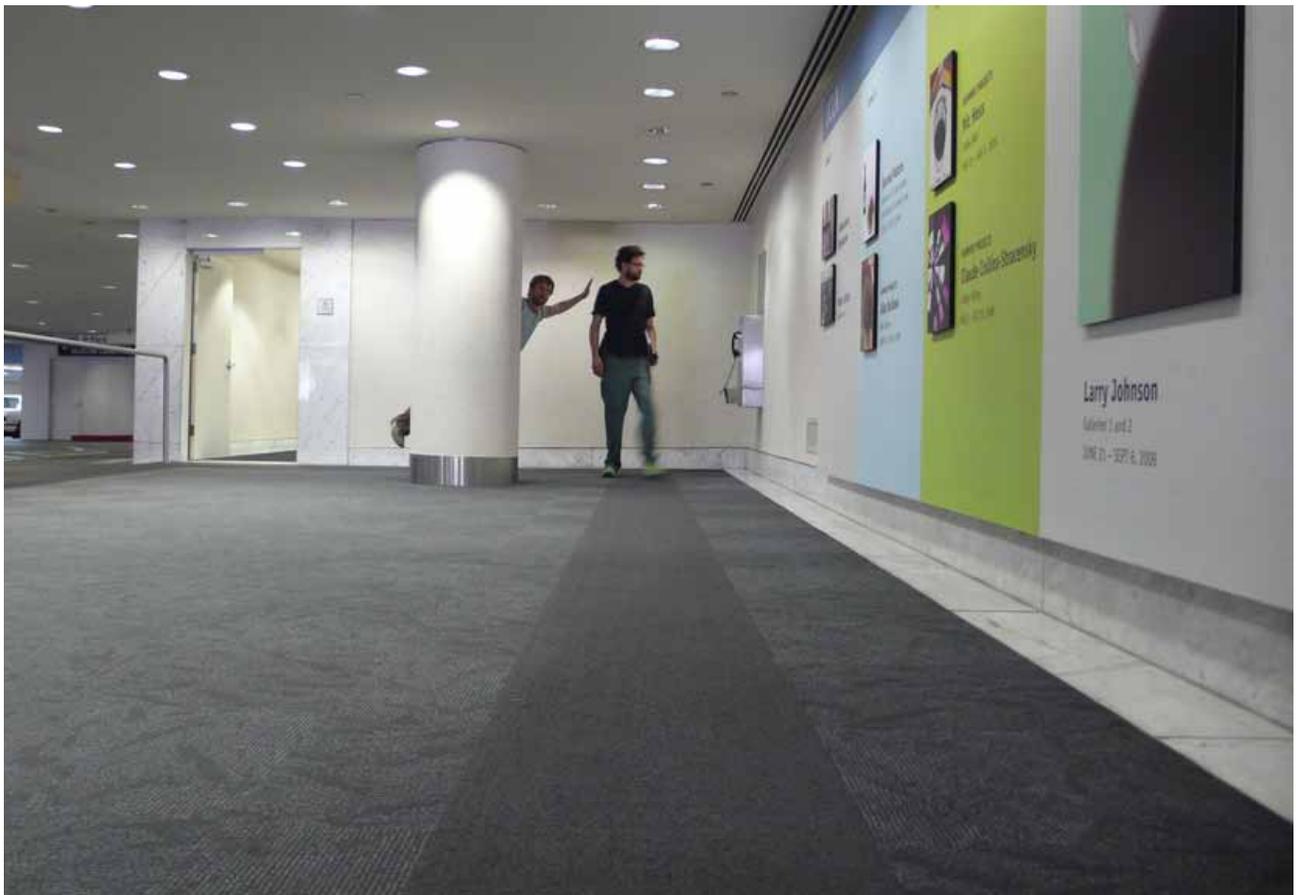




Case Study #eec002

**The Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center
10899 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90024**



Case Study: The Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center

Various forms of energy flow within, through, and around the Museum. The most coveted being that which transpires between art object and viewer. For this unseen force is what the institution is built upon.

