

Robin Lasser

b. 1956, Buffalo, NY; lives in Oakland, CA

Adrienne Pao

b. 1975, Oakland, CA; lives in San Francisco

Ice Queen: Glacial Retreat Dress Tent

2008

chromogenic print, fabric tent

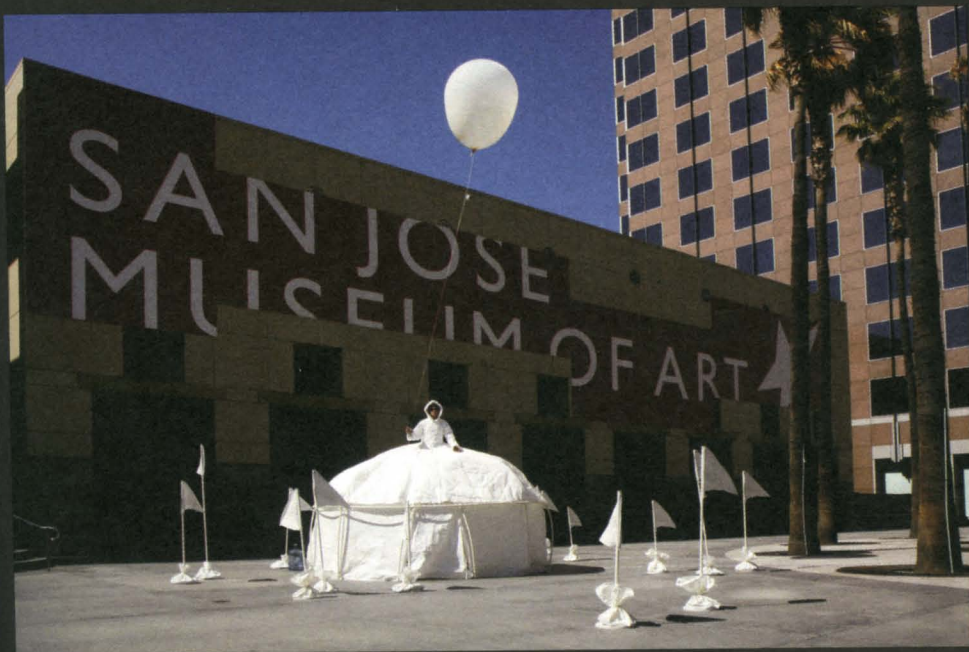
Commissioned by ZERO1 with support from the James Irvine Foundation

Green House Dress Tent

2007

chromogenic print

right: Ice Queen: Glacial Retreat Dress Tent, installation view, Circle of Palms, San Jose
overleaf: Installation view at the event SubZero, First Street, San Jose
Photos: Adrienne Pao



She models white tarpaulin material and stands ten feet tall, fourteen feet wide. Names of advancing, extinct, and retreating glaciers, sewn on white flags, mark her home and her dress. She is the “Ice Queen,” photographed on Mount Shasta and shown in the Superlight exhibition as well as performed live at the OISJ Biennial, where participants encompassed by dry-ice fog and the sounds of crickets could crawl under her tentlike dress to check out weather data and learn more about the planet’s increasing temperatures.

Robin Lasser and Adrienne Pao elide distinctions between performance, installation, and photographic practices. An entire wardrobe line of “Dress Tents” can be attributed to the artists to date, among them Ms. Homeland Security: Illegal Entry Dress Tent, Green House Dress Tent, and Lava Tube Top Dress Tent. Ice Queen: Glacial Retreat Dress Tent stands with them as temptress, conversationalist, and landscape. The works prod us to continuously reconsider our point and position of reception as we are seduced to escape into the shelter of their skirts. We are no longer passive receptors or mere interactors, but deviant and complicit as the artists play with glacial personification and ring alarm bells for global warming all the while.

Ice Queen raises a warning but does not punish. She gives heaps of information but does not overburden. She is beautiful, sad, playful, funny, intelligent, and aware. She walks a line between the aesthetic and the ethical, forming a question mark that is also a keyhole—or a slit in the skirt—as Lasser and Pao ask, “What is up a woman’s skirt in the twenty-first century, anyway?” [MH]



Lynn Hershman Leeson, Global Mind Radar/Reader (An Emotional Barometer)

Ideas and inspiration come from the culture itself and the possibilities within technologies that comment on the possibilities for humanness at the most optimistic and unique level. There is a historic blindness to works that are in the present, and this includes conceptual breadth as well as possibilities for materials. Yet the most relevant work breaks ground on both these elements. That we are technologically symbiotic, and growing more so, becomes the connective tissue of a kind of transnational and global hyper-skin.

