

# FORT GANSEVOORT

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### **ART PEOPLE; Art lights up Times Sq.**

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IT is not every day that artists can get their work up in lights on Times Square. But this year, no fewer than 12 will have their ideas transformed into animated dots and colors on the huge Spectacolor computerized light board at No. 1 Times Square.

The project was the brainchild of Jane Dickson, a painter who worked as a designer and programmer for Spectacolor Inc., soon after her arrival in New York. When Collaborative Projects (better known as Colab), an artists' group with which she is affiliated, had a Times Square show in 1980, she asked the president of Spectacolor, George Stonbely, if she could put an ad for the show on Spectacolor's light-board. He agreed and told her he would be interested in doing larger projects if she could organize them and get funds.

Miss Dixon then approached people at the Public Art Fund Inc., an organization that sponsors and coordinates art projects around the city, and asked if they could suggest possible sponsors. They told her they would sponsor it themselves, and they asked her to coordinate the project.

Her idea was that 12 artists, one each month, would create "messages to the public." The artists were chosen by a panel of art professionals made up of the critic Lucy Lippard; Janet Henry, artist and art administrator; Rafique Auzouny, film maker; Mike Robinson, artist and head of Colab, and Jessica Cusick and Jenny Dixon of the Public Art Fund, who between them shared one voice and one vote.

Each of the five was asked to submit the names of 10 artists. The committee then discussed the nominees and decided on 12 that they thought would interpret the medium in diverse ways. Each artist would receive an honorarium.

The artists whose work has been on display so far are Keith Haring, Jenny Holtzer, Johnny Matos, who is known as Crash, and Ed Towle. The artist this month is Matthew Geller. Those following him will be David Hammons, Christof Kohlhofer, John Torreano, Edgar Heap-of-Birds, Hans Haacke and Bill Sullivan. In December, the artist will be Jenny Dixon, who is planning a grand finale on New Year's Eve, when all 12 of the artists' spots will appear after the ball drops.

The project gives a wide range of artists the chance to interpret the idea of "message" and to use in their own way a medium to which they would not normally have access. Some of the messages have been political: Matthew Geller's, called "In case of Nuclear Attack," juxtaposes the words "In case of nuclear attack cover exposed skin - lie on sidewalk close to building" with images of a man burying his head in

# FORT GANSEVOORT

his jacket and a man curled up on the pavement, trying to squeeze himself against a brick building. Other messages have included Jenny Holtzer's provocative word plays and the celebrations of graffiti of Keith Haring and Crash.

In order to get their work on the light board, each artist has had to follow roughly the same procedure. Jane Dickson takes the artist to Spectacolor and shows him or her what the computer can do. Then the artist makes up a story board that contains a rough sequence of the desired animation. The artist then discusses the sketch with Miss Dixon and the programmers at Spectacolor until the plan is approved on both sides. The final animation, done dot by dot with a keyboard, takes roughly three to four days.

The project is worked out by the artist and realized by the programmers between the 1st and 15th of the month. The spots are roughly 30 seconds. They run once every 20 minutes from the 15th to the end of the month.

Spectacolor, which has donated the advertising space, is as pleased as everyone else with the results. "It's good public relations," said Tom Gemignani, art director of Spectacolor. "Probably the most profitable thing for us, though, is working with other artists who are not of the same frame of mind."

The latest city to be "Groomed" is Philadelphia. Its Red Grooms festival officially began when Mayor William J. Green was presented with the keys to "Philadelphia Cornucopia" on Flag Day, June 14. The festival will continue at the Institute of Contemporary Art, on 34th and Walnut Streets, until Sept. 12.

The display at the institute has two parts. "Philadelphia Cornucopia," which was commissioned for Century IV, the city's tricentennial celebration, almost fills the huge 50-by-50-by-30-foot lower gallery. "Sculptopictoramas," in the upper gallery, is a survey of Mr. Grooms's large-scale environments, which includes drawings, maquettes, photographs and a video of some of his films.

Like "Ruckus Manhattan," the new work is a walk-in environment. This time Mr. Grooms's fabulously incongruous world includes a golden horn of plenty that is 24 feet in diameter, 11-foot-tall figures of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson signing the Declaration of Independence, images of the Liberty Bell, William Penn dancing on top of City Hall with the statue of Diana from the Philadelphia Art Museum, a Victorian drawing class, Duchamp's nude descending a staircase and more.

The idea of a major Grooms show came from the director of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Janet Kardon. "I have been following Red Grooms's work for a long time," she says, "and thought him undervalued in a funny way. With all the attention he has gotten, there has been little comment on his work in art journals. With the vogue for figurative work, installations and site-specific sculpture, the time was right to consider his work in a serious way."

According to Mrs. Kardon, the project took form in Mr. Grooms's mind about a year ago when he spent several days exploring the city. "He studied Philadelphia very seriously," she said, traveling around, going through archives, museums and galleries.

He started executing the work in New York some three months ago, working on flats 50 feet long. Three weeks before the opening, the material he had been working on in New York and what the institute's installation crew had been constructing from his plans "came together." Of the three weeks of constant work in which the show was given final form, Mr. Grooms spent a week to 10 days on the site. According

# FORT GANSEVOORT

to Mrs. Kardon, he watched over everything. "If he didn't actually paint a figure, he certainly embellished it. When a decision was made, he made it."

Mrs. Kardon spoke about the "wonderful spirit of camaraderie" during the realization of the work. The Institute of Contemporary Art is in the fine-arts building of the University of Pennsylvania and a number of students helped with the installation. "He works with young people so well," she says. "Everyone who touched the project came away happier for the experience."

The new director of the Houston Museum of Fine Arts is Peter Marzio. He replaces William Agee, who resigned this year. The 39-year-old Mr. Marzio, who received a doctorate from the University of Chicago, was director of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington. A successor at the Corcoran has not yet been named.