

CALIFORNIA ON MY MIND

Proposal for Soex Offsite

Principal artist Paulina Borsook, with original visual art provided by Paul Collins and audioscape by Rudy Trubitt

California On My Mind is a multimedia presentation that addresses water; power; old San Francisco money and new; and memory --- all in a matrix of strong sense of California place. The work is about fantasy, projection, and the suggestive powerful intersection between interior life and the mediasphere, both historical and current. It intertwines the personal and the political as located in the uniquely Californian context.

Consisting of a spoken-word performance in synch with an audioscape and images projected onto three potential, thematically-apt, San Francisco sites, *California on My Mind* proposes to create for audience members an immersive evocation of California psycho-geography.

The spine of *California on My Mind* is the spoken-word narrative, which directly references in mood and subject-matter the movie "Chinatown" and the books *Cadillac Desert* and *Imperial San Francisco*. The narrative also pays indirect homage to the books *A River Runs Through It* and *The Great Gatsby*.

The *California on My Mind* public event (approximately 25 minutes long) would take place at one of three possible sites in San Francisco, each selected for its potential along both thematic and practical axes. At each site, the images would be projected onto an exterior surface in synch with the spoken-word performance and the audioscape.

The approximately 90 images used for the projections consist of a mixture of found images, montages newly created for the work, and texts-as-art.

The texts-as-art are ten short scenes excerpted from the Great California Novel Borsook has on *her* mind, but that she has not yet written. This imaginary novel is referred to in her spoken-word narrative.

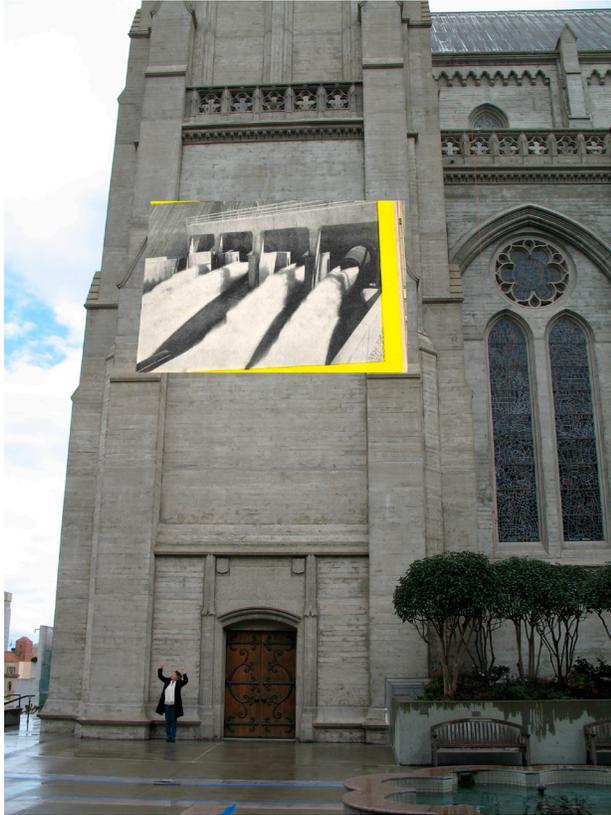
The five original montages created for *California on My Mind* were put together by Paul Collins, a Canadian expatriate artist who lives in Paris. Collins has never been to California, so his work wholly reflects the California of global mediaculture and of the imagination. The Collins montages serve as companionate mood-art for the ten short scenes from the imaginary novel, but they are not literal illustrations of it.

The text-as-art and the Collins montages make up the last ten images to be projected. The audience experiences these in silence except for the nature-sounds audioscape in the background.

The audioscape consists of a loop of fresh-water sounds excerpted from the audio collage, *In the Hull*, sound art created by Oakland audio engineer and nature-sounds recording expert, Rudy Trubitt.

The three potential locations for the performance of “California on My Mind” are:

The Courtyard at Grace Cathedral



Grace Cathedral, a fine cultural institution in the city of San Francisco, rests on the site of the old Crocker mansion --- with Charles Crocker being one of the original Big Four San Francisco robber barons who snarfed up all the land, railroads, water, and power of the newly-created state of California.

Unique advantages to this site are excellent sightlines (the images would be projected onto the outside of the northeastern tower of the church, high above audience members in the courtyard --- as portrayed in image at left), and the great acoustics possible in an enclosed stone courtyard. Grace Cathedral as an institution has a commitment to fostering community and culture, and Borsook knows some people associated with the local Episcopalian hierarchy who might be persuaded to advocate for the project. Besides, the church is right across the street from the Pacific Union Club (as power elite as you

can get in San Francisco) and kitty-korner to the Huntington Hotel with its Big Four restaurant. Robber barons rule!

Merced Manor pump house/Central Pump for the Hetch Hetchy water system



Also currently owned by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, this municipal building is the actual city structure that represents the damming of Hetch Hetchy (an act which broke John Muir's heart and in a sense created the modern environmental movement).

Unique advantages to this site are good sightlines (the images would be projected onto the eastern wall of the structure, as to be visible from audience members on the grassy area between it and the sidewalk --- as portrayed in image above right) and the overt poetry-of-water images and words sculpted into the facade of the building.

Merced Manor is currently undergoing reconstruction, so *California on My Mind* might appeal as a work that helps celebrate/mark the grand rehabilitation of the structure.