There is no question that my own particular practice derives from the art world. I've always tracked it back to Cubist and Surrealist impulses, but bridged by present technological capabilities.

Robin Lasser, Ice Queen: Glacial Retreat Dress Tent

How do I think about my art practice? Out loud, usually with one or more collaborators. I have difficulty knowing what I am thinking, until I say it, until the words become sound waves, echoing back into my body, from my feet on up. This is how I begin to understand all kinds of dirt. "Dirt is sexy because sex is dirty." (I remember Rebecca Solnit whispering this into my left ear some years ago.) I make visual art with collaborators as a way to see ourselves think, argue, and visualize ideas about our bodies and the environments that house them.

What is it that I do? Take walks, not at sunset. Eat and especially drink a lot. Care about Alex, my son. Think out loud about interesting things to share with my students. Talk to others and myself about new ideas. I am an exhibitionist and am asking you if you want to collaborate. I am available.

Sarah Lowe, ice age

I do two things: make messes and make them bigger than me.

I became an artist in order to evade specialization. It is essential for my practice to be conceptually and intellectually fluid and mobile. I don't experience conflict between the different modalities in which I operate: within the scholastic/historic/artistic facets within my own work; in my professional capacities as a builder of my own work; or as an anonymous or named collaborator building other people's work. Boundaries between old and new media, between art and design, between art and research, are erected arbitrarily, moved around to suit the comfort and prejudices of the perceiver. They are only relevant to me as I work when I choose to exploit extant tensions between these alleged territories. I conflate, collide, impurify, squish, miscegenate, bastardize, blaspheme, and make messes.

A sufficiently complex conceptual mess eventually will grow beyond my capacity to control it, which makes it bigger than me. I sacrifice a certain amount of control in order to achieve results that I could not anticipate (like making compost).

actually meant visual art. I believe we live in the post-convergent era. Such a term would seem to obviate the need to classify according to a single sense or within a single medium. Similarly it makes it difficult to accept that noncollaborative heroic acts can be thought or enacted, as art or otherwise.

Rubén Ortiz Torres, High 'n' Low Rider

I see what I do as art, but more importantly as culture. Art is a language and as such it is a cultural construction. As you mentioned there are several art worlds. My work often navigates across some of them, sometimes into uncharted territories. Ideas and inspirations come from what I have seen and where I have been. Southern California, where I live, is an interesting crossing and clashing point between my past and the future, between north and south, between west and east, and between popular and unpopular culture.

Ed Osborn, Outfield

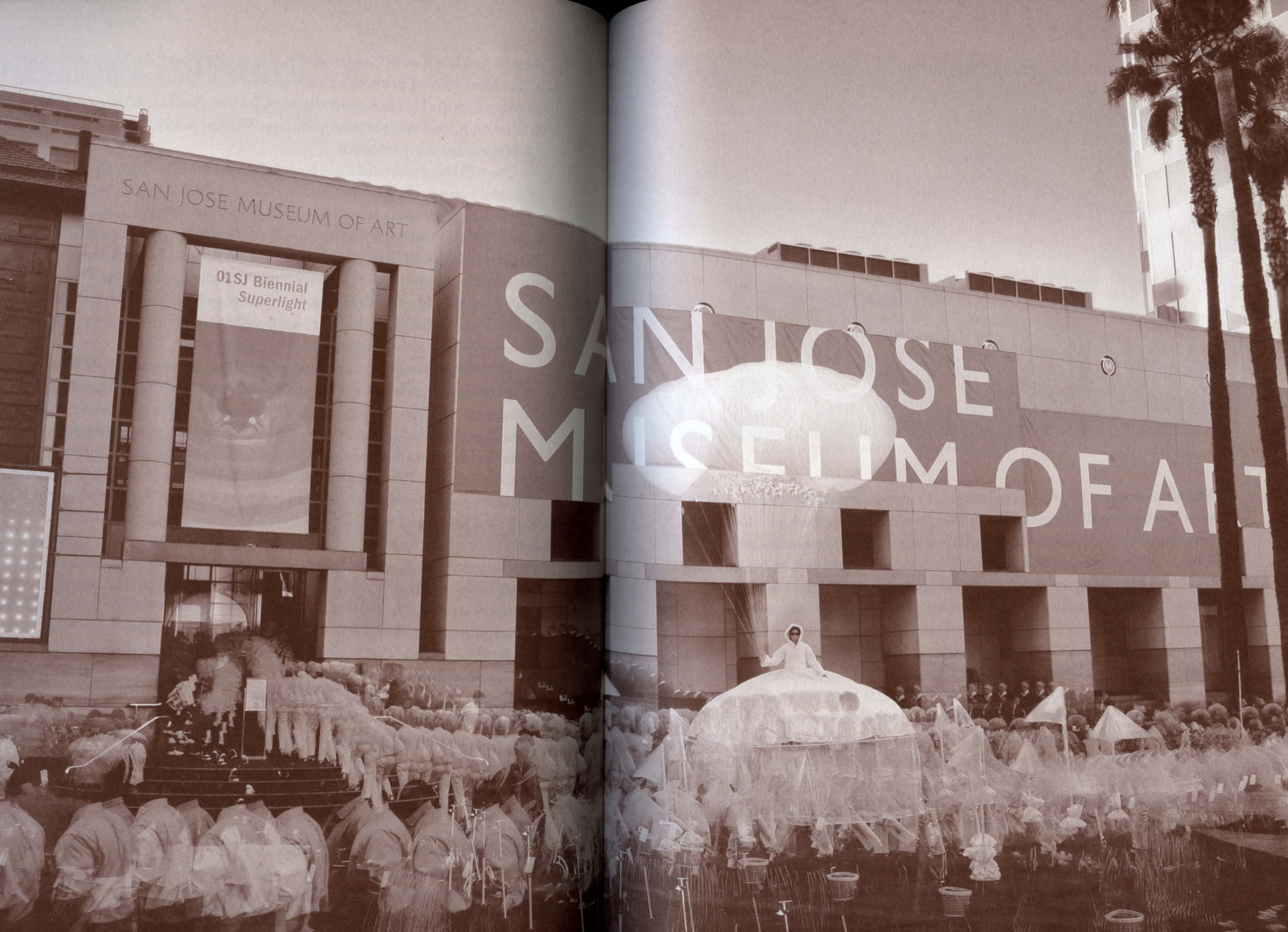
My background is in music and my work mostly (though not exclusively) includes sound as a primary component. So I do have a material attachment in my practice, even though I don't think of it that way. Like many people here, I focus on a process or a set of ideas that eventually have a physical realization in some form. Jim Campbell said that he uses tools that are familiar to him to make his work, and that is one of the things that shapes its format. I am familiar with different tools, but the process of working from a particular set of skills and orientations is similar.

