



PICTURE(SQUE): Ellen Harvey Works, 1999-2025

picturesque (adjective)

1: resembling a picture; suggesting a painted scene; charming or quaint in appearance.

—Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Sometimes, it's only in retrospect that you realize that your work has been obsessively circling a particular theme or group of related questions. And then once you've seen it, you can't unsee it. It's been like that for me with the relationship between art and tourism.

—Ellen Harvey

On the Picturesque

As an adjective, the word “picturesque” is used to describe something that is visually charming, quaint, or attractive. It often refers to scenes or places that look so naturally beautiful or idyllic that they resemble a painted picture. In less museum-y and more literary contexts, it can describe vivid, striking, or colorful language that effectively creates detailed mental images.

A word whose origins dial back to the Italian *pittresco*, meaning “painterly”—or more precisely “in the manner of a painting”—the term passed through the French *pittoresque* before fully entering the English language in the early 1700s.

First intended to describe landscapes that resembled works of classical art, the term's meaning morphed, as the denotations of words routinely do, eventually coming to encompass a full-blown aesthetic category. Developed largely in the 18th century, the notion of the “picturesque” came to describe, in the words of artist and author William Gilpin (1724-1804), “that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture.”

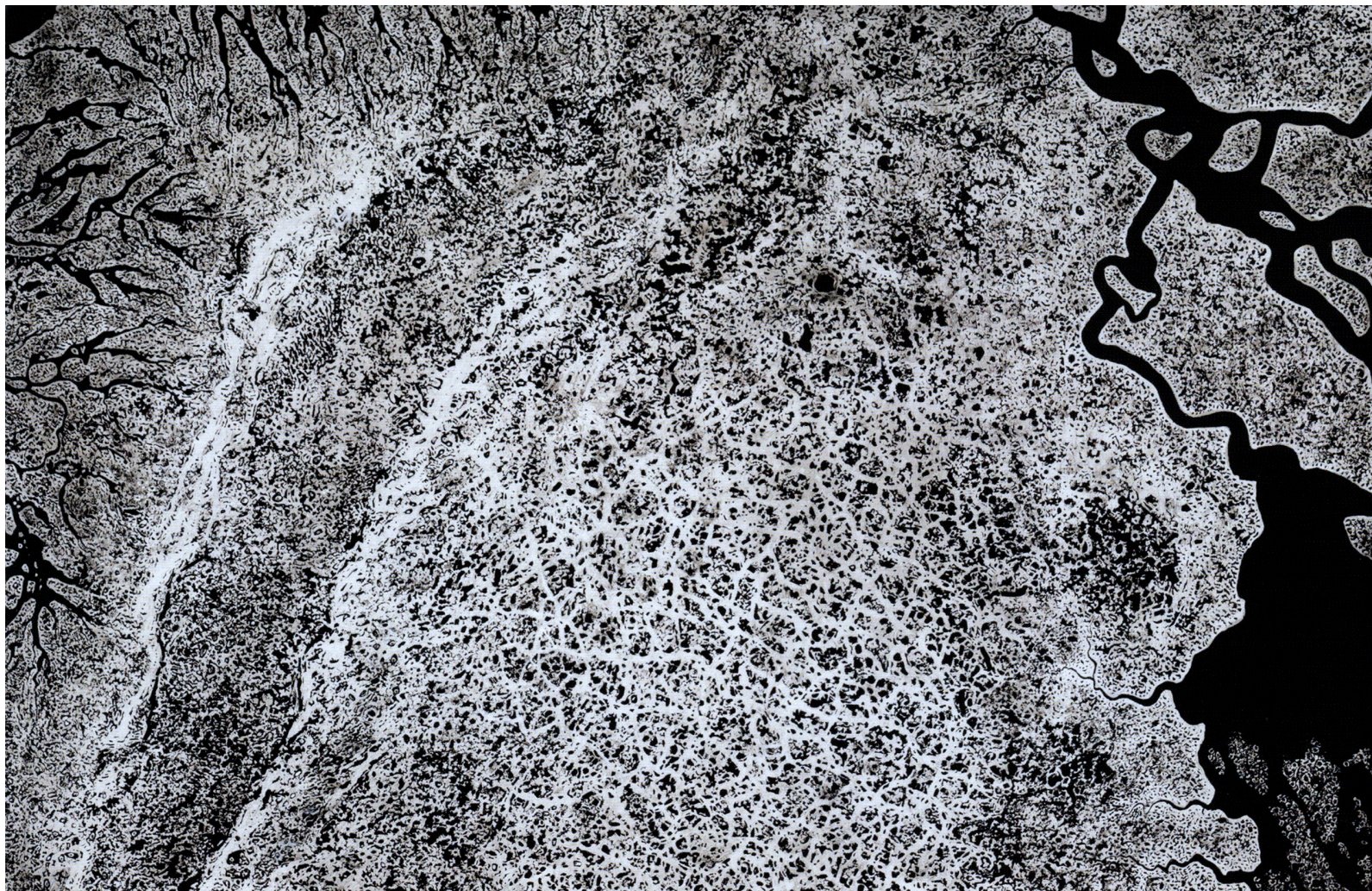
About Ellen Harvey

Certain people travel for conquest, others for pleasure. Younger generations do so, it is reported, to satisfy more Instagrammable rationales: food, business, hedonism, relaxation, something called “wellness.” The Brooklyn-based, Anglo-American artist Ellen Harvey has traveled widely during her lifetime, most recently as an artist bent on reframing history one artwork at a time. Her job in a nutshell: to excavate landmarks and other historical symbols from the relentless greenmarket-style composting of human oblivion.