Whereupon we introduce the second most significant form of energy identified at the site: That being the capital upon which the endeavor is initiated and perpetuated.

Many other forms of energy also are encountered, some of which are intended and some not. Thus, in places we found an indubitable stew of vibratory sensations.

Contributing factors included things like cellular and radio signals ricocheting off marble into energized zones, or poor airflow and dismal lighting suffocating spaces in stark institutionalality. Places like these offered a palpable sense of dread. Conversely, some areas offer idyllic expanses that catalyze the euphoric horizontal energy flows that take place in non-hierarchical exchanges of creativity.

The entity known as The Hammer Museum is currently growing apart from a darker past. The workers who dedicate their efforts are crafting outstanding cultural experiences for visitors. The joy and pride emerging from these accomplishments sends positive energy through various strata. Our findings and the adjustments we propose here are intended to fortify their efforts and qualitatively improve the charges, sparks, nebulae, and vortexes revolving around, within and through the architectural space.



Capital—crystalized and institutionalized, Sept. 6, 2009.



Several kinds of energy course through the Hammer Museum. Sept. 20, 2009.



Gallery view of “Second Nature: The Valentine-Adelson Collection at the Hammer,” Sept. 6, 2009.

Assessment

Our Methods

We use analytical and experiential techniques to assess an institution's energy flows.

We start with a thorough gathering of any subject, fact, rumor or notion pertaining to the institution. We then filter this information through various methods of dialectical analysis, ecological critique, rationalizations and other philosophical interrogations in order to understand the personal, institutional, historical, political, and ecological forces at work in the situation.

But knowledge that can be gained from books or the internet is limited. A large part of knowledge must be experienced to be gained and understood. Our experiential research begins with us as real people. We bring to any situation the baggage of our lives—our personal histories, relationships, knowledge, skills. These spheres of personality create narratives that are often in conflict with the prevailing narrative under which the institution is built. We are out of synch with the corporate story of America's great businessmen who have led us all into prosperity. We are out of synch with the global story of energy production consumption. We are out of synch with the stories of the avant garde, the rise of modernist art, and multi-million dollar architecture. We are out of synch with the sexy art world and their sexy cocaine parties. So to the Hammer, we bring an outsider's view, attempting to explain the differences between all of these stories.

An outsider's perspective is just the tip of the iceberg. The key to what we do is shifting our perspective. As consultants, we attempt to go deeper, to see things from different angles, from different consciousnesses. We can start to see things that are hidden, look around corners, see through walls. Here are just a few of the techniques we have employed in our energy assessment:

1. Psychedelics: Sacred medicines have been used for thousands of years to see beyond what we call "reality." What we sense using these chemicals and plants are no less real than the things we see through a microscope or telescope, but imperceptible to the naked eye.



Divining the river in P5, Sept. 27, 2009.



Detecting weirdness in P2, Sept. 27, 2009.



Bad vibrations outside Billy Wilder Theater box office, Sept. 6, 2009.

2. Derive: We drift and wander, connecting with the energy flows and letting them pull us where they may.

3. Theater of Cruelty: We skeptically attack the narratives that objects and systems of culture present to us. When the link between our bodies and the body of knowledge is gone, the pieces fall to the floor, ready to be reconstructed. We reconstruct them from our new perspective to find how we've been left out of the process.

4. Empathic Resonance: We project our love vibrations out to the space we're in as a bat echo-navigates by a kind of sonar. "Perception is an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy."—John Dewey.

5. Invisible Theater: We play out scores and improvise together to materialize a direct experience, in which we are sensitive to connections between us and the world. We use our bodies to interpret the things around us instead of using our brain.

6. Ekphrasis: A rhetorical device where one medium of art tries to relate to another medium. We address the art and architecture of the Hammer museum by reinterpreting what we see as a dance or performance. We can then get to the heart of the matter by comparing and contrasting the two works of art.

7. Clowning: Costumes, props, funny-walking, goofing around and "freaking" are just some of the techniques that both clowns and shamens use to pull themselves and others out of our normal states of mind. New opportunities for experience are opened up as our protective facades are loosened.



