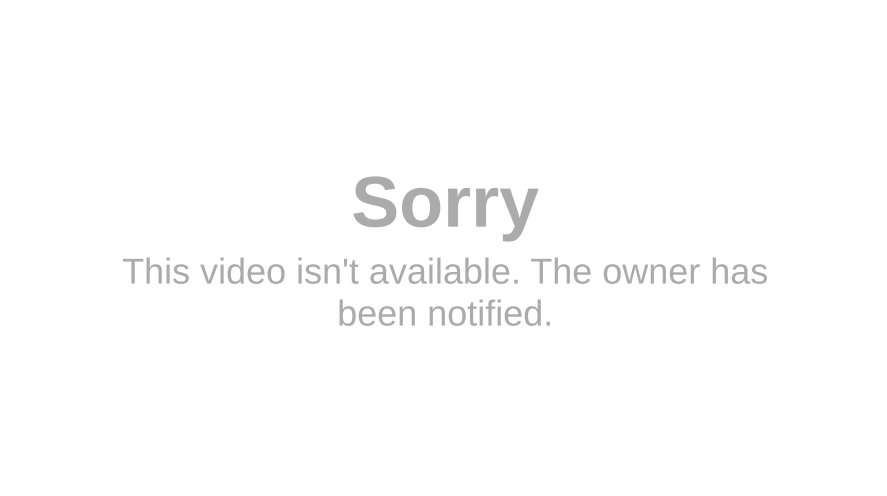
Interview / Videos: Mark Jenkins for Beck's Green Box Project

Posted by sleepboy, September 27, 2011

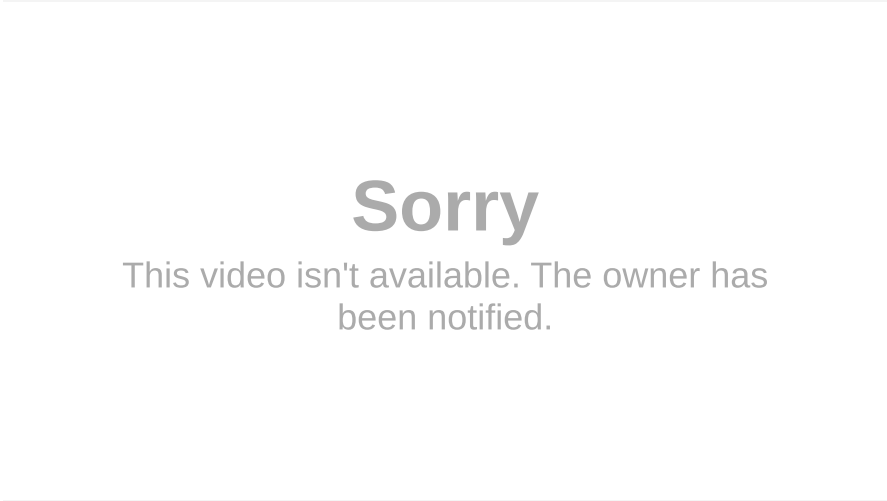
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Washington DC-based artist **Mark Jenkins**, whose work **we enjoyed** back in March at the **VOLTA** fair during **Armory Week**, recently got involved with the **Beck's Green Box Project**, an interesting application of new technology in the streets. The ambitious undertaking, which plans to showcase 1,000 projects by individuals over the next three years, utilizes the **Beck's Key App** (also with **Android support**), which allows people to overlay their mobile devices / tablet computers over "green box" locations and see an augmented reality like 3D or animated representations of the artists' work.

AM recently sent some questions to Jenkins about the project, of which he is one of the first 30 participants, among other things. You also see him talking about the project in the video above as well as view his "green box" at the Mary Bricknell Village (901 South Miami Ave) in Miami, Florida through tomorrow. Also, for those creatives out there, you can submit your own ideas through October 27th at **Becks.com**.

Entire interview and more videos after the jump…



FriendsWithYou (demo) [US] from Beck's Green Box Project on Vimeo.

Arrested Motion (AM): Working on unsanctioned installations in the streets is not something that most young artists think of back when you started out. What was your "Eureka" moment where you realized this

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was something you wanted to pursue?

