

Ryan Griffis

**Temporary Travel Office Tour of the Chicago Technology
Park: proposal for Turbulence**

General Concept

The Temporary Travel Office is a series of projects that seeks to generate and support participatory narratives that counter utopian perceptions of technological progress. Using tourism as a starting point, the Travel Office attempts to find ways to merge pleasure and criticality while working in the charged boundaries between public and private spaces.

Currently, the Travel Office is working on a series of works that address issues specific to biotechnology, real estate, and urban redevelopment in a part of Chicago known as the Near West Side. This project focuses on the development of the Chicago Technology Park, a subdivision of the Illinois Medical District - an urban area governed by an autonomous collective of business, government and research interests - seeking to promote emerging technologies in Chicago and Illinois. My interest in the CTP stems from its place in an ongoing history that reveals a pattern of socially engineered displacement, where the project of eugenic science, long considered abandoned, continues in the spatial management of populations and real estate.

This project includes three parts: the creation of a self-guided audio tour, a series of graphic posters installed within the "El" train system, and a Web-based component that will allow web-visitors to tour the space of the Chicago Technology Park online and facilitate symbolic communication with people within the geographical space of the Chicago Technology Park. All three components will participate in an exhibition called "YOUgenics" to be staged at the Betty Rymer Gallery at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago at the end of this year.

The audio tour has been completed and is part of the Chicago-based Version4 "Invisible Networks" festival taking place during the month of April this year. Audio CDs and printed guide/maps will be distributed at select sites and are also available for downloading from an advertised website.

Posters and interior cards will be designed and installed in the "El" train system lines connecting to the Medical District and will operate in a couple of ways. They will react with their immediate surroundings - a "public" space often used as a site of transport from one private

site to another, and increasingly kept private through personal technology devices, like audio players and cell phones, as well as the preponderance of advertising - in order to engage the locally mobile audience in the narrative intersections of the Chicago Technology Park, eugenics, and urban redevelopment. The content of these posters will reflect the "everyday" aesthetics of advertising common within mass transit settings, juxtaposing the positivist "happy speak" found in gentrification plans and biotech PR with the spatial and economic inequities that result from them. They will also serve as a "pointer" to the other possible sites of engagement - the audio tour and website.

The website will function as a portal that can be used to explore the space of the Chicago Technology Park on the Web. Rather than trying to bring the physical location of the Park to Web visitors, the site will connect visitors to the virtual locations that the Park occupies online, including State and city press releases, activist archives and corporate public relations documents. Virtual visitors will also be connected to geographical visitors via an interface that allows them to create virtual postcards that will be stored in a database organized to correspond to specific locations within the Park. These postcards will contain images of the Park and be addressed to parties that are involved in the redevelopment of Chicago's Near West Side. Images will be provided from a collection of previously digitized photographs as well as from an evolving collection of images uploaded by onsite visitors with web/camera phones. The postcards can be printed out by Web-users and mailed to their addressees as well as be read by the mobile viewers that are touring the physical space of the Park.

Artist Information

Concept, web design, research: Ryan Griffis
Graphic design, poster concept: Thomas Cobb

Thomas Cobb is an artist and graphic designer currently residing in Portland, Oregon. He is the senior advertising director at Willamette Week, Portland's alternative newsweekly. His creative activities include serving as the art director for The Bear Deluxe (an award winning environmental arts magazine published by Orlo, a non-profit arts organization), as well as being included in YOUgenics, a series of exhibitions that feature artists working with

the social issues of genetic technologies. Thomas received a BFA in painting from Washington University in St. Louis. **Ryan Griffis** is an artist, curator and educator currently teaching at Southwest Missouri State University. YOUgenics, a series of exhibitions and events focused on genetic technologies organized by Ryan, is scheduled for its third incarnation at the School of Art Institute of Chicago at the end of 2004. He has written on digital technologies, art and cultural activism for Rhizome's Net Art News, Soundtoys Journal, Furtherfield, and (the late) New Art Examiner. Ryan studied visual art in Florida and North Carolina, receiving an MFA from East Carolina University.

Budget + technical details

CTA posters

One-Sheet (46x30 in.) posters from Viacom Outdoor Chicago

production: \$57 (15) = \$1140

space rental: \$215 (20) = \$4300

Web component

technical details: Movable Type, MySQL and WINKsite will be used to generate web and mobile-enabled data and database management, the non-mobile website will be designed in Flash and XHTML.

programmers fee: \$2000

Total Budget: \$7440

Request from the Gunk Foundation: \$2440

Request from Turbulence/New Radio & Performing Arts: \$5000