

# PROJECT FOR THE NEW AMERICAN CENTURY

The Project for the New American Century is a year and half long meta-project that is parasitic on "real world" events. Over the course of a designated period of time (May 2007-November 2008) PNAC is designed to enact a kind of Benjamin-ian *Now-Time*. Whereby, the staging of video presentations and performances as well as the production of sculptures and installations brings about real world change through a quasi-osmosis-ic operation.

The inaugural PNAC event, *It's Time* took place took on Memorial Day 2007, approximately ten years to the date that the Neo-Conservative think-tank, the Project for the New American Century released its first missive declaring it's Reaganite doctrine of American imperialism. The performance happened on the Midway Plaisance at the University of Chicago. The event was conceived in two stages:



1. The digging of an Anti-Memorial in the form of an inverted negative impression of the United States Capital building by a faux-revolutionary.



2. The vitriolic recounting of this event by a young republican cavalierly proclaiming the failure of revolutionary action.



The anti-monument of the upside-down capital would later become the icon for the next event; a video performance that took place at Soldier Field on the celebration of the American Revolution in 2007. Two anonymous actors, one male and one female, raise a bed sheet/flag with the icon of upturned capital on it; meant to invoke both the flag rising at Iwo Jima by U.S. Marines as well as the emblem of the Moscow Film Institute; the *Worker and Peasant* statue by Vera Mukhina. The video titled *Speak* was later distributed via a chain letter system to select individuals who maintain fidelity to the event with the proviso that they must pass it on to another viewer, and so on.

The *Speak* video-performance concluded with a screening in Boston on the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the October Revolution and a few day later in Berlin on the Anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall. These two screenings act as bookends to create a temporal monument to revolutionary praxis. Why invoke the October Revolution in context of the Project for the New American Century? Several reasons, some obvious others not so obvious: first, the idea of revolution is a fixture of the American mythos; recall Thomas Jefferson's aphorism, "A little revolution, now and then, is a good thing." Secondly, due to one of the strange and ironic twists of history, the originator of the Neo-conservative movement in the U.S., Irving Kristol (PNAC's founder William Kristol's father) was himself once a Trotskyist.

Other events of this nature, in which the who, where, when and what get mixed in order to recast them in the "Jetztzeit"; will take place throughout the year including an exhibition at the ZKM where the Project for the New American Century authors the re-creation of Utopia Station 2003.



The Project for the New American Century is conceived of as a "Vanishing Mediator" as described by Fredric Jameson and elaborated on by Slavoj Žižek. In essence, it seeks to redress the wrongs perpetrated by an intellectual tradition that originated at the University of Chicago with a generation of students that found political currency in Leo Strauss's formulation of Plato's Noble Lie.

What, or who, would a *new American* look like? This is where the overtly parasitic part of the project comes into play. By adopting the name of that which it struggles to depose, namely, the architects of the Bush Administration's foreign policy; the project performs an act detournement. In a perverse attempt to reclaim a proper name-- the *new New American* might look like something like Senator Barack Obama, Hyde Park resident and University of Chicago professor.



By incautiously gambling on an Obama presidency the Project would retro-actively claim that it did, in fact, perform the un-performable...the overthrowing of the U.S government (or more precisely the Bush regime). With real world political change taking hold, the meta-project would effectively disappear or "vanish" as a practice and become an inert art work.

The Project for the New American Century would therefore posit itself as a work of "In-existent Art" with the direct association with Alain Badiou's *Principle of Inexistence* in mind (cf. Badiou's *Being and Event*). As the philosopher declares, "A subject [here read art work] is that which, finite instance of a truth, discerned realization of indiscernible, forces decision, disqualifies the unequal, and saves the singular. By these operations, whose rarity alone obsesses

us, the event comes into being, whose insistence it had supplemented."

If an unambiguous and unapologetic endorsement of a political candidate offends certain individual's aesthetic and/or political sensibilities... Good!! This is an art project!