

Andrew Ginzel and Kristin Jones

Installing the Invisible

Although others indulge us with electronic facsimiles of reality, New York-based Kristin Jones and Andrew Ginzel want to reinforce our perception of "the real world as real." Moving out of the art gallery and into the city, they construct chance encounters with what they term "the phenomena of life itself."

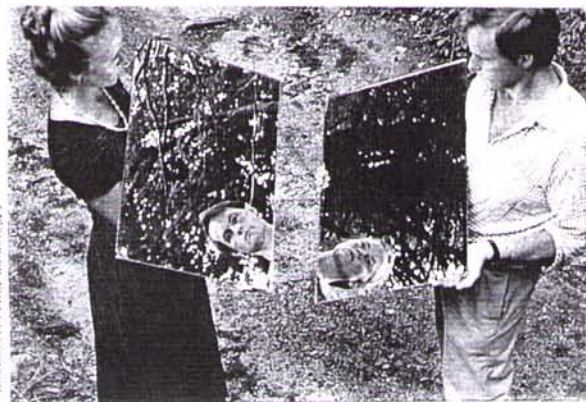
Jones and Ginzel create installations that could best be described as dynamic multisensory environments. Often temporary, the installations typically inhabit urban public spaces such as Manhattan's City Hall Park, the Brooklyn Bridge, Times Square and, most recently, a downtown Philadelphia street.

The installations are designed to reveal fundamental physical forces that are otherwise invisible — especially in the city, where the forces of nature are seemingly extinct. "Apotheosis," a 1994 Public Art Fund proposal for Hudson River Pier 32, invites New Yorkers to experience the mercurial forces of nature, "the fluctuating tides, wind and cycles of light."

Human nature was the subject of "Mimesis," last year's Creative Time installation on 42nd Street — a street, Ginzel observes, that may not possess a single tree river-to-river, but is very "natural" in manifesting human instincts. Revealed by flashes of light in the depths of a theater lobby was a topiary figure meant, according to her, "to be the primeval image of people on the street."

In 1992, when the Stuyvesant High School for gifted science students moved to a new building at Battery Park City, Jones and Ginzel constructed "Mnemonics," 400 eight-inch glass block "reliquaries" that were randomly

Memento-embedded glass blocks interspersed throughout New York's Stuyvesant High School in an installation by Ginzel and Jones.



embedded throughout the new building. Alumni from the school's first 88 years filled blocks with dance cards, diplomas and lunch money, while future mementos will accrue through 2080. Other blocks hold fragments of the wide world that lies beyond Manhattan island: the Berlin Wall, the Great Wall of China, Omani frankincense, a leaf from Sri Lanka's sacred Bo tree. "The installation implicates the students as they make discoveries," emphasize the partners.

Just nearing 40, the husband-and-wife team (Jones holds fine-arts degrees from RISD and Yale and Ginzel claims to be self-taught) has collaborated on more than 50 installations in the last 10 years and has garnered many awards — most recently the 1994 Rome Prize in the Visual Arts. Perhaps because of the collaborative nature of their partnership, Ginzel believes that the work is "egoless in its approach" — less about making an artist's "statement" and more about engaging the public in a time-based exploratory process. Art provokes questions; Jones and Ginzel design questions into our everyday environments.

MARGARET McAVIN

