Research Grant – Fall 2008

Title or Proposal: TANGO INTERVENTION

Faculty member: ROBERT LAWRENCE

Unit: Art & Art History

Abstract:
“Tango Intervention” is a series of site-specific public art performances, recontextualized by extensive websites that recast the Neo-Dada public interventions as serious sociopolitical artistic investigations. Support requested will supplement confirmed external funding to develop and present performances, including those in Washington DC and Cambodia, in conjunction with residencies at Salisbury University, MD; and Meta House Art Center in Phnom Penh. Funding will also be applied to reimburse expenses already incurred for presentations in Vienna, Austria and NYC this year. Funding is critical during my sabbatical year as I have time for complete concentration but am handicapped by the 50% Sabbatical pay.

Proposal:
“Tango Intervention” (“TI”) clearly supports the goals of the college in many ways. TI is interdisciplinary, innovative, and gaining visibility in a growing international arena. In the last few months TI has been featured at International Festivals in Vienna, Austria and New York City. TI is a complex project with many facets. Each Tango Intervention first manifests in public as Argentine Tango danced where dance is not expected. Before this public intervention, extensive research is done regarding the location in which the TI takes place. TI is an example of emerging art addressing ideas of Psychogeography. This new form of “Social Sculpture” rethinks Situationist strategies of the 50’s. TI is uniquely positioned to garner considerable visibility and significant international opportunities in a growing artistic field. A unique contribution to this field is my use of the Internet to re-contextualize the meaning of the public component of TI. During the public performance TI is encountered as an absurdist and/or romantic gesture in the face of anonymous urban routine. It has enormous mass appeal. When the audience refers to the website the work takes on a much more pointed deconstructivist dimension, using the colonial history of tango as a lens examining contemporary social issues. Response to this project has been broadly enthusiastic. Since last year, I have received support from a wide range of organizations, not just from the Neo-Situationist sector of the art world, but also from professionals in History, Sociology, Geography, Dance and other fields. This began with the involvement of the Chicago Parks District and continued with the involvement of History Link in Seattle, the NYC Tenement Museum, and St John’s University. The New York international festival, Conflux included TI in both 2007 and 2008. TI was in the 5th International Mobile Music Workshops, hosted this year by the University of Vienna, Austria. Documentation of TI was curated into the gallery exhibition of the annual conference of the International Digital Media and Arts Association in Philadelphia. I am invited by Salisbury University to produce TI for Washington DC. I will also perform TI in Cambodia at the invitation of Meta House, in Phnom Penh. The organizers of Meta House are based in Berlin and I plan to produce additional actions for TI in Berlin. I am also working in Berlin with Mirjam Struppek, of Urban Media.
Research, and director of the 2008 Urban Screens Festival and Conference. TI received partial CVPA funding last year. I seek additional funding to support production and presentation costs for these and other TI events. I have personally financed performances in Tampa, Chicago, Seattle and New York. As I predicted in my first CVPA grant, the project is becoming self-funding through external grants and the sponsorship of outside organizations. I have already received considerable funding from outside sources -- significantly more than the amount that I am seeking from CVPA. Funding is critical now during my sabbatical year when I am on only ½ salary but am able to devote myself entirely to this project. CVPA support combined with secured and growing outside support for TI will certainly raise my professional profile and the visibility of the arts at USF in significant international venues.