

“The Gratest City on Earth”

Times Square Art Project: Initial Proposal

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Project Description: This proposed project is conceived as a subtle but enjoyable way of directly "enlivening the pedestrian experience" in Times Square by installing a series of small-scale but highly visible light shows staged under the dozens of ventilation grates in the square itself. Each sparkling diorama will allow visitors to illuminate the dark, mysterious spaces, evoking the long-forgotten glitz of Times Square past while bringing a serene and surprising counterpoint to the loud clamor of Times Square present.

Each light show will consist of two or three elements -- a motor-driven, foot-wide disco ball, a high-intensity narrow beamed light, and possibly a hand crank extending above the grate that could provide the power for the mirror ball motor and beamed light. Should the hand crank be installed, pedestrians would have the option to interact directly with the light; otherwise, the light show would be powered from a separate light source and run continuously.

Even during the day, many of Times Square's ventilation shafts are pitch-dark. At night, of course, it is nearly impossible to see anything below a few inches unless a street lamp is in the vicinity. In either instance, pedestrians traversing the diorama-enhanced grates will be pleasantly surprised by the gentle interplay of sparkling light beneath their feet. At night, the experience will be enhanced by the soft beams that escape from beneath the sidewalk, emerging to frolic on nearby walls and legs. Hopefully, some romantic souls will even take the opportunity to join the lights below for a quick dance across the pavement.

The low cost and high security of each diorama (by nature, covered by grates) means that the scale of the project could well be extended to three or four dozen locations both in and around the Times Square area. Artist-designed maps showing the location of all dioramas will be available on-line and in person so that visitors will be encouraged to explore the entirety of Times Square.

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Site Considerations

- **Audience:** Any pedestrian in Times Square.
- **Day vs. Night:** Visibility from above unchanged in either environment; external visibility enhanced at night.
- **Site Accessibility:** From anywhere on the sidewalk.
- **Flexibility:** There are dozens of different locations which could be used, pending approval from relevant agencies.
- **Security:** Areas underneath grates are by definition secure areas.
- **Noise:** Irrelevant to the success of the project.
- **Maintenance:** Extra bulbs may be needed to replace burnt-out lights.
- **Duration:** Dioramas should be sufficiently durable.
- **Weather:** Lamps should be waterproofed. Wind not expected to be an issue.
- **Power Source:** Nearby businesses; lamps; other street-based electrical outlets.
- **Approvals:** Would need to be negotiated.

Budget

(preliminary and approximate)

40 disco balls	@ \$25 each	=	\$1000
40 disco ball motors	@ \$10 each	=	\$400
40 lamps	@ \$10 each	=	\$400
80 bulbs	@ \$5 each	=	\$400
Installation / artist's fee			\$300
Total			\$2500

Examples of Prospective Locations