Born to British and German parents in 1967 in Kent, United Kingdom, Harvey emigrated to the United States when she was in her teens. After stints at Harvard (AB, History and Literature) and Yale Law (JD), she moved to New York, turning to art full time. In short order, she arrived at a painting-based practice that engages a variety of media along with what she terms

Ellen Harvey, *The Mermaid: Two Incompatible Systems Intimately Linked*, 2020. Photograph: Museum der Moderne Salzburg.





Ellen Harvey, *The Mermaid: Two Incompatible Systems Intimately Linked* (detail), 2020. Photograph: Etienne Frossard.

“participatory strategies” to explore a set of recurrent themes. Among these are: the revolutionary potential of nostalgia, the relationship between art and tourism, the role of art and the artist in our society, and the social and ecological implications of the picturesque.

Harvey’s experience as an immigrant, she has said, complicates her understanding of ideas of place, ownership, and home. In a “Self-Interview” conducted for her 2021 exhibition at Turner Contemporary in the UK, Harvey characterized her relationship to memory and physical locale this way: “I think that this vulnerability to the loss of place may well have been heightened by the fact that my family moved around such a lot when I was a child. The fact that I was half German and half English made these feelings even more complicated. The experience of immigrating to the US from the UK when I was in my late teens was also probably formative. To be an immigrant is to be someone who has lost a certain sense both of belonging and of cultural ownership and authenticity forever—to the extent that such a thing exists.”

The Exhibition

PICTURE(SQUE): Ellen Harvey Works, 1999-2025 presents four major bodies of work along with a full complement of discrete mixed-media pieces that explore these and other of Harvey’s enthusiasms. The celebrated Anglo-American artist honors and questions ideas around travel, memory, monuments and

history making. Harvey’s artworks memorialize lost places and interrogate existing ones through a strangely commemorative enterprise: she bears witness to locales independently of their purported civic value or importance. More importantly, her artworks consistently turn a warm eye toward human beings’ relationships with their lived environment, while asking us to envision new ways of being in the future.