George Sterling Park



Poet George Sterling was one of the founders of The Bohemian Club (back when actual artists belonged to it, and before it was one of the secret societies of the powers that be), and was the person who first called San Francisco "the cool grey city of love". The park is appropriate for a performance of *California on My Mind* not simply because it rests atop Lombard reservoir (water! power! It's Chinatown, Jake!) in Russian Hill (where the old and new San Francisco rich reside) --- but because it is the site of the George Sterling memorial bench, erected in 1928 in the poet's name by Samuel Eastman, president of the Spring Valley Water Company. The Spring Valley Water Company was the precursor to the San Francisco Public Utility Commission, and was one of the classic California octopus-like grabbers of natural resources.

Unique advantages to this site are splendid city and bay views interspersed with tall trees. Images would be projected onto the backboard at the eastern end of the basketball courts.

California on My Mind: Technical considerations

The performance would rely on the following:

For the visuals

on a portable slide projector (rented or borrowed) + laptop (borrowed). The images are encased in Powerpoint; audioscape is on CD.

For the spoken-word and audioscape

both a Public Address system (rented) and a low-watt radio local-area transmitter (purchased): FM radio broadcast provides better sound quality.

Portable generator(s) or battery packs (rented)

A sound technician (to make sure radio and PA were working properly, as well as the audioscape); computer technician (to run computer); and general technical dogsbody (to run projector and help computer and sound technicians)

Participants would be encouraged to bring their own boomboxes or other portable FM radios, although this would NOT be a requirement for audience members; cheapo FM radios can be bought for the performance to hand out to audience members interested in them, much as headsets are handed out on airlines.

California on My Mind: Artist Biographies

Paulina Borsook

Paulina Borsook was on the masthead of *Wired* magazine during the magazine's early glory days. Her novella, "Love over The Wires" (1993), was the first fiction *Wired* published and was the first literary treatment of email adultery. "Nitestalker" (1996), written for the pioneering humor website, www.suck.com, was the first literary treatment of webstalking your ex. Her journalism, essays, and humor pieces have been appeared publications such as *Salon.com*, *Mother Jones*, and *The New York Times*; her book, *Cyberselfish/A Critical Romp Through the Terribly Libertarian World of High-Tech* (2000), was well and widely reviewed all over the world (see www.cyberselfish.com).

Borsook has been a regular commentator for NPR and has spoken at numerous universities (Brown, UCLA, Harvard Law School, Stanford --- just to name a few), conferences (Computers, Freedom, and Privacy; Technorealism) and arts organizations (National Film Centre of Canada, Artists Television Access).

Borsook has been a judge for the Electronic Frontier Foundation Pioneer awards and for the Webbys, and is a member of The Medinge Group, an international branding think-tank, where she serves on the committee for the annual Brands With a Conscience awards. She has been profiled in publications as diverse as *USA Today* and *Christianity Today*.

The website www.paulinaborsook.com archives her work going back into the 1980s. She has an AB from UC-Berkeley in psycholinguistics with a minor in philosophy, and an MFA from Columbia University, where she wrote her first published short story, "Virtual Romance", which was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Borsook is currently working on spoken-word projects: "Byzantium 550 AD" was presented at the Asilomar Microprocessor Conference and at Dark Markets/Vienna. She will be presenting in April 2006 "Wired for Sex: some investigations and some unanswered questions on sex and technology" as part of the Free-Range Intellectuals series at the Arts, Computation, and Engineering graduate program at the UC-Irvine.

Borsook is the curator for NWN, a mixed-genre works-in-progress performance series that is part of Concert Series at the Berkeley Hillside Club..

Borsook has lived in the Bay Area off and on most of her adult life, and currently resides in Santa Cruz, California. She commutes on a regular basis to Berkeley.

California on My Mind: Artist Biographies, 2

Paul Collins

Canadian artist Paul Collins has lived and worked in France since 1982. On the permanent faculty of Ecole Regionale des Beaux-arts de Normandie in Caen, he has exhibited paintings, photography, collage, and video in group and solo shows throughout Europe and Canada for 30 years.

Public collections holding Collins' work include Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Fond National d'Art Contemporain, and Banque d'ouvrres d'art du Canada.

Long associated with the Toronto artist-book publishing house, CoachHouse Press, Collins has created several books under its imprint and for other French and Canadian publishers of artist's books.

Collins has recently published a CD of experimental music, *Wipe Out*, with French underground composer Jean-Jacques Palix. An ongoing collaborative photography project with Canadian artist John Armstrong has been touring Europe and Canada since 2002: *Lakeshore* will be on display at Galerie Espace de Soutien a la Circulation Arstistique (ESCA) in Nimes, France from 24 March 2006 to 27 May 2006.

A show of Collins' videos and performance work will be held at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, in October 2006.

Collins lives in Paris, France.

Rudy Trubitt

Rudy Trubitt (www.trubitt.com) is the moderator of the Nature Sounds Society email/web group. He is also a musician: he is currently the bass player for Bay Area kids' fave cover-band, The Sippy Cups, and several lifetimes ago he performed with the Hawaiian new-wave band, The Squids. He works as an audio engineer (major projects include developing the sounds for Lionel trains) and is a writer with five books to his name.

California on My Mind: Budget

Implementation costs

Rental of Public Address system, generators + power-packs, projector. Includes technician services \$1,000

Purchase of low-watt FM transmitter \$450

Purchase of 50 FM radios, wholesale, with batteries \$400

\$1,850

Artist fee \$1,000

Total budget \$2,850

