventional power structures, they endure. Much like the buzzing dragonfly who pops in and out of the animation frame, viewers enter into this world with the knowledge that they can turn away (from disorientation and disempowerment); *Slurb* offers viewers the safety of detachment even as it invites immersion in a space of ambiguity and multiplicity where an end is also a beginning. This ambiguity, in turn, creates an interstitial space where hope might dwell.

Perhaps most disarming is the visual style with which Zurkow subtly charms viewers, presenting an alluringly sweet surface that entices them to consume a communication with troubling implications. Deliberately adopting and adapting the kitsch form of cartoon, she strikes a particular balance between building a rapport with viewers based on the familiar seductions of entertainment and the simultaneous pursuit of more subversive operations. For instance, *Slurb* might be seen as relating with straightforward irony to a cultural obsession with natural disaster, exemplified by the omnipresence of 'disaster porn' in mass media and its function as a gently anodyne catharsis. This tacitly accepted transformation of disaster—the uncontrollable, unknowable—into mediated spectacle absolves viewers of responsibility, both



*Marina Zurkow*

for the occurrence, when what is at stake might include complicity in global warming, and for the subsequent suffering of their fellow human beings (not to mention non-human beings). (The conditions of mediated representation surrounding Hurricane Katrina are worth noting here as a particular context for Slurb—and for viewers in Tampa, a city situated, like New Orleans, on the Gulf of Mexico. E.g., the ‘short attention span’ of television news coverage has failed to convey the purgatorial disorder that persists even today in that disaster’s aftermath. In this context, Slurb bubbles to the surface as a persistent memory almost but not quite effaced by the relentless rhythm of the 24-hour news cycle.)

With rather more at stake, however, Slurb poses the question: what if a critique of anthropocentric humanism looked like cotton candy? Philosopher Michael Zimmerman, in his interpretation of postmodern thought—including that of structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss—in the context of ecological discourse, has called for creative competition among non-objectifying narratives about the relationship between humanity and nature (a dichotomy his endeavor calls into question) to contest the perpetuation of attitudes toward ‘the natural’ as tool or product for use and exploitation. (Electronic mediation and its representational modes are often seen as implicated in such attitudes.) In related fashion, Slurb presupposes that “the future of planet Earth will be decided, in part, by the contest among...competing narratives.” In this light, the animation’s calculated innocuousness, its relationship to kitsch and the survivorship of liminal characters within its narrative all suggest a strategic confusion of stable categories of identity linked to distinctions between human and non-human, natural and unnatural. This categorical confusion, particularly as evidenced in Slurb by the breakdown of species and social group integrity, is reminiscent of critical theorist Donna Haraway’s concept of the cyborg. Citing the untenable binary structure of representationalist views of the world as a source of bastard fecundity, Haraway argues that “cyborg unities are monstrous and illegitimate; in our present political circumstances, we could hardly hope for more potent myths for resistance and recoupling.” Critical points of tension between polar oppositions (like ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ or ‘modern’ and ‘savage’) and the unclassifiable identities that transgress them constitute, for Haraway, a ‘border war’ where and in which new alternatives are born.

In the context of this ideological and ecological border war, Slurb takes its site (waterfront Tampa) as a discursive jumping off point. Only tangentially site-specific in the conventional sense of having been conceived for a prescribed physical location—after all, Slurb’s online afterlife perpetuates at least as important an opportunity for engagement as its temporary installation does—the animation assumes, in the words of art historian Miwon Kwon, that “the operative definition of the site has been transformed from a physical location—grounded, fixed, actual—to a discursive vector—ungrounded, fluid, virtual.” Slurb’s relationship with downtown as a physical site (as in another of Zurkow’s projects, which conjured an imagined natural disaster in the context of San Jose, Calif.) takes the form of a visionary simulation that permits viewers broad interpretive latitude. Selected by the organizers of Lights On Tampa 2009 for use in public education programs, the animation claims as its discursive site the values of viewers, particularly local viewers, and their attitudes and actions toward the environment, their eco-systemic awareness. While Slurb’s fantasy is, at least on surface, gentle and surreal enough not to induce panic, its nagging implications—a bit like the animation’s buzzing dragonfly—have the potential to haunt those who consume it. To the relief (perhaps) and inspiration (hopefully) of viewers, Slurb’s playful appeal suggests an ethical imperative that is not merely an urgent challenge but, potentially, a pleasurable one.

*This topos is better characterized as a ‘return of the real’ in the Lacanian sense, which would require a longer introduction for readers of this essay than is possible here. Cf., e.g., Slavoj Žižek, Looking Awry: an Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 34-39, and Slavoj Žižek, ed., Mapping Ideology (London: Verso, 1994), 21.*

*Comment by the artist during roundtable discussion, Jan. 8, 2009.*

*Michael E. Zimmerman, Contesting Earth’s Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1-17.*

*Ibid., 184.*

*Donna J. Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature (New York: Routledge, 1991), 154.*

*Miwon Kwon, One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 29-30.*

*Cf. Haraway, 150.*



*Animation stills of Slurb and projection of Slurb at St. Pete Times Forum*





Satellites: City of Tampa



New to Lights On Tampa 2009 was Satellites, a weekend-long special exhibition of 13 artists. All artworks were located in the Channel District and completed in partnership with property owners. The event was organized by Wendy Babcox and Shawn Cheatham; and made possible by the City of Tampa Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). Participants included:

- Peter Segerstrom
- Anat Pollack / Robb Fladry
- Yoko Nogami / Maria Saraceno
- John Orth / Alan Calpe
- Meg Mitchell
- Gregg Perkins
- The Fluff Constructivists
- Michael Reynolds
- Wesley Wetherington
- Joe Griffith

(from top to bottom): Anat Pollack & Robb Fladry, John Orth & Alan Calpe, Meg Mitchell

(for images from left to right): Joe Griffith, Gregg Perkins, Michael Reynolds, Wesley Wetherington





Revamp Fort Brooke, *Casa Magica*

## Acknowledgements

It is important to acknowledge those who brought Lights On Tampa 2009 to the citizens and visitors of Tampa, and extend a sincere thank you for bringing free access to artistic excellence. Special thanks to the incredible artists that participated: Chris Doyle, Will Pappenheimer & Chipp Jansen, Carlton Ward, Jr., Sabine Wei ßinger & Friedrich Förster, and Marina Zurkow. Their talent and professionalism made it a pleasure to bring their vision for Tampa to fruition. Appreciation must be equally extended to the jurors who brought these artists to our attention: Anne Pasternak, Executive Director of Creative Time, Dave Hickey, Scholar and Art Critic and Jerry Saltz, art critic for New York Magazine. Special Thanks to the City of Tampa Public Art Committee and the Board of Directors of Friends of Tampa Public Art, civic leaders, sponsors, and the City of Tampa. All shared efforts in this public / private partnership, bringing either their financial and in-kind support, or valuable time and expertise. Recognition must especially go to the behind the scenes team that worked tirelessly to make Lights On Tampa a tremendous success: Melissa LeBaron, Nancy Kipnis, and Carol Edgerley. And finally, a very special thanks goes to Mayor Pam Iorio for making Tampa a City of the Arts; for without her vision and support, it would be Lights Out.



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