

Artist Statement

by Bob Eckstein

Today's email; *2009 NYFA Artists' Fellowship Applications are due next week. Application materials must be submitted and postmarked by midnight on the due date of your category.*

Dear Jurors of the NYFA Grant Committee,

I would like to respectively apply for a 2009 NYFA Artists' Fellowship to complete my current art performance slated for early 2009. Sadly, this work is currently in danger of not being realized due to a lack of funds.

Since 1978 I have enjoyed a long, lustrous relationship with the New York Foundation of the Arts starting with my first major project (*Disability*), where I shot myself in the foot. In 1987, I received my second NYFA grant to fund *Your Insecurities Are My Broken Limbs*, which consisted of me being shoved down a flight of stairs. Finally, thanks to a Pell Grant in 1996, I was triumphantly run-over by a family Winnebago in the critically acclaimed, *Run-Over*. This led to a series of *happenings* I conducted in alternative spaces, executed in front of select art circles where either I was run over or pushed down something. In the new millennium I explored getting stuck in everyday things (most notably; wet cement, a washing machine, retractable ladders) in mundane locations (new pavement, laundromat, fire escape). I am quite proud of this diverse body of work and take seriously my role as a non-traditional artist.

With the successful completion this summer of my of most recent project *Downsize*, in which my wife of twelve years walked out on me, I have spent the past two months deliberating over my next artistic venture, a spontaneous, yet staged dramatic performance involving burlap bags, a tribal war mask, a gun (again), and a 1998 Saturn hatchback. *Heist* is my ambitious statement on the current economic collapse and Wall Street's emotional effect on artists, both

consensual and concessional, a logical step from my previous pieces *Sweeping Out Water Fountains Under Gloom of Night* (2002-04) and *Bodega!* (2005). Inspired by my own confining experiences of being late with my rent, this event would capture a moment of “role-reversal” toward my current financial institution. Visual and political puns emerge, ingeniously using class, justice and ethics of power with the actual act of robbing a bank. Addressing issues of self-esteem, society restrictions and irony, both apparent and concealed while placing others and myself in great danger (again). Making poor life choices is a reoccurring theme in my work (so says my life coach). *Heist* would be a natural extension of these ideas, expressing a narrative frame of my life, allowing me to draw from my immense life experiences and expansive anger, and ideally, turning my anti-commercial tendencies into a fortune, that would present new opportunities for me and any future art projects (should I decide to stay in the country).

I ask you to consider and process my request for a NYFA grant briskly as the tenuous time frame for this ongoing piece is February 20th, 2009, the date my unemployment runs out. The location chosen for the event has been the Citibank on 36th St and Avenue of the Americas due to it's inviting layout and proximity to my current art studio. With proper financial backing of an NYFA Fellowship, I can complete the necessary research and add a qualified henchman, both which will prove paramount to this project's success. Enclosed in this application are slides illustrating a floor-plan of the aforementioned Citibank and mug-shots of leading candidates to recruit as the driver of the getaway car. The preamble to this performance would be a surprise entrance before proceeding to close off the establishment. At this point my years as an artist being shot at and/or wounded will be instrumental and critical to the complexities I hope to archive during this unscripted progress. So is art.

Upon request, I can provide your committee with references from

those who would vouch that I would actually go through with this. The one-day performance will be, no doubt, filmed and documented on the bank's security cameras. As with many of my artistic endeavors, who knows what revelations will unfold during the course of the project (I consider this is part of the artistic learning process), but I fully expect to receive tremendous media coverage, from both television and print media. Full credit would be given to you—I intend to explicitly state that *Heist* was made possible thanks to funds from the New York Foundation of the Arts.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope that the NYFA council and it's members appreciate the importance of work like this which expands and invigorates the elastic boundaries of what our society perceives and accepts as art. My resume and character I know speaks for itself and will make yours an easy decision. It goes without saying, that the prestige attached to an NYFA Fellowship would give such a plan creditability and stir excitement among other avant-gardists exploring shady activities, encouraging them to seek support and sponsorship. Your generosity would not only allow this dream to be realized but assure the safety of those involved...both voluntarily and involuntarily.

