

Collect My Junk

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Collect My Junk is a public art intervention and an artistic form of urban research. The installation is a video sculpture that was first presented as part of Toronto's Alley Jaunt art festival in August, 2007. The festival takes place in the alleyways and garages surrounding Trinity Bellwoods Park. *Collect My Junk*, which was commissioned to celebrate the festival's fifth anniversary, was displayed over three garage spaces, each representing a crucial aspect of the collaging and sculptural process.

The motivation for this collaboration was to examine the discarded objects that make up the city block and alleyways within the diverse area of Trinity Bellwoods Park, which is one of the largest open spaces in downtown Toronto. We began the process by walking along the main thoroughfares of Dundas Street West and Queen Street West, in the alleys themselves, and finally, through the park. The intention of these walks was to collect whatever discarded debris captured our attention while also keeping the documentation and the objects of each location distinct. The entire collecting process, which was spread over several days, was recorded and eventually turned into a four-screen projection in one of the garages. The second stage of production was to transform the collected debris into sculptural collages that mimicked the landscape from where they were found. To do this, a piece of Plexiglass was positioned to frame a section of each site of collection. This frame became the canvas upon which the found objects from that location were arranged into a collage. The process of covering the actual space with the objects on the Plexiglass was documented by digital stills. The last step of this stage was to spray-paint our collages white. In the final installation and third stage of production, the digital stills were animated and projected onto the spray-painted collages, which had now become the screens. This animation of each retrieved landscape collage was then projected on its respective sculptured video screen.

As an artistic research method, *Collect My Junk* exposes the hidden objects found in urban spaces in order to ask a series of questions about the intersections between what is visibly present and what is omitted or discarded from everyday public experience. By transforming waste objects, with their associations of being unhygienic, consumed, abject, and excess, into our artistic materials, we began to consider new ways of understanding the complexity of city space based on its less visible—and indeed, dirty and unclear—layers of signification. Additionally, the process required us, as artists and researchers, to contemplate the rich possibilities found through the spontaneous, phenomenologically-driven associations that were made through the act of collecting and collaging urban debris. The final piece can be framed as a text that places the act of finding “junk” alongside the creative interpretation of these objects. This process becomes a research method for exploring the interconnections between the subjectivity of the urban researcher and the subjectivity of the spaces themselves. The projections explore and reveal the abandoned and the re-imagined stories of these lost/found objects and provoke us to think of the continuities between distinct spaces of the city, and, perhaps most importantly, to make visible the conversation and movement between Dundas Street West, Queen Street West, Trinity Bellwoods Park, and the alleyways in between.