Mark Jenkins (MJ): In 2003 when I installed my first tape sculpture of myself in a dumpster in Rio. Looking at it from the rooftop, watching people walking by, the installation really came to life. I realized this was the perfect environment for my work. Moreover, when the garbage truck came later that night and took “me” away, this final scene was a sort of a death rebirth thing. I was hooked.

AM: How would you say your creative process works – do you see an urban setting that intrigues you and a vision of an interventions comes to you, or do you come up with an idea – say, at home – and then search for the perfect location to install it? Or perhaps it’s a little of both.

MJ: The process is usually that myself and my friend Sandra walk around the city imagining these characters roaming about…climbing up walls, passing through walls and engaging in other types of abnormal behaviors. They are extraordinary figures, not super heroes or villains, just absurdist beings living in a sort of trans-dimensional zone.

AM: You have traveled the world giving workshops and talks on your sculpture and installation techniques. Any interesting stories after the fact where one of your attendees have implemented what you have taught them locally?

Sage Vaughn (Italy) from Beck's Green Box Project on Vimeo.

MJ: There are usually some follow up projects. Nothing too crazy though. Some of the more interesting projects have been emailed to me from school teachers who’ve used the tapesculpture.org tutorial. They’ve done the Last Supper, cheerleaders on homecoming floats, volleyball teams posing on courts…some pretty large scale stuff.

AM: On a related note, are there any countries and cities you have not traveled to yet that you would like to visit and do some street installations? If so, what in particular about the potential site’s setting, culture, or people intrigue you in terms of interacting with your work?

MJ: I’d like to do some projects in India. I’ve never been there but it seems like a rich environment, culturally and spiritually. I think it could enrich the work and push it in a new direction.

AM: Technology certainly has played a role in the evolution of art in recent times, in particular the internet. Any comments as to how this has affected you personally as well as thoughts on the future?

MJ: The internet continues to be the primary medium for publishing new street art works and sites like woostercollective.com, rebel-art.net and this site are these sort of the internet publishing journals. They document new bodies of works and also with the idea that other artists can build upon them.

Kate MccGwire (UK) from Beck's Green Box Project on Vimeo.

AM: Tell us in your own words what Beck's Green Box Project is all about. It seems to be a novel vehicle to add extra layers of interactions with viewers of your work.

It's something new and fun for artists to experiment with. I had known very little about augmented reality and for me it was a way to play with street space, specifically 3D to 2D. Especially since so many people have only seen my work on the web, it creates a sort of situational irony. But beyond this, it added new layers to the work with the ability to add sound and motion elements as well as geo-positioned interactivity.

AM: At the core of things, why did you choose this route of artistic expression? Other artists have told us there is the thrill of the unknown with a hint of risk, the curiosity as to how the public would interact with your work, the somewhat rebellious thoughts of taking back some of the outdoor space inundated with commercial advertisements, or just the "look at me" sense of accomplishment. Do some of these statements ring true to you, or is it something completely different?

MJ: I think all of this resonates to some extent, except maybe the "look at me" aspect which is a bit self-indulgent. But foremost, it's just that there really there is no better environment for my work to come alive, to participate, so to speak. In a gallery it must overcome the challenge of becoming a pinned butterfly. It lacks the kinetic energy is has on the street.

Beck's App Demo from Beck's Green Box Project on Vimeo.

AM: What would you say to critics of so-called street artists taking on collaborations with commercial entities as diluting and diverting the original message the art form?

MJ: This can be the case if the artist directly leverages their existing body of work to in turn promote a commercial product. I've had numerous ad agencies hijack my style of doing installations to create a buzz about a brand. With this project however, Becks is supporting artists to explore a new medium in a way that extends the work in a new direction and with complete artistic freedom. For me this type of collaboration isn't compromising my existing body of work in the slightest and I think it's very generous of them to support the artistic community in this way.

AM: What kind of projects and shows do you have coming up that you can share with our readers?

MJ: At the moment, I'm doing on a workshop in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. In February a residency project in Rome.

Discuss Mark Jenkins **here**.

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