



## **FINAL REPORT**

Elizabeth Ellsworth and Shannon Mattern

Project Media Space] [Public Space (MSPS), a project funded by a 2005 Faculty Development Grant, has succeeded in introducing curricular innovations; forging new relationships between University departments, with various civic and cultural organizations around the city, and with other universities, both domestic and international; and increasing the visibility of the Department of Media Studies & Film. And in the process, we've generated a vibrant dialogue, which in turn inspired exciting creative and production work, by both students and faculty, that examines the issues at the heart of our project: how media construct and shape public spaces, and how those spaces shape people's interactions with media.

The very first day of the Fall 2005 semester marked the first meeting of the MSPS Seminar, the flagship course for the project, led by Drs. Ellsworth and Mattern. The course used the city as a laboratory, or an extended classroom; students attended, over the course of the semester, a variety of programs, offered both within and outside the university, that allowed them to think and experiment in the public spaces of the city, and with other organizations concerned about the project's themes. The course was offered again by Dr. Mattern in the spring. Additional MSPS-linked courses included Digital Architecture (Fall 2005) and Exhibition Design (Fall 2005), both cross-listed with the Department of Architecture, Interior Design & Lighting; and Location Aware Media (Fall 2005), cross-listed with the Department of Design & Technology.

A few weeks into the Fall semester, we publicly launched the project with a panel discussion involving faculty in various New School departments, each discussing how his or her own discipline studies the place of media in public spaces. The discussion between Jaeho Kang from the Department of Media Studies & Film; Vyjayanthi Rao from the Program in International Affairs and the Department of Anthropology; Stephanie Owens from the Department of Design & Technology; and Linnaea Tillett from the Department of Architecture, Interior Design & Lighting filled the Parsons Auditorium.

Then in October, we welcomed representatives from the Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit urban planning and design organization, to discuss "How to Turn a Place Around: How Public Spaces are Created." Also this month, students in the MSPS Seminar visited Brooklyn College to share in Media Studies faculty member Steve Ausbury's "Invisible Cities" project, which enables high school students in an after-school program to use media to explore the notion of "utopia."

November brought a student colloquium, featuring the scholarly and creative work of three Media Studies students whose work addresses issues central to Project MSPS. At the same time, Dr. Mattern chaired a panel, co-developed by Dr. Ellsworth and titled "Teaching the Urban: Space and Place in Interdisciplinary Pedagogy," at the annual American Studies

Association conference in Washington, D.C.; Project MSPS was among four projects featured on the panel.

As the semester came to a close, Natalia Ramirez, the 2005 MSPS Graduate Fellow, hosted a screening of four videos – both artists' videos and documentaries – that served as a fitting end-of-semester counterpart to the mid-September panel discussion. And finally, December 20 marked the deadline for submissions of scholarly and creative work produced in the fall MSPS seminar. Yet this deadline, instead of representing closure, catapulted us into the next stage of the project. These seminar submissions – along with submissions from interested Media Studies faculty and students and faculty in MSPS-linked courses – were considered for inclusion in a two-week May 2006 exhibition, organized in partnership with the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) and held in the LMCC's large gallery space at 15 Nassau Street.

But even before the jury met to choose projects for the exhibition, the Spring MSPS calendar of events began with a visit from Antenna Design, an award-winning media and industrial design firm. Later in the semester, the Center for Urban Pedagogy visited to discuss with students how they use media to educate various publics about urban infrastructure, and in early April students in the MSPS course experienced a beta-version of the New-York Historical Society's cell phone tours of historical sites in the city's Lower East Side. In addition, our 2006 MSPS Graduate Fellows, Vanessa Pappas and Denisse Andrade, organized a colloquium of interdepartmental student work on MSPS-related issues.

For two exciting weeks in April, the Department of Media Studies & Film hosted renowned philosopher Brian Massumi and choreographer/philosopher Erin Manning, who, during their stay, addressed issues germane to Project MSPS: how new media environments shape social interaction and generate movements, sensations, and affects that open up possibilities for thought and action in public spaces and events. The two-week calendar, organized by Dr. Ellsworth, featured a well-attended public lecture, regular office hours open to University students and faculty, and an intensive two-day seminar that included participants from other New School departments and other local universities. This pathbreaking program, which again forged new relationships and increased the department's visibility, was generously supported by the Department of Architecture, Interior Design & Lighting and the NSGS Dean's Office

All the while, the students in Dr. Mattern's Media Exhibition Design course were learning about the history and theory of exhibition design in order to prepare themselves to design and install the LMCC exhibition. The exhibition jury met in early March and selected 15 student and faculty projects, including a project created by Dr. Ellsworth and her creative partner, that would be featured in the show, and the Exhibition Design class immediately went to work. They developed a theme, designed an exhibition catalogue, developed a floorplan for organizing the individual exhibits in the gallery, created wall text and marketing materials and spread the word about the exhibition, and, in early May, spent several long days installing the exhibition in the gallery at 15 Nassau. The May 9 opening attracted several hundred visitors and generated some local press coverage. Over the following 11 days, the gallery was home to numerous student- and faculty-organized public events: an audio show featuring several world premieres by international sound artists and composers and live performances; artists' talks; a reading series; and a second faculty panel discussion, this time featuring Provost Arjun Appadurai, Jonathan Bach from the Program in International Affairs; Edward Keller from the Department of

Architecture, Interior Design & Lighting, and Colleen Macklin from the Department of Design & Technology. The exhibition wrapped up with a presentation by highly reputed media artist Krzysztof Wodiczko, whose visit was generously co-sponsored by the Department of Design & Technology.

Even as this semester draws to a close, the projects, relationships, and dialogues fostered by Project Media Space | Public Space continue. There are plans for future collaborations between departments, universities, and cultural organizations linked through Project MSPS. The project's courses and programs have inspired several student thesis projects and opened avenues for interdivisional faculty research partnerships. Our Faculty Development Grant has been supplemented by financial assistance from numerous New School departments and administrative offices and by the unfailing support of Dean Linda Dunne, Dean Carol Wilder and Associate Chair Dawnja Burris. Our initial award of \$6000 blossomed into something worth much more. We are immensely grateful to the Office of the Provost for making possible this most memorable year.