Clowning in "Contingency Space," Sept. 27, 2009.



Rupturing the link between viewed & viewer, Sept. 6, 2009.

reconcile with this enigmatic collide when considering site-specific work within the museum.

A generous guide, identifying himself simply as Mark, led us through spaces like the loading dock—eliciting a world of ideas of what could manifest there—places like the secret escalator—a non-functional architectural relic, a metaphor to the catering of wealth we continue to do in this country—and other environs we saw but did not see.

We conclude that the relationship between the museum and corporation may not be so unlike that of individuals who find themselves in an abusive marriage that is difficult to separate from. The nature of this friction is not surprising considering the philandering Mr. Hammer and the kind of manipulative relationships he pursued with wives, mistresses, offspring, the U.S. and Soviet governments, and the blurry distinction he created between his personal pursuits and his business affairs.² It is clear that the museum, despite the name it must begrudgingly carry on, would do well to separate from as much of the residual ego that haunts the space as possible.

At the base of the Armand Hammer's now eerily walled-in personal escalator, in a makeshift store-room/office, we mused about the elaborate trysts that brought corporate and public spheres into the awkward dance that gave birth to the museum. We played the parts of tree house club members, swapping secret tales of a strange adult world we'd seen and heard of. Our guide, Mark, topped it all when he disclosed that a river flows below and around the Hammer's subterranean parking structure.

During our assessment, we were performing the space by interjecting our own personal histories into the theater of the institution. In Charles R. Garoian's essay on the subject, he claims "by performing the museum, viewers bring their personal identities into play with the institution's dominant ideologies. In doing so, they are able to imagine and create new possibilities for museums and their artifacts within their contemporary cultural lives."



Armand Hammer's private escalator, now inactive, Sept. 27, 2009.



Sounding the garden courtyard with bells, Sept. 27, 2009.



Occidental Petroleum Disclaimer, 2009, 56 sec. video. [Click here to view on YouTube](#)

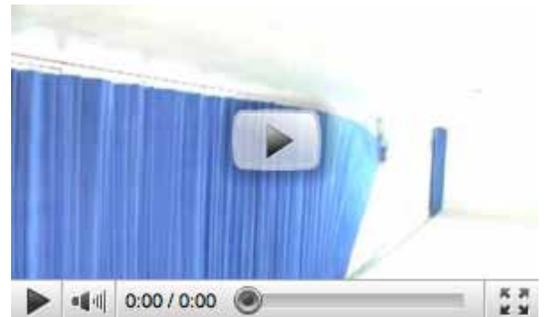
The Hammer offers a tightly controlled experience to visitors. We disrupted the give-take, channeled exchange indoctrinated by the traditional pedagogical arrangement of the institution by employing performative acts. With these we brought creative fields of energy from the confines of the gallery spaces into the corridors, gardens, garages and elevators of the structure. This laid claim to, and positively charged, areas where more dismal phantasms were dawdling.

People coming in contact with our performances were not treated as spectators, but offered an opportunity to participate to contribute to the growth of the buzz being stimulated. For example, Mark graciously joined with us as a delightful player while he led us around otherwise inexcusable parts of the museum. We were relieved to find such openness rather than a grimacing authority reluctantly opening doors while casting doubt on our exploits. As a trio, we spread energy that would otherwise be sequestered to the gallery spaces or performance stages of the institution.

We found an area on the north end of the Gallery Level that is home to nothing but a pair of large curtains and some amazing acoustics. We named this the “Contingency Space,” since we feel like anything COULD happen here, but rarely DOES anything happen here. The space is also often referred to as “The Eyebrow.”