Harvey’s first such significant effort, her *New York Beautification Project* (1999-2001), revisits a series of public guerrilla interventions for which the artist painted small, perfectly executed, traditional oil landscapes throughout the city of New York. Experienced at CAM as written and photographic documentation of some forty oval paintings, the work also charts the freighted social phenomenon *The New Yorker* pegged with the headline “Vandal in a Volvo.” According to the artist, who is White, part of the project’s premise was to knowingly “explore how the reaction to unsanctioned artworks was influenced by the aesthetics of the art and the appearance of the artist.” Harvey’s individual paintings took two to three days to paint. They each measured five by seven inches. They were made without permission, in daylight, and in full public view of passers-by and police. Whenever anyone objected to the paintings’ presence, Harvey immediately removed all traces of them.

A second notable artwork included in *PICTURE(SQUE)* is Harvey’s large-scale mural *The Mermaid: Two Incompatible Systems Intimately Linked* (2020). A 100-foot-long painting based on a



Ellen Harvey, *The Mermaid: Two Incompatible Systems Intimately Linked* (detail), 2020. Photograph: Etienne Frossard.

satellite view of Florida, this black and white, oil and acrylic work was executed on 60 aluminum panels. A work that contrasts the man-made with the natural, it depicts the entirety of the state's landmass from one end to the other—from the Bay of Biscayne to the great watershed of the Everglades to Miami Beach and the Atlantic Ocean. Just as a mermaid is half human and half fish, Harvey's painting is split evenly between two types of landscapes. Put differently, the painting's halfway point marks the forced transition between the Everglades National Park and the greater Miami area. (N.B.: *Mermaid* is an adaptation of *Atlantis*, a hand-painted, etched glass installation sited permanently at the Miami Beach Convention Center.)

Harvey's remarkable 316 painting installation *The Disappointed Tourist* consists of an evolving, participatory response to a single question: "Is there a place that you have always wanted to visit or revisit that no longer exists?" Harvey has posed this question on a dedicated website since 2019. Suggested answers (they exceed 500 web entries from more than 40 countries) are then turned by the artist into 18 x 24 inch acrylic and oil paintings that resemble antique black and white postcards. Her monochrome depictions evoke nostalgia and affection for disappeared sites ranging from Greece's original Parthenon to Manhattan's fabled music venue CBGB. A democratic exercise in accessing art and art history, *The Disappointed Tourist* operates at both modest and monumental scale—the better to visualize a present and a future that includes the destruction of memory itself.

Finally, *PICTURE(SQUE)* includes the East Coast debut of Harvey's most recent project: *The Utopia Machine* (2024-). A collaboration with the landmark Getty Foundation's PST ART: Art & Science Collide initiative, the work consists of more than 100 paintings depicting answers by visitors to public libraries to the question: "What would make our world into a utopia?" One typically trenchant byproduct of this deliberately interactive artwork: the first 100 utopias were mainly sourced by Harvey from users of the Los Angeles Central Library, many of whom spend their days there because they have nowhere else to go.

These and other works in the exhibition—among them *Alien Souvenir Stand* (2013) and *Selfie Panorama (Times Square)* (2021)—go deep in celebrating and exploring things that exist at the crossroads between the real world and the often-rarefied world of art. Among her projects' primary goals, Harvey writes, are to celebrate "human attachment to places both real and aspirational" and to create "a level playing field in which personal losses and larger cultural losses can meet and be recognized." To that, this writer would add the following: the whole of Ellen Harvey's tremendously generous art project is about democratizing art as a forbidding social space—that, and staging an ongoing, expanded, and horizontal conversation about our individual and collective love for our unstable physical environment.

