

SPACES

World Wide Wonder

A fledgling arts organization with a multimedia mission presents on Greene Street and on the Web, 24/7

Location One has always thrived on unlikely collaborations. The not-for-profit art center was born in 1996 while Claire Montgomery was struggling to produce a traditional dance performance. At the same time she was working on a separate project with a "techie" who knew his craft but whose artistic choices were not uninspired. In a fit of genius or desperation—or both—Montgomery commissioned the two men to work together.

"It was WW III," says the executive director of Location One, "but we all kept at it with me as referee, and in the end they made fabulous large projections of real space abstracted out to a wild virtual space." And everybody learned something, Montgomery adds. "The dancer was forced to accept that the techie had created the most magnificent dance space he had ever occupied, and the techie was forced to slow down and consider the spiritual needs of the dancer and how he moved through space."

Location One's programming has since grown to include visual arts, performing arts and an international residency, brought together within an organization dedicated to multimedia presentations that include video, film, and Web broadcasts. The work of dancers, jazz musicians, avant-garde playwrights and visual artists has appeared in virtual realms, international sites and the group's physical space at 26 Greene St. Central to all the projects is the concept of convergence.

The LowDown

Lower Manhattan Cultural Council - Summer/Fall 2002

"What was wonderful about the art world I had known (in the sixties and seventies) was the collaboration among disciplines," says Montgomery, who knows a bit about crossing disciplines herself. An artist who moved to Tribeca in 1974, Montgomery took a Wall Street job in the eighties, only to return to the arts and start Location One as a non-commercial space for artists to experiment with technology.

Although a commitment to technology is part of the organization's vision, Montgomery stresses that new media is not the sole focus—it's simply a tool for the artistic process. "Everything we do has a physical and a virtual aspect," says Montgomery. And that's one reason why the residency program

is so vibrant: It fosters the physical proximity that encourages working across cultures and artistic media.

These days Location One is struggling with the very real aspects of limited funds. Situated one-half block north of Canal, the art center has suffered the same debilitating lack of attendance as other Lower Manhattan cultural groups since 9/11. Most of the fall performance series was cancelled after the attack, because the gallery was in the zone open only to residents. Its north-of-Canal locale, however, excluded Location One from many types of assistance. Its free-admission policy made it impossible to document revenue shortages, and citing the organization's short history, several potential funders opted to support long-standing grantees instead.

"We feel confident that we can continue supporting many of our planned exhibition programs," Montgomery says, but she is concerned about securing operating funds to stabilize the organization.

Clearly, though, Location One has a strong ongoing presence, Downtown and on the Internet. The center streams live 24 hours a day. Visit www.location1.org and you might catch an outdoor cam trained on Greene Street traffic or a gallery performance. Click on a link, and you've entered a video installation.

In the center's latest convergence, two-time Obie Award-winning playwright Mac Wellman will present a work-in-progress entitled "Bitter Bierce," based on the life and works of satirist, critic, journalist, novelist



Location One artist-in-residence Abouhi Nishijima in a live performance, Dec. 12, 2001 (Kawling)

and short-story writer Ambrose Bierce.

In this unique collaboration between Mac Wellman and an international group of Location One artists each performance will combine live and electronic elements; a live actor will perform at three of the five scheduled events. Artists connected to a network both locally and remotely will respond to the performer and the script using collaborative software to manipulate in realtime video images and audio elements. These large-scale images will then be projected onto the gallery walls and broadcast online at www.location1.org.

"It seems to me an infinitely richer world when everyone shares their vision," Montgomery says of the type of collaboration her group fosters. Judging by the new work she's bringing to the global arts community, that goes for her vision, too.