
Crabs, a large bowl of pearls, a joined circle of Qing stools, and an array of rusted rebar pipes salvaged from the wreckage of Sichuan’s destroyed schools. Ai’s photos from his New York years (1983–93) provide a moving portrait of New York City’s Chinese community, document protests in Tompkins Square Park (1988), and record the artist’s friendship with poet Allen Ginsberg. Finally, an installation built from bicycle spokes and tire-less rims stacked and welded onto poles seems to symbolize China’s popular mode of transportation and its people.

This traveling exhibition was organized by the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo in collaboration with the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the first of five U.S. venues. The Brooklyn Museum hosts the show from April 18 through August 10, 2014. A new Ai exhibition opens on Alcatraz Island, a former prison colony near San Francisco, in September 2014.

—Jan Garden Castro

Florian Dombois

*Boston*

**Florian Dombois**

*Boston University*

*uboc No. 1 & stuVi2*, a four-day public art installation by Swiss artist Florian Dombois, was on view from sunset until 2 a.m. during the TransCultural Exchange’s third biennial conference on international opportunities for artists. The theme for the conference was “Engaging Minds,” and curator Mary Sherman, founder and director of TransCultural Exchange, invited Dombois to create this site-specific piece as a symbol of the conference’s underlying mission to emphasize the importance of art in making cross-cultural connections.

The title of the installation, *uboc No. 1 & stuVi2*, refers to the two Boston University buildings connected by Dombois’s laser light beam. The Boston University School of Law Tower, a concrete structure designed in 1964 by Modernist architects Sert, Jackson, and Gourley, is called the ugliest building on campus by students—hence “uboc No. 1.” Dombois says that he actually finds it kind of beautiful, an iconic example of Modernist architecture. The other building, recently constructed student housing, is a more generic steel structure. These buildings from different eras are similar in style, rather like a modern father and post-modern son. Dombois’s installation helped to underscore the similarities between the two, connecting them across time and space. Though he considers this work post-conceptual, he wanted a tangible object for his concept. The light beam became a trigger to imagine the sculpture. The connected buildings were the sculpture, too.

Dombois selected the two tallest buildings on campus; he also liked the fact that the laser would pass over a multi-purpose intersection—reputedly the only one in the U.S. that includes all possible kinds of human transportation, from boats on the Charles River and a railroad overpass to Interstate 90 traffic and a regular crossroads of two major city streets with lots of pedestrian traffic. The laser stretched across .68 miles of space, passing over smaller buildings and a busy maze of highways, streets, sidewalks, and bridges.

*uboc No. 1 & stuVi2* appeared to be just a straight line of light, but it also included live streaming of the real-time movement around the two buildings <http://www.transculturalexchange.org/conference_2013/Dombois/uboc1.html>. Using a smartphone at the site, one could connect to see not only the straight beam of light, but also images of the fluctuating laser, which appeared as a moving segmented line, making one aware of the Earth’s movement.

*uboc No. 1 & stuVi2* was also a kinetic sculpture and a sound installation. Laser beams put out sound as well as light waves; we just cannot hear them. (Dombois won the German Sound Art Prize last year.)

Although the initial plan for this temporary installation called for a bright red beam, it was changed to green at the last minute. Dombois shifted the color because the human eye does not see red as clearly as it sees green. To me, red might have been better. Seen from the side at street level, the green beam did not show up very well against an already illuminated urban night sky, though photos taken from Interstate 90 show a dramatic straight beam of blue-green light. Though only of short duration, *uboc No. 1 & stuVi2* was a quiet spectacle and a thought-provoking poetic gesture, an almost intangible sculpture that vividly illustrated connection.

—Jane Ingram Allen