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Christian Viveros-Fauné
Curator-at-Large, USF Contemporary Art Museum

CHECKLIST

All Artworks by Ellen Harvey

Alien Souvenir Stand, 2013

oil on aluminum, watercolor on gessoboard, propane tanks
5 x 17 x 8 feet

Black Polaroid (No. 1), 2026

Black Polaroid (No. 2), 2026

Black Polaroid (No. 3), 2026

Black Polaroid (No. 4), 2026

oil on aluminum

33 x 30 inches each

The Disappointed Tourist, 2019-ongoing

acrylic and oil on wood panels

316 panels, each 24 x 18 inches

Max Goes for a Walk, 2022

3-minute video

The Mermaid: Two Incompatible Systems Intimately Linked, 2019

black and white acrylic and oil on 60 panels

40 x 60 inches each panel; overall 10 x 100 feet

Mushroom Landscape, 2014

found painted tree fungus, gesso on three tree fungi, two

wooden shelves, watercolor on wall

acrylic on tree fungus: 13 x 8 x 3 inches

three tree fungi (R to L): 8 x 7 x 3 inches, 10 x 8 x 3 inches, 14 x

10 x 3 inches

New York Beautification Project, 1999-2001

82 framed photos and texts

12 x 15 inches each

On the Impossibility of Capturing a Sunset (in Margate), 2020

65 hand-engraved Plexiglas mirrors, Lumisheets, Plexiglas

frames, electric cords

dimensions variable

Picture(sque), 2017

antique Claude glass, float glass mirror, hook, plywood

23-1/2 x 21 x 1/2 inches

Selfie-Panorama (Times Square), 2026

oil and acrylic on plywood; GIF on iPad

36 panels, each 10 x 7 inches

Souvenirs of Armageddon (Burning Interior), 2009

oil on wood panel

20 x 20 inches

Trash Painting (No. 2), 2024

oil on aluminum

8 x 24 inches

TV Rock Iceberg, 2014

acrylic on board and ulexite mineral

14 x 18 x 1-1/2 inches

Twin Planet Protest, 2019

oil on panel

two panels, each 19-11/16 x 19-11/16 inches; height variable

Utopia Machine, 2025

acrylic and Posca marker on Alubond panels

100 panels, each 12 x 16 inches

ARTIST'S BIO

www.ellenharvey.info

I want to seduce people into thinking. – Ellen Harvey

Ellen Harvey is a British-born Brooklyn-based conceptual artist whose work ranges from guerrilla street interventions like her iconic *New York Beautification Project* for which she painted miniature landscapes over New York's graffiti sites to immersive institutional installations and large-scale public artworks. Her work is painting-based but utilizes a wide variety of media and participatory strategies to explore several reoccurring themes such as the social and ecological implications of the picturesque, the revolutionary potential of nostalgia, the conflict between advertising and ornament in public space, the relationship between art and tourism and the role of art in our society.

Harvey has exhibited extensively in the U.S. and internationally. Solo museum exhibitions have included MoCA|CT (CT), Rowan University Art Museum (NJ), Butler Gallery (Ireland), Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art (Poland), Museum der Moderne Salzburg (Austria), Turner Contemporary (UK), Barnes Foundation (Philadelphia), Groeninge Museum (Belgium), Corcoran Gallery of Art (Washington DC), The Bass (Miami Beach), Center for Contemporary Art (Warsaw, Poland), Pennsylvania Academy (Philadelphia) and Whitney Museum at Altria (New York). Her work has been included in group shows at Vienna Secession, Gwangju Biennial, Brooklyn Museum, PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Seattle Art Museum, Sculpture Center (NY), Queens Museum, Princeton University Art Museum, Prague Biennial, SMAK (Belgium), Arnolfini (UK), Museum Kurhaus Kleve (Germany), Contemporary Jewish Museum (San Francisco) Pinokothek der Moderne (Munich), and the 2008 Whitney Biennial, among others.

She has completed large-scale public artworks for Olana State Historic Site, Miami Beach Convention Center, Metro-North's Yankee Stadium station, New York's Queens Plaza subway station, Chicago's Francisco Station, Boston's South Station, San Francisco Airport, Philadelphia International Airport, Andover Internal Revenue Service Offices and the Flemish National Architect.

She is the author of the recently reissued *New York Beautification Project*, and her work has been the subject of three monographs to date.

