



KILL THE ENGINE - TELEVISION , CULTS, GYMS



Sometimes this column is fairly easy to write. Example: I have a bunch of zines. I write about them. Done. But sometimes this column is more difficult to write because what I want to write about requires a lot of background information and is fairly confusing. Today's column is of the background information/confusing variety, so bear with me.

I'm part of (pardon the overused term) an art collective called Okay Mountain that is based in Austin, Texas. We (Okay Mountain) started out as a commercial gallery, but over time began organically making work together by passing drawings back and forth while we were drinking beer at our picnic table in the gallery's backyard during working hours. These drawings morphed into a regular collaborative drawing assignment called the 7x7s (read more here). Based on these collaborative drawings, we were offered a solo show in Austin at the Creative Research Laboratory in 2008 (the University of Texas' satellite gallery space for graduate students). Since that show, we've been actively making work together and trying with each project to develop an increasingly more focused vision of the Okay Mountain aesthetic. So that's some very oversimplified background information. Now onto the confusing part.

Recently Okay Mountain was invited to participate in a group show at the Mark Moore Gallery in Culver City, CA. There are ten of us in the collective, so when we begin working on a project, the first step is to start talking in really broad terms about ideas that everybody can agree are somewhat interesting. Very loose concepts like television, cults, gyms... nothing super specific. The conversation will start there and after about 50 hours of talking, we'll have a rough idea about what we want to make for a particular show. For this show, we began talking about road trips and traveling and we had a few ideas being thrown around about creating a sculpture based on roadside attractions. It was about this time that I left Austin for two weeks on a family vacation to Canada. A lot can happen in two weeks.

I returned to town from my vacation and saw this giant game show spinner wheel being built in our studio. Apparently the conversation had morphed from travel to game shows. Specifically the idea about how a game show can change a person's life. Or about the misconception that a game show will actually change anything about a person's life. I missed many important conversations about this sculpture, so everything I'm writing here is pretty much second or third hand information.

I was absent for the entire conversation(s) about the text that would be placed on the wheel, so I'm not totally sure how it all happened. But I think it had something to do with coming up with phrases that represented events that (might) happen in real life that could be just as life changing as winning a few thousand dollars. But events that are more commonplace but as equally "life changing." Is that right, guys? I put life changing in quotes because I think the general consensus is that nobody's life is ever actually changed by winning some money on a game show. You leave the same shitty way you came.



However, I was present when we were trying to figure out how to lay the text out on the wheel and I was the guy that suggested hiring an actual graphic designer to help us out so that the text looked just as professional as the sculpture itself. I'm proud of that. Hooray for me.

Also, I wanted to point out that the text wasn't just applied to the sculpture with vinyl. We used cut vinyl for the painting process, but the finished sculpture is all paint, no vinyl. I don't want to give away too many secrets so I'll leave it at that.

This sculpture was designed so that it could be broken down into 13 sections and loaded into a box truck and driven to California to be installed on site.



So here's what the sculpture looks like after it was installed in the gallery space. Please forgive the wonky horizon line. If you want to look at some professional installation shots then check out the gallery's site. They also have images of all of the other work in the show.

Anyway, the point of the story is that it was a pretty awesome trip to California for an art show. Did I even mention that this blog is about going to California for an art show? The gallery was great, the people were great, the weather was great, and I saw a lot of really amazing artwork while I was in LA.