

Being on Time

In November 2000, the Public Access Collective presented “Being on Time,” an extensive public art project which brought ten professional artists into a working relationship with students from Central Technical School in downtown Toronto for a period of six weeks. With the intention of provoking a timely discussion around the themes of technology, time, art and education, installations were devised exclusively for the school’s Art Centre building. Conceived as additions to the existing architecture, the installations lived unobtrusively among the student works which permanently adorn the walls, seamlessly occupying washrooms, hallways, lockers, and even creeping into the sacrosanct domain of the teachers’ lounge. As is the nature of site-specific installations, many of the works presented were ephemeral in nature and so particular to the site and time of the exhibition that it would be difficult to imagine a life for them outside the context of the school. And yet, with the publication of this issue we are proposing just such a continuation. Rather than offer an epilogue to the exhibition, we have sought to generate renewed considerations of the original experiment.

The exhibition was conceived as a spatial intervention into the dynamics of public high school, where teenagers negotiate for expressive freedom and self-identity within an institutional routine. “Being on Time” offered a means to explore the subjective experience of this place – both the space of the high school and the time of the new millennium. This issue of *Public* opens further perspectives on the lived experience of institutional learning, with the exhibition as a conceptual model and point of departure. In the design of this issue, we have sought our own expressive freedom within the parameters of a textual framework, to create an open-ended discourse in different media – indeed to insinuate the nature of the media into the discussion itself.

In this way, this issue is also an intervention into questions of representation in the context of new times and technologies. As editors, our task was to translate the experiences and conceptualizations that surrounded an art exhibition in a high school onto the printed page and into the digital CD-Rom (found at the back of this issue). In addition, we wanted to find a way to ‘reproduce’ or translate the actual exhibition installations themselves. In this sense, our work was to mediate the relationship between art object and page, analog and digital. In addition to exploring the relation between the actual event of the exhibit and what appears here

in these pages, editing this issue of *Public* has been an exploration of the relations between the digital and typographic technologies, which together make up this issue of the journal. What is the relation between these media? What do each of these media offer the subject re-viewing the exhibition and its themes?

For the students and visitors who toured the exhibition as it was taking place in Central Technical High School, “Being on Time” offered an exploration of adolescence, education, time, art and technology. Each of the artists and authors whose work appears in this issue continue to examine these themes, asking questions such as what is the time of adolescence or the time of education? What is the time of production, the time of making art? And what is the time of technology and the virtual? These are urgent questions for the twenty-first century and taken together they form an indispensable constellation of ideas for being in our time.

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