She is a graduate of the Whitney Independent Study Program, Yale Law School and Harvard College and attended the Berlin Hochschule der Kunste. She is the recipient of numerous awards including a NYSCA grant, a Smithsonian Artists Research Fellowship, the Wivina Demeester Prize for Commissioned Public Art and a John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The USF Contemporary Art Museum (USFCAM) is pleased to present *PICTURE(SQUE): Ellen Harvey Works, 1999-2025*, a survey exhibition featuring four major bodies of work by the celebrated Anglo-American artist Ellen Harvey. Spanning more than twenty-five years of artistic practice, the exhibition explores themes of travel, memory, monuments, place-making, and environmental change. Through projects including *The Disappointed Tourist*, *The Mermaid: Two Incompatible Systems Intimately Linked*, *The New York Beautification Project*, and *The Utopia Machine*, Harvey examines the ways individuals and societies remember, represent, and imagine the world around them. *PICTURE(SQUE)* is curated by Christian Viveros-Fauné, USFCAM Curator-at-Large.

This exhibition and its associated programming were realized through the creative collaboration of USFCAM's talented team: Amy Allison, Program Coordinator; Shannon Annis, Curator of the Collection and Exhibitions Manager; Kenzie Ferrell, Digital Media Specialist; Don Fuller, New Media Curator; Alejandro Gómez, Preparator; Eric Jonas, Chief Preparator; Jennifer Miller, Curator of Education and Public Art; Gary Schmitt, Exhibitions Designer; Christian Viveros-Fauné, Curator-at-Large; David Waterman, Chief of Security and Visitor Services;

Kyna Patel, CAM Graduate Assistant; and the CAM Security Team—Madison Baker, Anamary Encinales and Isabella Fonte.

As USFCAM presents *PICTURE(SQUE)* from August 24, 2026, through March 6, 2027, the museum also looks forward to welcoming Sarah Higgins as its new Director and Chief Curator beginning October 12, 2026. Higgins brings extensive experience in curatorial practice, arts leadership, publishing, and community engagement, and will help lead the museum into its next chapter while advancing CAM's mission as a vibrant center for contemporary art, research, and public engagement.

PICTURE(SQUE): Ellen Harvey Works, 1999-2025 is organized by the USF Contemporary Art Museum. Support for the exhibition is provided by the Lee and Victor Leavengood CAM Endowment Fund, the Allen W. and Janet G. Root CAM Endowment, and the USF College of Design, Art & Performance.

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Kristina Keogh, PhD
Acting Director, USF Contemporary Art Museum

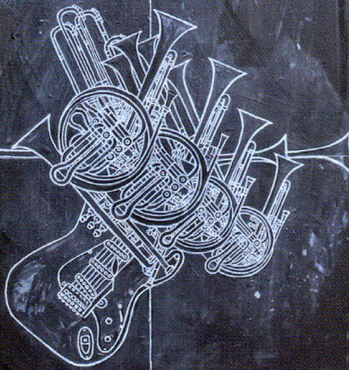


Above: Ellen Harvey, *New York Beautification Project* (details), 1999-2001. Photographs: Ellen Harvey Studio / Jan Baracz.

Inside cover: Ellen Harvey, *Utopia Machine*, 2024. Photograph: Angel Xotlanihua.

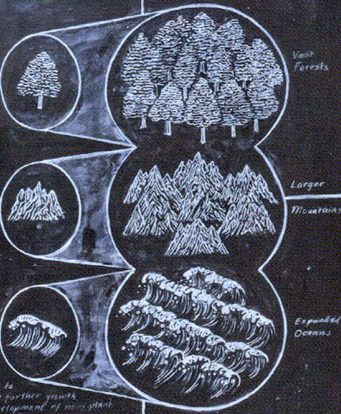
Music Maker

A friend told me about this idea.



PATENT PENDING: JACQUES ME

Expand Nature



PATENT PENDING: RYAN H.

