

Approaching Humility/ Its Hard to Be Humble:
An Illustrated Lecture Series

Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center,
On Suffolk Street, between Delancey and Rivington Streets
Lower East Side, New York City, New York.
September 10, 2003, 7 p.m.

Though seemingly regarded as a virtue in the abstract, true humility is notably absent from our public discourse and national politics; arguably, genuine humility also fails to find expression within the private realm. Is humility a delicately structured thing, painstakingly maintained, easily destroyed? These speakers will suggest what it could mean to conduct our lives with some measure of humility and to find a basis for this without necessarily referencing to theology. However, the aural and visual works displayed are not so much about wrestling with humility in an overt or cerebral manner, as they are about a modest process. This lecture in its visual and verbal forms is a gesture towards humbleness. It is a struggle to locate native instances of humility within our current cultural landscape—perhaps these remain so abstract as to be essentially alien.

Speakers:

Paul Chan is an artist living in New York City.

Joel Ferree is an urban planner living in New York City.

Kathleen Graber is a poet living in New Jersey.

Paul Chan, artist.

SUBLIME HUMILITY:

Notes on outsider art and outsider politics -- after 9/11

Art and politics on the margins of history point toward alternatives to the unsavory dynamic of social humility/humiliation at work today in everything from reality television to the war on terror. What can foreign policy experts learn from wood carvers from Mississippi and Iraqi Sufi sheikhs?

Kathleen Graber, poet.

HUMBLE POET, HUMBLE POEM:

Insult or praise?

Humility is, frankly, not a virtue widely valued in contemporary American poetry, an artistic landscape dominated by the extremes of the narrative confessional lyric and the language poem. Yet there is a legacy of something like humility that comes to us from Keats's idea of Negative Capability and the examples of both Whitman and Dickinson. Why is humility so problematic for poets? Is the insistence on the centrality of the self simply arrogance? Something predictably and typically American?

Joel Ferree, urban planner.

POWER AND HUMILITY, PLANNING AND PARADOX

In coming to grips with people's fears and desires, authorities have carved a legacy of their own emotions into the urban fabric. The battlefield on which the love affair between power and desire plays itself out is often one of difference and the casualty is often humility. Can there be a humble approach to building cities?

Artists

Dave Ford

Holly Miller

Austin Thomas

Performing Artists

Diane Cluck

Dave Deporis

Goat Island (video)