Having made work that's often classified under the rubric of sound art (a mixed blessing at best) for quite a while, I have often wondered about the usefulness of that designation, both as a practical matter (identifying to someone else what it is that I do) and as a practice matter (what am I doing?). Fortunately, there isn't a good answer as to what sound art actually is (only a multiplicity of highly conditional ones), so some of the possible limitations of working under its rubric can be easily avoided. Working in an area that is hard to define well is one of the rewards of working in it.

Adrienne Pao, Ice Queen: Glacial Retreat Dress Tent

When I work with my family and the landscape in Hawaii, I reconstruct a cultural space that has been severely altered by colonialism. I delve into calm, beauty, terror, and seduction all simultaneously. In one photograph, I attempt to connect with my family, our history, and reinvigorate a political place for a new culture to emerge.

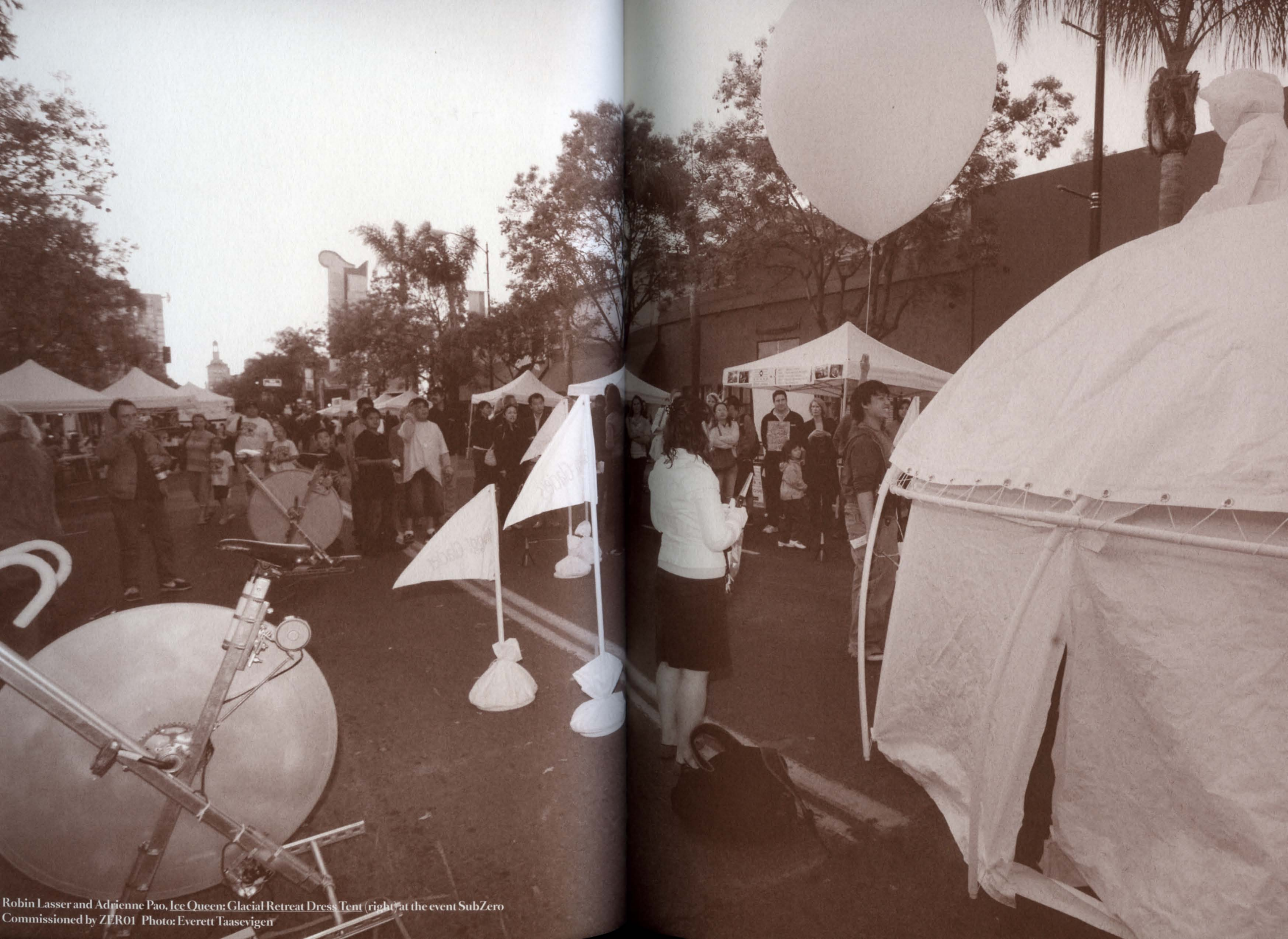
When I work with Robin [Lasser] and our Dress Tent series, I allow our collaboration to become an amorphous world that takes a form of its own, one of female identity, politics in contemporary culture, and a new sense of fashion, one that may be consumed, worn, discarded, and reconsidered. Who would've thought that you could play, examine, and rifle around under a woman's skirt?



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Robin Lasser and Adrienne Pao, Ice Queen: Glacial Retreat Dress Tent (right) at the event SubZero
Commissioned by ZER01 Photo: Everett Taasevigen

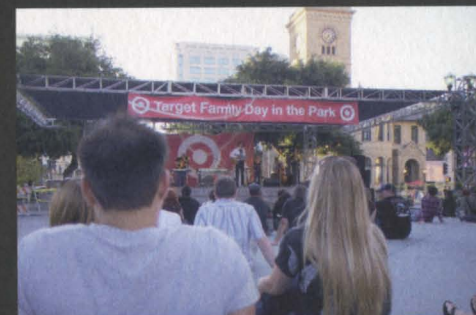
Target Family Day in the Park