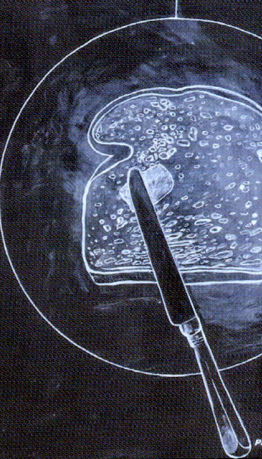
Thanks

Just Thanks!



PATENT PENDING: ANON.

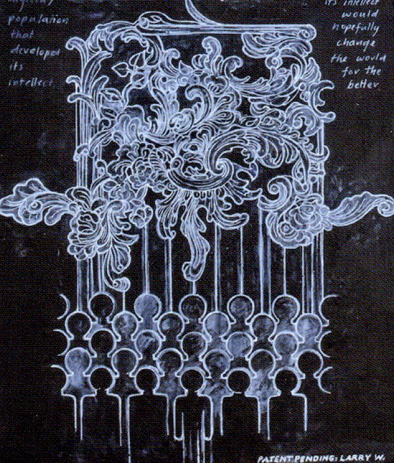
Toast



An educated (not necessarily formally degreed) population that develops its intellect.

Educated Population

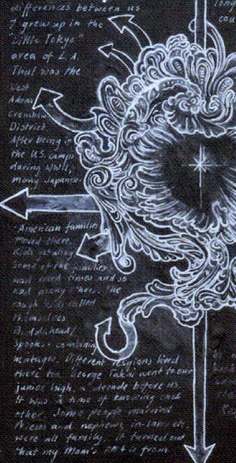
An educated global population that developed its intellect would hopefully change the world for the better.



PATENT PENDING: LARRY W.

People respecting each other, realizing as children before that differences between us are not differences between us. I grew up in the "Silk Tokyo" area of L.A. That was the last time I saw a Japanese person.

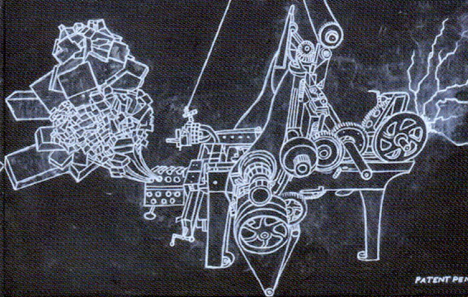
Respect for All!



PATENT PENDING: CONSTANCE C.

A machine that takes up carbon emissions and turns them into candy flowers.

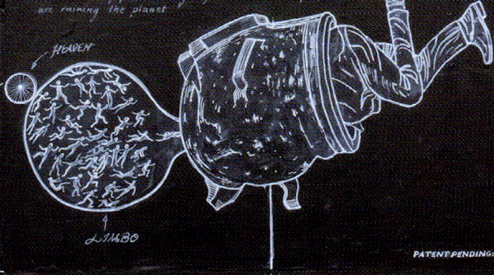
Dream-Powered Machine to suck up Carbon Emissions



PATENT PENDING: ANON.

A Machine to Purge Crappy People

A Machine to purge all the crappy people and dumb them to zero. This machine would take all the crappy people in the world and not enough good ones. Thus, the world is overpopulated anyway, we need less people who are ruining the planet.



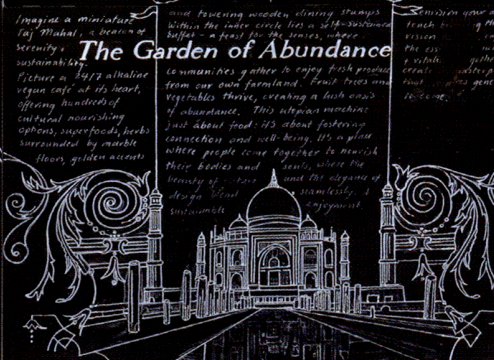
PATENT PENDING: ANON.

Love, Understanding and an Open Mind

There is too much hate, anger and misunderstanding in the world.



