

## Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks: Powel House

### Philagrafika Presents: *Megawords* at Landmarks Contemporary Projects

September 5 - 12, 2006



Philagrafika presents: *Megawords*. With works by artists **Dan Murphy** and **Anthony Smyrski**, *Megawords* is the first exhibition in the **Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks'** new **Contemporary Projects** program. For this exhibition, Murphy and Smyrski will create a site-specific installation at the museum, the first exhibition of contemporary art in this unique and important historic space since the 1770's. The project is curated by **Robert Wuilfe**, founder of **Landmarks Contemporary Projects**.

In their installation at Powel House, Murphy and Smyrski will take advantage of the visual grandeur of the 18th century structure as a stark contrast to the modern urban imagery of their *Megawords* project. Building upon their innovative use of commercial printing techniques, the Powel House will become a distribution site for *Megawords* magazine, hearkening back to the 18th century tradition of populist publications such as Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, which was printed just down the street from the museum.

Additionally, by projecting photographs and video within the house, audiences will enter an immersive environment in which a reconstructed version of the past meets the reality of the present.

*Megawords* is an ongoing, collaborative artistic investigation by Murphy and Smyrski. Through their artwork, they address issues of community and document people surviving in cities all over the world. Prior to this exhibition, the primary medium of this exploration has been the freely-distributed and critically acclaimed print publication *Megawords*. According to Murphy and Smyrski, *Megawords* strives to be a "free" magazine in the broadest sense of the word. Free of advertising for starters, but also free of any editorial format, legal owner or commercial purpose. What's left is a collection of interesting images, stories, people and documentary findings. They believe this material is powerful enough to speak for itself, which is why they present it with as little editorial framing as possible. Through conscious juxtaposition of images and text, Smyrski and Murphy invite the reader to draw their own conclusions. In their work, they attempt to spark thought and dialogue, and inspire a curiosity about the world outside one's immediate life, a curiosity that potentially will lead to understanding.

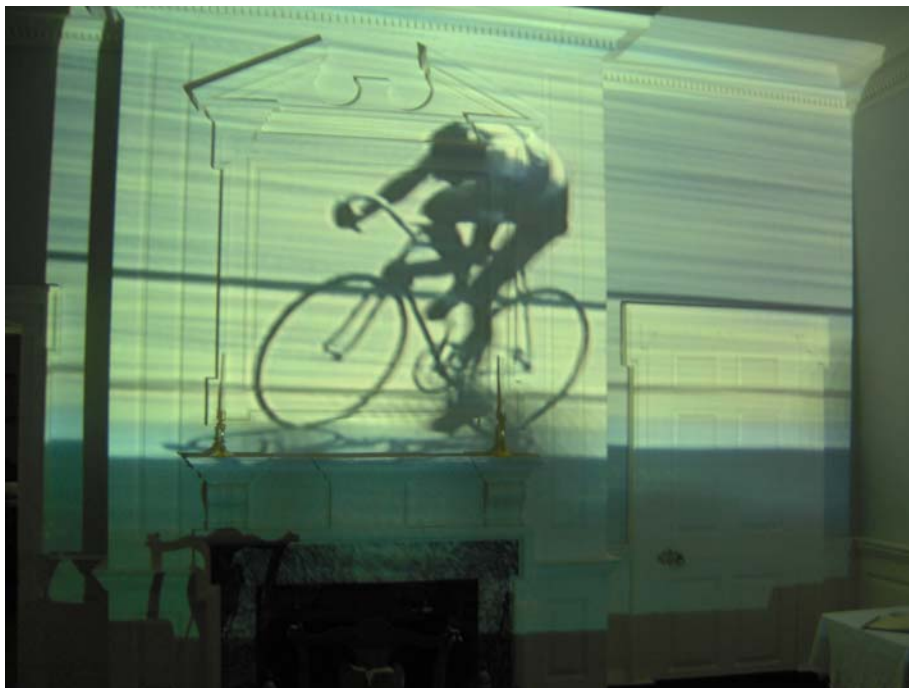


In addition to the exhibition, Smyrski and Murphy will participate in a free public panel discussion on Wednesday, September 6th at 6pm at the Powel House Museum. The discussion will also include: **Alex Baker, Ph.D.**, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; **Shelley Langdale**, Associate Curator of Prints and Drawings, Philadelphia Museum of Art; **Edward A. Mauger**, former Dean at Rutgers University, and an author, researcher and raconteur specializing in 18th century life in Philadelphia; Artist and author **Steven Powers**, aka **ESPO**; Photographer and Whitney Biennial participant **Zoe Strauss**. Through the panel discussion, we will examine the way the medium of print is ideally suited to communicate issues of history, social class and the urban environment to contemporary audiences. The typical visitor to the Powel House may have a strong interest in history, politics or architecture, but is often less conversant in art history and



contemporary art. They may be intimidated by the perception of exclusivity of the art world. This is unfortunate and ironic, because as panelist Boudreau has written, "Powel House has been a center of Philadelphia's arts community since the 1770's." By taking contemporary art out of the 'white cube' of a typical gallery or museum, Philagrafika will provide a surprising, accessible context for an audience experience. By using printmaking to link Philadelphia's modern urban life and its historic past, the project will demonstrate the power of art to provide a new way of seeing the world.

**More images from the installation:**





Partner Information:



**Philagrafika's** mission is to promote and sustain printmaking as a vital and valued art form by providing artistic, programmatic and administrative leadership for large-scale, cooperative initiatives with broad public exposure. Philagrafika builds upon the Philadelphia region's rich history and abundant artistic resources to increase critical dialogue, provide benefits for the local arts community, and enhance the city's presence as an international center for printmaking. They do this through an international contemporary art festival, an annual invitational portfolio, and special projects. Their programs have been designed to present new curatorial and critical models for printmaking-models in which the medium is presented as an integral component of current artistic practice. For more information, please contact Rebecca Mott at [mott@philagrafika.org](mailto:mott@philagrafika.org). **Philagrafika**, 728 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19146; 215-557-8433; <http://www.philagrafika.org>

For more information about **Megawords**, please visit [www.megawordsmagazine.com](http://www.megawordsmagazine.com).

**Megawords**magazine