Sound Plop Gallery 3, 2009, 36 sec. video.
[Click here to view on YouTube](#)



Curtain Drag in “Contingency Space,” 2009, 49 sec. video.
[Click here to view on YouTube](#)

Adjustments

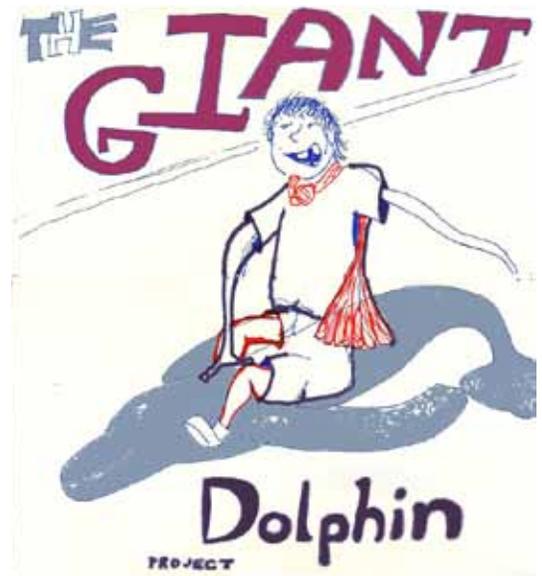
Our assessment identifies some areas that may require an energy adjustment. Below are a few adjustments that we would like to pursue.

The Giant Dolphin Project

Tom had a dream that our friend Karl was riding a giant dolphin around in the air as his project at an art opening at the Wind Tunnel in Pasadena. The next day we discovered that Occidental Petroleum is a partner in a natural gas project in the Persian Gulf called “The Giant Dolphin Project.” It happens to be “the premier transborder natural gas project in the Middle East,” drilling into one of the world’s largest gas reservoirs at various points in the bottom of The Persian Gulf, and piping the gas from Doha to Abu Dhabi.

In our business, there are no such things as coincidences. We believe that this dream is a portent of a future time when a robust creative culture can eventually liberate itself from the oft-time exploitative market forces that traditionally nourished it. Indeed, we see this trajectory already taking hold in Los Angeles—where 20 years ago defense companies were the foremost employers in the region, and now that industry is surpassed by the creative sector in terms of the number of people it employs.

We wish to foster this trajectory by staging a public celebration of creative effort over entropic forces. This would entail a psychedelic light show in the Contingency/Eyebrow space. Assisting us would be light magicians Karl Erickson and Robby Herbst, a dancing troupe, and musicians from The Faraway Places Modal Energy Unit.

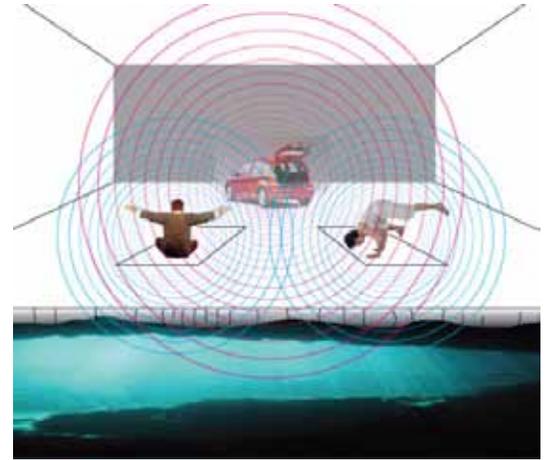


The Giant Dolphin Project, Dream Drawing, 2009.
Pen, pencil, marker on paper.

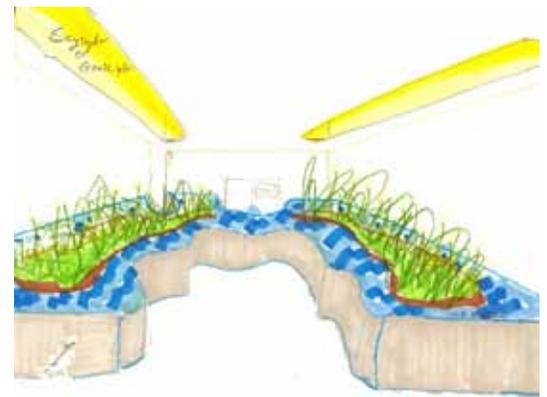
Underground River: Contact

There is an underground river that starts from a spring somewhere in Bel Air and runs through the UCLA campus and underneath the Hammer Museum. The river has been concreted over, sump-pumped, and channeled into a network of underground pipes below Westwood. We believe that the balance of culture & nature is way out of whack due to this artificial routing of a natural flow, and that this affects the Hammer Museum in ways that are unnoticed, but tangible.

