



Artists of the Little City Foundation's Multidisciplinary Art Center

***ALERT - Please Proceed to a Shelter
Nearest You***

November 18 - 29, 2003

University of Illinois at Chicago

GALLERY 400

College of Architecture and the Arts
School of Art and Design

Run! Don't Freeze!

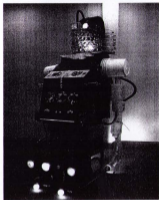
From atop the robot the Mayor deployed his forces. His regular agents couldn't take part in Operation Galaxy 400; funds for overtime had been elastically cut. So the agents completed their work in advance. Laboring on their behalf, support crews set up stockpiles and opened supply lines. They worked in shifts.

They first secured the homes. Extra-high fencing went up around each house, corners triple-knotted with rope, marked with red posts. Inside, halogen beam floor lamp airbags.

Then came the safety signs, videos and manuals. Walls were built and named. Emergency exit plans were drafted and approved. Lists compiled and laminated. Natural disasters formalized. As were hot items, flammable materials, insects that bite or sting, and things that are poisonous. "Be wary of strangers!"

She had been playing with her brother (who was a bit older) at building with bricks. The bricks were lightweight cardboard covered with brick-patterned contact paper. They played in the foyer with the front door open wide to let in afternoon sunlight and a little breeze. She was always deferring to her brother who knew best; or so she thought at the time. If he had really known best he would have known not to play by an open door. A black Lincoln (maybe an Oldsmobile) pulled up in front of the house maybe twenty, maybe thirty feet away. Men in dark suits wearing black sunglasses jumped out of the car like in the movies. Acting quickly, somehow she had enough time (though she had no time, really) to close the front door as quickly as

she could, except it wasn't very quickly—it couldn't be because in order to shut the front door itself one first had to shut all the stained glass panels that connected the door to its frame. Only then could she shut the door, at which point it was too



late. Being small, she was only able to reach a few panels. Her brother had scrambled. "Run! Don't freeze!" she thought. But she could no longer run. She had only one option: Play dead.

The Mayor convened his cabinet. All were identified as strangers. Food pantries were stocked with canned items; the items were given warning labels. Barricades replaced regular walls. Building plans indicated exit doors. Bundled tightly, yarn lay

piled.

Whenever she closed her eyes she could see them inside the corners of her eyelids. She never searched, but she knew that if she focused her attention just so, she would find them: the size of her thumb, dark fat brown cockroaches crawling into the corner and up the wall. She could hear them, and she could smell them. Under the plaster and latex there were thousands if not millions. A building crawling under its own skin.

Her weapon was a large bottle of Borax. She puffed the powder in every crevice and ringed a thick bead on the floor around her bed. A poison moat. Cross if you dare.

One day she snapped. As she stepped into the tub she saw one near the drain. Back a minute later can of spray in hand, she opened the shower curtain, pointed at the crack on the wall right where caulk was missing, and sprayed. Holding her breath, she sprayed more. Slowly, then fast, then much faster. Tiny ones first fell, then large ones scurried filling the bottom of the tub before she knew it. She ran and slammed the bathroom door. With duct tape she thickly sealed gaps around the door. A poison trap.

She didn't sleep in the apartment for a week. Maybe longer. When she returned (after pest control) she opened the door and found a death valley. Bulging, smelly, winged, fat, long, skinny. Crushed under her weight as she swept.

Sometimes you just need to know things in advance. At least

be prepared. Someone should have placed a warning on that building: ALERT. DON'T LIVE HERE. Instead, the apartment fooled her with rooms of light, more windows than walls.

She didn't warn anyone either when she finally left for good. By then it was too late. The disaster was over and she was left trying to get the roaches out of the corners of her eyelids.

In case of emergency run, don't freeze. Someone should have told her that, though overconfident in her own comfort, she assumed she would, but didn't. She stayed.



Everyone was on edge, except the Mayor's forces—they had been living like this for a long time. The Mayor had asked them

to take action and they had been ready. They spoke with the people of their fears, experiences and strategies in an effort to thwart rage and greater chaos. Slowly, they erected a banner to alert those who didn't yet know.

For each stranger just entering the site everything was strange. They read the banner:

ALERT! TAKE NO RISKS. OR RISK ALL.

—Jacqueline Terrassa, 11/19/03

The Multidisciplinary Arts Center at Little City Foundation

The Multi-Disciplinary Arts Center at Little City Foundation supports the creative expression and artistic culture of people with developmental disabilities through a variety of media including video, visual and performing arts. Little City Foundation is a residential center located in Palatine, Illinois; its mission is to provide services that will help children and adults with mental retardation and other developmental, emotional and behavioral challenges lead meaningful, productive lives. The arts program at Little City began in 1985 with the launching of Project VITAL: its goal was to make video production more accessible to people with developmental challenges and other disabilities. Out of this program, the Media Arts Program began producing

the award-winning KISS MY TV SHOW, which airs nationally on cable access channels. The media program also established a venue for artists with disabilities to create video, radio and internet projects. The Studio Arts Program began in 1994 as a temporary artist residency; it has since grown into a daily program. Little City residents and artists from other residential facilities work Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. alongside artist-facilitators who travel to the site. The Studio Arts Program allows the artists to pursue the arts as a vocation, offering them materials, space, equipment and support so that they can create, exhibit and sell their work.

In conjunction with *ALERT - Please Proceed to a Shelter Nearest You*, artists of the Little City Multidisciplinary Art Center have created *Evacuation Plan*, a new poster produced by POSTChicago. POST commissions Chicago-based artists to create posters for the public space. Exhibited throughout the city in various locations, POST features a new printed series monthly. Extensive documentation and information about POST may be found online at <http://www.post-chicago.com/>.

artist bio

The Multidisciplinary Arts Center at Little City Foundation

Artists working at the Multi-Disciplinary Arts Center at Little City Foundation include Harold Jefferies, Charles Beinhof, Dana Duerr Rita O'Connell, Ken Hirsch, Mike Lyon, John King, Jack Armstrong, Nick Diedrich, Kathy Kane, Jeanne Reindl, Lori Couve, Charles Seeberg, Martin Markowski, Jeris Reed, Marcellous Williams and Jerry Rose. Their work is facilitated by Brett Bloom, Jennifer Galicinski, John Grod, Esther Hwang, Pete Liebenow, Laura Piazza, Michael Piazza, John Ploof and Margo Rush.

Jacqueline Terrassa

Jacqueline Terrassa has been the education director at the Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago since 1998. She is a member of the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs' Public Art Committee, and has served on grant review panels for Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts. She holds a BFA from Washington University and an MFA from the University of Chicago.

At the Edge: Innovative Art in Chicago

ALERT - Please Proceed to a Shelter Nearest You is the fifth in the series At the Edge: Innovative Art in Chicago, running from August 26 to December 20, 2003. At the Edge unveils newly created works that are difficult to show in commercial spaces, that extend a working artist's practice, and/or push the boundaries of art experimentation. Marked by inquiry, experimentation and ingenuity this years artists' projects are the first in annual At the Edge exhibitions intended to encourage the most innovative aspects of Chicago's art community's current dynamism.

Credits

Gallery 400 is supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the College of Architecture and the Arts, University of Illinois at Chicago and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.