Peter Manning

Experimental Game Design

4/26/16

Project #3: Intervene

“The Official Declaration of Uncertainty”

*The Official Declaration of Uncertainty* is an incidental piece using minimal material to foster disquiet in the audience. It combines the construction aspects of Fluxus with the philosophy of public art. The piece 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.” Along with the formality of the text, the piece as a whole is made to resemble an official signpost. The idea is to draw the audience’s attention to how little we as individuals ever tend to learn about the workings of the greater universe.

The piece is heavily influenced by Fluxus works such as George Maciunas’ *Literate Man vs. Post-Literate Man*, heavily based in the written word but relying on the audience’s ability to find message in the combination of word and form. As with many Fluxus pieces, it asks the audience to understand it first as a set of instructions, and then subsequently as a contemplation of those instructions. Initially, the participant is confused and mildly bemused by the piece. Then, if they engage with the piece, they find that next comes the “don’t think about elephants” moment. They remember that the world around them is inherently chaotic and they don’t really understand it. That is assuming that they choose to enter the magic circle. The resonant ideas are lost when the viewer merely glances at the piece before walking past. This is one of those instances where minimal materials are not always as effective as something more professional.

The piece also takes inspiration from street art, in that it is an attempt to interfere with public spaces with artistic endeavor. *The Official Declaration of Uncertainty* is an attempt to impose the artist’s ideas onto a public space, and in doing so present those ideas to all who occupy it.

Future iterations of this piece would benefit from a higher quality of production. Ideally the piece would be made as an official-looking sign, possibly affixed to an actual post. It may also be worth creating a larger quantity of these signs and posting them in various locations, if only to see how different groups of people react to them. The piece is an attempt at interfering with our standard perspective of numbness to the incredible complexity of the universe.