Our desire is to make contact with the river flow and the energy that the water carries. To do this, we propose a 10-minute meditation in the very lowest level of the Hammer's parking garage. The consultants will sit on mats near a car parked in the middle of the lot. The car's stereo will play a hypnotic recording of bells and drums at a very loud volume as the consultants, in a psychedelic level of consciousness, mesh their mental greetings with the sound. The resulting vibrations will pound through the concrete and metal pipes and make contact with the river.



Sketch for *Underground River: Contact*, 2009. Digital collage.



Sketch for *Underground River: Let Nature Back In*, 2009. Pen, pencil, marker on paper.

Underground River: Let Nature Back In

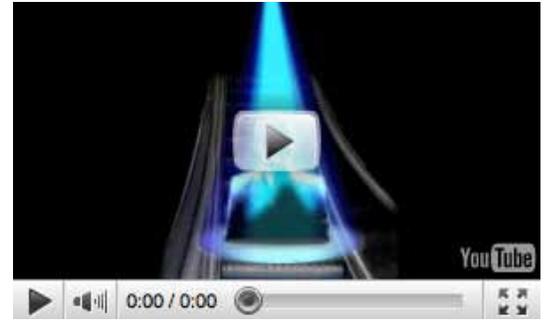
After contacting the river, we will attempt to re-engage its natural flow. We propose to flood the lowest level of the garage and allow the water to emerge above ground.

Using concrete barriers, clay and mud, we will create a trickling brook and pond. Soil will be added and skylights will be built, so that plants will begin to grow. We envision a new indoor/outdoor micro-ecosystem that includes fish and amphibians, cattails and water lilies, and perhaps nesting ducks. Resetting a natural flow will have a quantum affect on the other psychic flows that exist in the building.

The Secret Escalator

Armand Hammer's private escalator was at one point a direct route from the café area on the Garden level to Galley 4. It has been walled off at the gallery, and now serves as a dark, awkward office space for the kitchen staff.

We feel, that in general, the Hammer Museum and the Occidental Petroleum Cultural Center Building are a concretization of an individual and corporate ego. While steps have been taken to address this in some ways, we feel that this ego must be banished for the museum to make a genuine contact with the artists and public. We propose to introduce an ego-less flow into the space by way of a few short performance-based actions. With the help of other artist collaborators, one such performance would include forming a chorus clad in monastic robes that joins voices in a song about the museum, its history and hoped-for future.



The Secret Escalator, 2009, 1 min 24 sec. video.
[Click here to view on YouTube](#)

Conclusion

The foregoing findings represent our preliminary analysis of the Hammer Museum and its surroundings. We feel that further exploration and intervention is merited on a broad collective level to bring about improved dynamic buoyancy. This exhibition site has great significance and emits a burgeoning cauldron of energies, all catalyzed by the anxieties and ecstasies of our time. In this sense, it is a fascinating locus for the exhibition of contemporary art.

Within the mission of the institution itself, twelve words reveal a linear tendency to “explore the capacity of art to enhance the full range of human experience.”

Conversely, we encourage a glimpse through the “wrong” end of the telescope. In essence, by unleashing the range of human experience onto the museum, we explore art’s inimitable capacity to echo our concerns and joys. Further, the energies generated in this process can chase haunting vestiges to the edge of oblivion.

Without caveat or disclaimer, Ecstatic Energy Consultants Inc. extends wholehearted appreciation to the commissioners of our study and to those who nurtured our research with kindness and attentiveness.

To learn more about Ecstatic Energy Consultants Inc, please visit our website, www.ecstaticenergy.com



Ecstatic Energy Consultants Inc. at the Hammer Museum, Sept. 27, 2009.

Footnotes

1. Doug Harvey. “Multiple Exposures: ‘Snapshot’ at the Hammer, and Beyond.” LA Weekly. June 28, 2001
2. Epstein, Edward Jay. *Dossier: The Secret History of Armand Hammer*. New York: Random House, 1996