IHR Fellows Program

2007-2008: The Humanities and Sustainability

Sustainability, Systems, and Ecological Art

Project Directors:

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Abstract:

Sustainability is rarely examined at length in humanities scholarship. Nevertheless, since the early ‘70s, many artists and writers have used their work to raise consciousness and educate the public, not only about the problems that globalization poses for natural and ecological systems, but also to examine the problematic dynamics that arise when systems like those of informatics and cybernetics are established.

Central to our research in the domain of eco-art is the examination of systems that underpin much of this activity. Through their work, many artists have explored natural and man-made ecologies including water resource distribution networks, the spread of airborne pollutants, and global climate patterns. As such, the exploration of such systems is at the heart of our research and such study will allow our project to cut across the arts, sciences and humanities. With its tools for interactive 3D data visualization and audio sonification, AME’s SMALLab provides a flexible and extensible infrastructure for simulation, modeling, and manipulation of these complex systems. We propose to utilize SMALLab as a research tool to simulate and engage such systems in order to better articulate and enrich our understanding of the processes that are utilized by eco-artists past and present. We will leverage SMALLab as an active catalyst for discussion and debate around these topics within the ASU community, and we will invite our invited guest collaborators to employ it as a resource to aid and extend their own research. One outcome of our work will be the realization of a technological and conceptual framework for the integration of art, science, and criticism around the notion of complex systems, which lies at the cross-section of sustainability and art. We will encourage our invited collaborators to discuss the possible critical and methodological implications that such self-reflexive use of digital technologies poses for work and research in eco-art more generally. This direct engagement with systems research will complement our proposed theoretical and metaphorical approaches to sustainability research, and will allow our team to achieve a broad transdisciplinary impact that will lead to increased opportunities for future funding and collaboration.

The IHR Fellows team, Sustainability, Systems, and Ecological Art (http://www.asu.edu/clas/ihr/faculty/fellows/2007-2008SustainabilityTheme.html), will roll out
the *Art Truck* this weekend. Please join us this Friday and Saturday, December 7 and 8, as the Art Truck takes its maiden voyage in Tempe and Phoenix. The Art Truck delivers art for environmental awareness and ecological change to various sites in the Valley. The Art Truck will be part of First Fridays events on December 7, in the lot adjacent to Eye Lounge at 419 E. Roosevelt (at 4th St.) in Phoenix from 7 to 9 p.m. A second Art Truck exhibition on the theme of water will be on view between 4 and 9:30 p.m. as part of the Tempe “Fantasy of Lights” Holiday Boat Parade, on Saturday December 8 at Tempe Town Lake (Booth 19). The artworks on view each day are listed below. As always, the Art Truck is free and open to the public. We look forward to seeing you!

Julie Anand, David Birchfield, Robert Gordon, Claudia Mesch
Coordinators for the Ecological Art, Systems and Sustainability Project

**Friday, December 7** Gallery
From the Car, Betsy Schneider and Frank Ekeberg
Sound and video installation
Flooding Phoenix, Dan Collins
Video projection
Heliopolis, Mary Bates Neubauer
Video and image wrap

**Saturday, December 8** Gallery
The Castaways Project, Steven Feld and Virginia Ryan
Sound and video installation
Profile in Sound, Shifting Landscape, David Birchfield
Water Lens, Julie Anand
Photography and image wrap
Mary Bates Neubauer, image wrap