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Currents 2011: New Video Reviewed

Written by Katy Crocker // June 21, 2011 // Art, Santa Fe // 6 Comments

Santa Fe was unrecognizable June 10, for the opening night of *Currents 2011*, a festival for international, new media art. Amidst the bustling Railyard District were: people on bikes, Axle Contemporary's mobile gallery, video art projected on buildings, the train running through the district, young hipsters on skateboards, experimental music in the streets, and bystanders. El Museo Cultural de Santa Fe, where *Currents* was held, sits in the middle of the action, alongside Santa Fe Clay, Second Street, the Farmers' Market building. (No doubt, Second Street Brewery—overflowing with customers' fists full of beers—was thankful for their prime location that night.)

For those of our readers that don't know Santa Fe, prior to 2008 and the opening celebration of the Railyard District, which includes Farmer's Market, Railyard Park, and residential/retail, and mixed-use areas, also where SITE Santa Fe resides, Canyon Road was *the* destination for art. Thus the contemporary art of Santa Fe was swallowed by high to low-end kitsch, pervading the city's art market. When the plans for the Railyard were in the works (2002), a few galleries jumped at the opportunity to move from historic Canyon Road, as well, old standbys, like William Siegal Gallery, resurfaced.

Forgive the history lesson, but for Santa Feans this is big, and *Currents* is helping to provide this facelift of sorts to our mostly traditional city.

Inspired by new media, and its ability to engage audiences, Mariannah Amster and Frank Ragano organized and curated *Currents 2011*. Ragano believes that new media is now a "common language for our world and is therefore important to incorporate into the art scene of Santa Fe and New Mexico in order to keep it alive and vibrant."

Ragano continues, pointing to the convergence of science and art, which has longsince been attributed to New Mexico—(notoriously, one of the preeminent locations for nuclear bomb testing during the World War II era, while simultaneously a haven for artists and so-called freaks).

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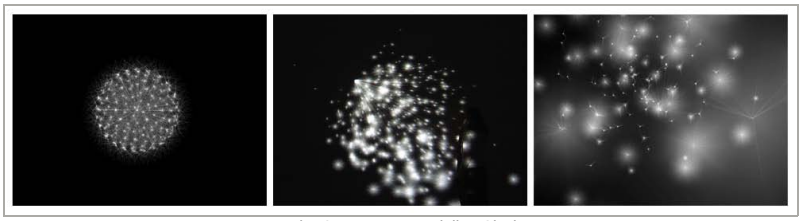
Given the wide breadth of the twosome's curatorial focus, *Currents 2011*—truly a mixed bag, included explosive, disco-poppy pieces to atmospheric, contemplative works; playful to socio-political; as well as flat-out formally beautiful—had everything from low-tech to high-tech with a particular focus on interactivity.

Interactivity draws people in, often prompting interpersonal connections, and spontaneous play. These qualities are ideal for community-driven initiatives, which I believe is the highest aspiration of Amster and Ragano, given word choices like "festival," and "common language," which are associated to the *Currents'* mission statement. Judged according to the goal (as is only appropriate), they accomplished this aspiration entirely.

Formally speaking, some highlights from the exhibition included works by artists: Olga Mink, Carmin Karasic and Rolf Van Gelder; Yuki Nakamura; and Tiffany Carbonneau; and John Carpenter.



John Carpenter, "Dandelion Clock"

In short, *Currents 2011*, with its interactive elements and public art installations, utilized the Railyard to its fullest capacity, transforming Santa Fe into a new place. Or perhaps, creating a new place for new media in New Mexico. Although Santa Feans resist "scene-ster-ism", it's precisely this hype-slash-scene excitement, which is emblematic of what we are missing when we beg for a city that's alive past 9 p.m.

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About the Author

Katy Crocker graduated from the College of Santa Fe with a degree in art

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Shannon Murphy: Before the thread closes I'd like to thank everyone who has given feed

Ellen Berkovitch: Thank you. I fully agree and it's a good idea to do so (make sure the

Hannah Hoel: The writer responds: I met Shannon Murphy in 2006 and we used

Ellen Berkovitch: You know, Vince, I've been happy to see your comments here because it'

Vince Kadlubek: After a day or so of reflection, I feel that the review was written as

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history and was the director of ARTWORK International until spring 2010, when she moved to Austin, Texas. From there, she focuses on contemporary art and cultural history. In addition to writing for AdobeAirstream, she regularly contributes to Proxart Magazine, Los Angeles.

Read more by Katy Crocker

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Rolf van Gelder *June 27, 2011 at 2:31 pm* · *Reply*

Dear Katy,
Thanks for the very nice review!
Peace,
Rolf van Gelder

Katy Crocker *June 28, 2011 at 10:18 am* · *Reply*

Thanks, Rolf – we loved having your work in Santa Fe; it was spectacular!

Frank Ragano *June 29, 2011 at 8:29 pm* · *Reply*

Hi Katy,
Just finally had a moment to see your review.
Thanks so much. It is a very intelligent, insightful, engaging and beautifully laid out piece.
Thanks for your interest in our project.
All our best,
Frank Ragano

Richard Lowenberg *June 30, 2011 at 8:51 am* · *Reply*

Thanks to AdobeAirstream for the excellent coverage and review of Currents2011. Currents represents the transition of art-making and presenting in our time, and for the future of Santa Fe's cultural economy.

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The recent Festival was a great creative and popular success, and provides the foundation for an even better program already being prepared for 2012. Kudos to Frank and Mariannah for their experienced and artistic curatorial vision and for their unique sense of creating a unified media space, which is as much a part of the show as any individual media artwork. I look forward to a vital future for Currents.

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