Peter Manning

Experimental Game Design

3/20/16

Project #3: Intervene

“The Official Declaration of Uncertainty”

For this piece I tried to imagine what would be the most efficient way to intervene in the world, the highest ratio of impact to object. Anyone could make an impact with a bulldozer, but it would take a truly impressive artist to make a similar impact with something one ten-thousandth of the mass. Sadly, it turns out that I am not yet that artist.

My first idea for this piece was to “close down” the sculptures next to the Curry student center. I planned to set up a series of signposts saying “Art is closed for repairs. For your own safety, do not appreciate the sculptures.” Sadly, the requisite materials did not fit my budget. However, I enjoyed the idea of an unusual signpost. Brainstorming with my classmates was less than ideal- I found that I could not properly convey the surrealist tone properly, and spent most of my allotted time making clarifications rather than getting real feedback. That said, someone’s suggestion of putting specific hours of operation on the sign absolutely struck a chord with the direction I wanted to take this project.

The final result was less than I had hoped, but has its own charm. It is a printed sheet of paper, reinforced with cardboard and affixed to a store-bought cardboard stand. On the paper is the following: “Warning: Until further notice, Truth is Unknowable. Do not attempt to understand the world from 8am to 10pm Mon-Sat, and from 8am to 8pm Sun.” I enjoy the dry wit of the presentation. It takes influence from assorted works by Ben Vautier, Yoko Ono, and Terry Pratchett, asking the audience to question why they largely take the world around them for granted. Unfortunately, most of the message was lost in the presentation.

In a number of public places and at various times of day I would set up my little sign and wait. To my dismay it garnered very little attention. Part of that was no doubt the fact that it was clearly constructed cheaply from common materials, but it did not help that I lacked stealth and subtlety while trying to document people observing it. Another iteration would be more successful, especially if I could commission an actual metal sign to make it look more authentic. My goal with this project was to interfere with people’s assumption that they could and did understand the world, but in the end I was unable to overcome the apathy of those who were not interested in entering the magic circle.