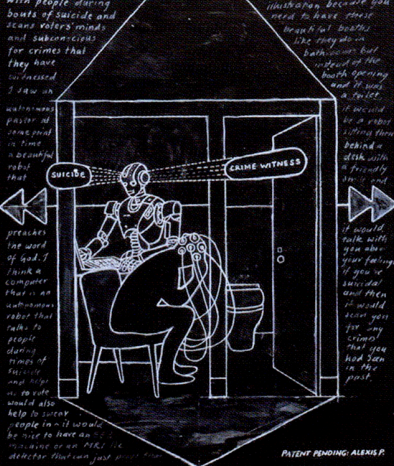
PATENT PENDING: ANON.



PATENT PENDING: ANON.

An EEG machine that is also an artificially intelligent robot that can read your mind and control your emotions.

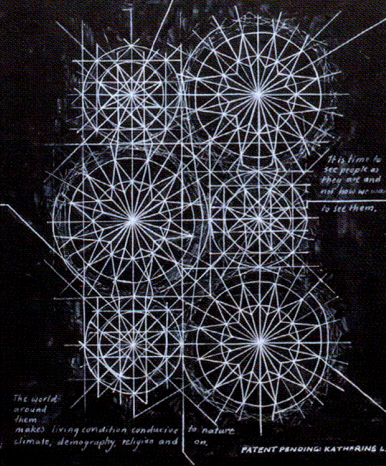
Humanoid EEG Robot



PATENT PENDING: ALEXIS P.

Seeing different people and their ways of life is dependent on the world they live in. Everyone is different in their own specific way.

Culture as Diversity



PATENT PENDING: KATHARINE L.

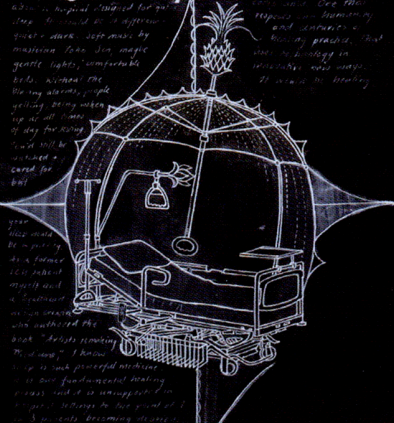
The world is a beautiful place. It makes living conditions conducive to climate, demography, religion and culture.

Compassion



Hospitals that are quiet and open up for a better healing. I don't want to be in a hospital. I want to be in a better place.

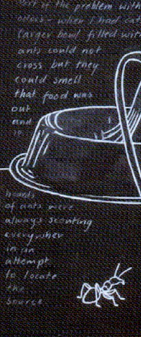
Quiet Hospitals



PATENT PENDING: ANON.

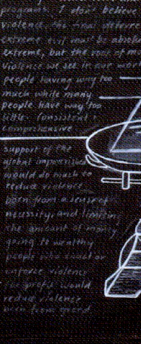
But if the problem with the world is that it's too big, then I think we should try to make it smaller. I think we should try to make it smaller. I think we should try to make it smaller.

Ant-Pr



PATENT PENDING: ANON.

Match



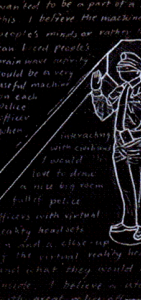
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Comm