Plaza de Cesar Chavez, San Jose

June 7, 2008

Sponsored by Target

A family-oriented day of music and interactive art exhibits at Plaza de Cesar Chavez in the heart of downtown San Jose featured five bands performing on the main stage and more than fifteen activities, including CathexiSpin by Friends of Ficus, a series of exercise bikes built in the tradition of Marcel Duchamp's "retinal paintings," which visitors could pedal to power "art energy" to other projects in the park. Free Soil, an art collective based in San Francisco, offered workshops in energy management and ecology. Sarah Lowe's ice age, a large-scale inflatable sculpture fabricated from semitransparent plastic sheeting, was clearly visible throughout the downtown area. Visitors entering Robin Lasser and Adrienne Pao's provocative installation Ice Queen: Glacial Retreat Dress Tent explored issues related to climate change and its effects on both nature and human nature.



A selection of projects at the event Target Family Day in the Park. Photos: Everett Taasevigsen

**What is the price of innovation?
This is an underlying theme of
Superlight and the O1SJ Biennial,
a global festival of art on the edge
that examines compelling questions
about whether today's technology
can solve the problems caused by
previous innovations. The artists in**

Superlight

**take on topics such as terrorism,
pervasive war, colonialism, climate
change, debilitating pollution,
failing education systems, global
outsourcing, inescapable poverty,
and dysfunctional relationships,
illuminating some of the weightiest
issues of our time with a deft and
often humorous touch.**



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