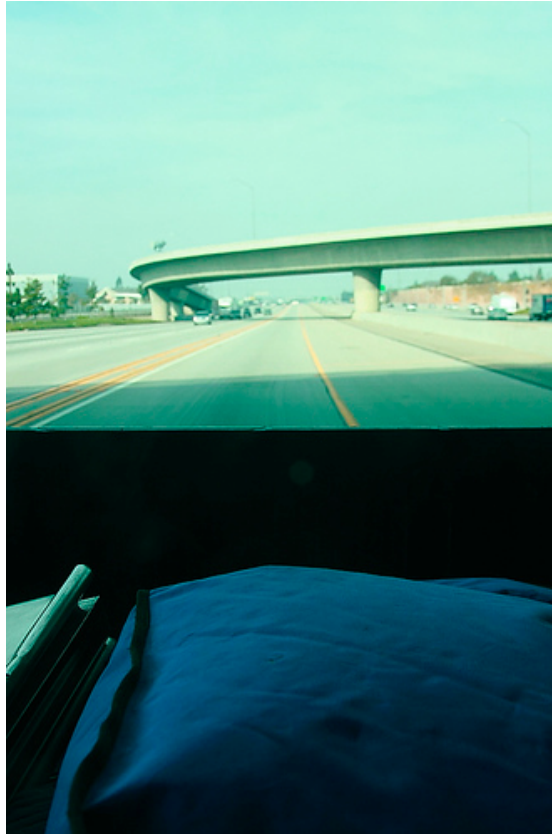


A SUSTAINABLE FEAST /// MFB GOES MARCO POLO

///001 FIVE SOUTHBOUND+PUBLIC SPACE

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Down the 5-S from Andy's truck heading to the Mexico-US Border (MFB)

EN ROUTE to Mexico is a landscape familiar to the American commuter: a terrain of mustard lines chalked on concrete and gradated onramps that take vehicles upwards and over and down again with ease. Luckily on a Saturday morning, the 5-South entre Los Angeles and Tijuana is practically empty. Three weekends back-to-back, I've traveled the southbound stretch with a bandy of public practitioners known collectively as "Portable City Projects" (PCP).

Led by Jules Rochielle, the pack (Andy Manoushagian, Fred Portillo) performs in public spaces in an attempt to facilitate conversation in a mock-cafe environment. Signaled by foldable aluminum furniture complete with an accordion canvas bench good for six and a blue picnic umbrella, the project "cafe" can either appeal to or repel unassuming passersby.

Their black-tied, white button-down shirts tucked into standard black aprons confuse spectators who can't help but suspect a rude encounter with a suitcase vendor or a proselytizing Mormon. But for the most part, the portable cafe is successful at reeling in curious types who usually have much to tell.

The purpose of the project is:

about creating a social space where people can engage in conversation and exchange, build human connection while ending the existing silence through dialogue amongst those who experience urban alienation and isolation (PCP, »).

PCP and other projects that perform public spaces aim to confront and dissolve the social obstacles effected by the development of private and semi-public spaces, which often overlaps the public sphere. Public squares once meant for celebration and protest default to trading posts of consumption. However, one may argue that the public forum has shifted realms to more contemporary media such as social networking sites and text messaging. But evidently, such sites and services are plagued by advertisements and access alone to these technologies is not free.

In response, PCP will not only podcast their happenings online but also stream them on pirated radio.

From 6 February to 21 March, PCP will collaborate with other groups and individuals involved in public practice at La Casa del Túnel Art Center in Tijuana. Janet Owen Driggs curates Performing Public Space, featuring works and performances by PCP, Lauren Bon, Fallen Fruit, Finishing School, John Geary, Anne Hars & Bill Wheelock, Ari Kletsky, LA Urban Rangers, Paul Pescador, Nancy Pop, and Jane Tsong.