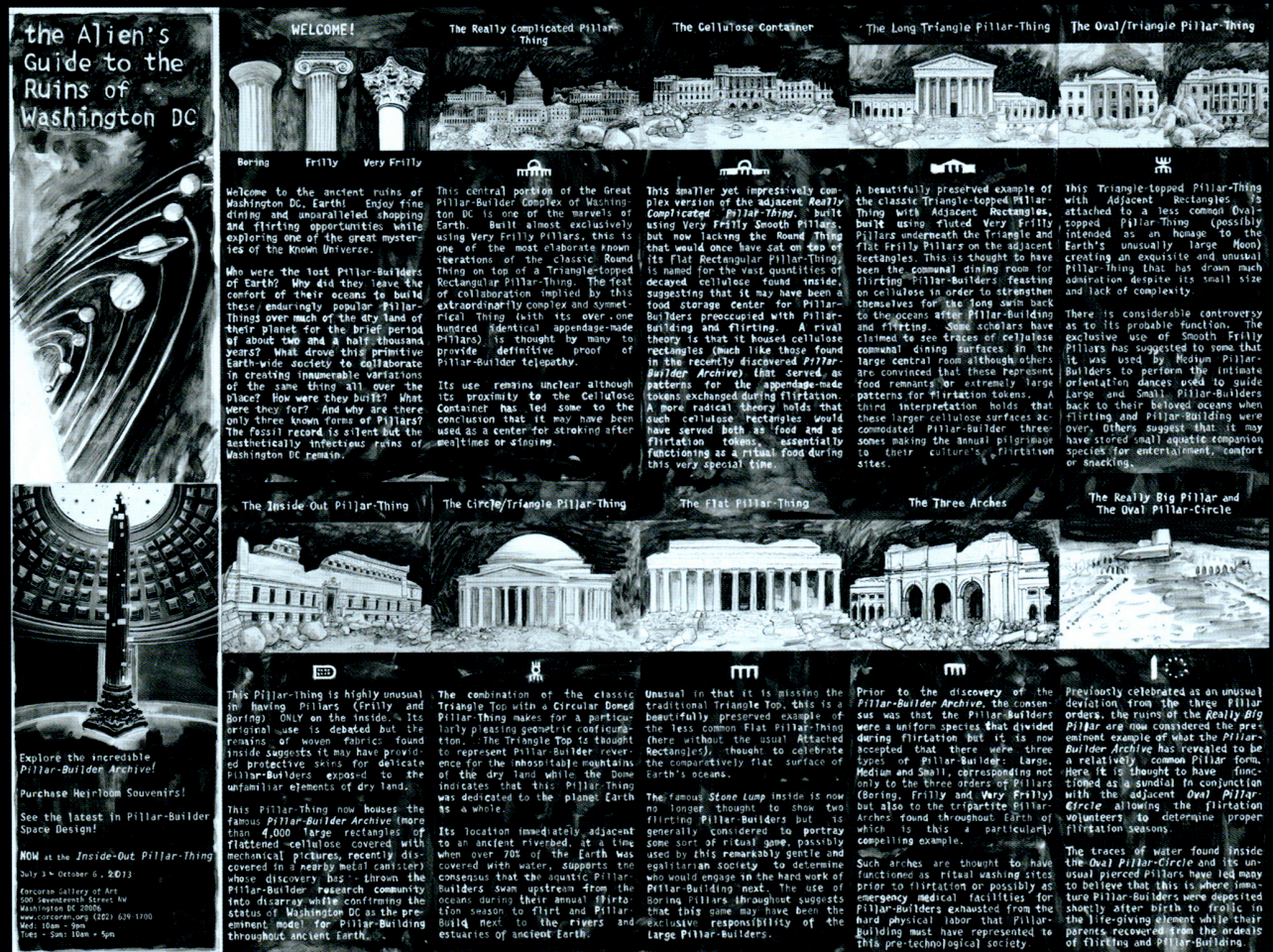


PATENT PENDING: ANON.

Mindre



PATENT PENDING: ANON.



Above: *The Alien's Guide to the Ruins of Washington DC* (front), 2013. Photograph: Ellen Harvey.

Left: *The Alien's Guide to the Ruins of Washington DC* (guide at King Street Metro display, Alexandria, VA), 2013. 12,000 folded 18 x 24 in prints. Photograph: Caroline Space.

Cover: Ellen Harvey, *The Disappointed Tourist* (detail of installation at MoCA/CT, 2026), 2019-present. Photograph: Etienne Frossard.



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