

Notes on Wind-Up: Walking the Warp

The definition of a weave structure is the interlacement of two sets of threads at right angles. The first set is called the "warp." The second set, the "weft," weaves through the warp to create a cloth. The making of a warp is performed in the first phase of the project *Wind-Up*.

The proposal to perform a warping process evolved from several cultural and visual art positions simultaneously. First, the making of cloth is a hugely contested arena of cultural production at this time. The human labor to make any textile, either by machine or hand, requires a complicated sequence of repeated and time-consuming actions. In the US, most of our woven goods are now produced "offshore" in questionable working environments and questionable practices involving the human rights of workers, living wages, and the freedom to voice grievances.

As both performance and sculpture, *Wind-Up: Walking the Warp* has alignments with aspects of process art of the 60's-70's (Morris, Hesse, Serra), form resulting from the action applied to material, yet the actions required to make a functional weaving warp are very particular, repetitive and incremental with little allowance for variance or individual improvisation. The use-function of a warp directed all aspects of our movement and the resulting form; the sculpture is infused with this specificity of time, repetitive labor, and accumulated materiality.

I knew from years of teaching weaving in group studios and also from a textile delegation trip to China - watching all that fuchsia and golden silk thread being thrown around on gigantic bobbin and warping machines - that these textile production processes were visually commanding. The yellow green neon-colored thread of urban safety gear was used in *Wind-Up* to heighten perceptual presence. This visuality was one important goal of the project -- to make a sculpture that was first a highly visual experience, accessible to many, and then available for critical discussion and debate, eliciting cultural alignments and questions on many levels.

To make *Wind-Up*, we developed a collaborative team and a working process that allowed us to understand the challenges of our particular production, both technical and social -- in a way we were working from the inside of a process to understand something about time, materiality, and cultural production. Thinking through effective communication and quality of group process was a second important goal of the project. To achieve this goal, the group undertook bi-weekly practice sessions incorporating discussions of group process and stressing honesty among participants. Also considered were quality food for energy and individualized music to pace the walking, body strengthening stretching exercises for fatigue, discussion of durational art forms and walking meditations, and undertaking preliminary performance art exercises utilizing the expertise of other artists. During the gallery performance, we managed a rotation schedule with few breaks, collectively walking approximately 33 miles over a 6-day period.

My third goal was to develop a conceptual structure that involved a constellation of participants, leaders, sites and audiences, and to actualize the use-function of the performed warp by weaving it into cloth. In one way this conceptual structure of art production can be likened to the woven textile itself -- a cloth is created through the ordering of many individual parts and actions; the term "weaving" is historically used as a metaphor for ideas about coming together, for community.

I invited Sara Rabinowitz to be the lead in the next phase of the project. Her working title is *Wind-Up: Meandering the Labyrinth*. At the close of the Hoffman exhibition,

the warp thread was completely removed from the frame and given to Rabinowitz. The warp will be woven into cloth, cut, sewn, and re-performed in future collaborative actions under Rabinowitz's guidance with dressmaker Kristin Frieman, artist Annie Egleson, myself, and other artists and participants.

-- Anne Wilson, June 2008

Wind-Up: Walking the Warp, performance and sculpture
Performance January 20 - 25, 2008

Rhona Hoffman Gallery, 118 North Peoria Street, Chicago
Anne Wilson: Portable City, Notations, Wind-Up exhibition
January 21 - March 1, 2008

Performance warping team: Carla Duarte, Annie Egleson, Jongock Kim, Rosemary Lee, Christy Matson, Rachel Moore, Sara Rabinowitz, Rana Siegel, and Anne Wilson.



Photo: Surabhi Ghosh