



"In and Out" materials.

The project "In and Out" was at Gallery 400 in Chicago from 19 February through 23 March.

## In and Out

By Mary Murphy

I envy people who can organize yard sales. My one attempt to participate in this weekend economy was an anxious day avoiding people I knew. A couple of curiosities came to mind about buying stuff out in public; one is the uneasy thrill of scoring redundant items that once seemed like a good idea, another is the sheer embarrassment of the readiness of stuff that has accumulated. People who hesitantly stand by their hideous cast-offs and refuse to accept less than two dollars deserve respect.

Yard sales seem like an appropriate measure for the recent project at Gallery 400, a collaboration between New York-based artist, Benoit

Trevanin, Chicago's Resource Center, and the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Essentially, the project was an ongoing exchange of materials brought into or taken out of Gallery 400 by anyone interested in participating. Large crates made from materials provided by the Resource Center functioned as receptacles for the accumulation while nodding towards a minimalist joke. Items that moved in and out were logged onto a computer and the final printout was made available. The simplicity of the project was a relief. No exchange value was established—a participant did not have to bring in an item in order to remove something—and there were no restrictions on what could be brought in (except for live animals and explosives). On opening night, the gallery space contained only the empty bins which were returned to their vacant state by the end of the project.

Although the project was officially a collaboration, it quickly became known as Trevanin's project. Without an incentive to favor the project off of, "In and Out" simply flowed as business as usual for the other participants, whether that business was environmental education (the Resource Center) or creating a forum for contemporary culture (the School of Art and Design). One and usefulness have directed much of Trevanin's work: "Basically, I started to make things so that people would have to use them, which means if you just sell them, museums, studios, anyone in those niches want to buy something then you have to use it." Ideally, the materials brought into Gallery 400 that had been deemed useless would be reintroduced by another person's needs.

Which brings me back to yard sales. While the idea of exchanging redundant objects with meaning is an admirable one, the materials brought into the space were selected for their perceived exchange value—with the assumption that these items would be of use to someone else. But they had currency of some sort. Nobody brought leech, real leech. While a transmutation of values may have occurred, it was not their currency to useful, but rather from potential or latent value to its realization—which is a very different economy; it is a yard sale without small change.

Mary Murphy lives and works in Chicago.



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