

# Peace & Quiet

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## ABSTRACT

*Peace & Quiet, a temporary dialogue station installed in Times Square, New York City provided a tranquil place where veterans and civilians – two wide-ranging groups whose paths increasingly do not cross – could openly engage each other in meaningful conversation. Conceived, designed, and built by the Brooklyn-based firm, Matter Architecture Practice, this project review traces the development and collaborative process by which the station was realised and inhabited.*

July 15, 2010

A man in an Army cap approached a perfect stranger who had noticed the Vietnam hat, and shook Mr. Bochicchio's hand and said, 'Welcome home.' Like this friendly, chatty man had come back from war this morning, and not 38 years ago. 'Everybody does that,' Mr. Bochicchio said as the man walked off without another word. "Thanks for serving." Never seen 'em before.'<sup>1</sup>

While we may be critical of the wisdom of waging wars in far away places, it is impossible to not be touched by the personal stories about the struggles of the veterans who served in these conflicts – which seem to confront us daily in the media. Since we no longer build monuments, or only with reluctance and typically for the deceased, we asked ourselves what a possible response might be to the anecdote above. As a counterpoint to the recruiting station, the possible commencement point for arduous and dangerous journeys for those lucky enough to return, we propose to erect a 'Discharge Station', to welcome the men and women of the armed services back into civilian life.

The above was part of a one-page submission responding to an open call issued by the Times Square Alliance Public Art Program for 'letters of interest for Art Projects and Art Events ... engaging the unique nature,

and rich history of the Times Square District'. Installations could be proposed within the square or a number of designated spaces in the surrounding streets. Almost 400 proposals were received.

Our letter, crafted moments before the deadline, was the spontaneous product of a month-long research into this infamous location, conducted without any pre-conceived ideas for making a proposal. We studied the square's history as a site for receiving the news, its iconic significance, who and what was once or currently there – while trying to imagine how anything of moderate scale could possibly make an impact or even tempt passing notice in an environment of crushing over-stimulation. Rather than seek competition with this vast space, we were reactively drawn to the idea of remaining absolutely still: quiet.

Anchoring the southern end of Times Square stands a small and serious structure, which looms large for its incongruity with the cartoonish 24-hour commercial entertainment spectacle the place has become. The U.S. Armed Forces Recruiting Station, first sited there in 1946, has become a destination for demonstrations of any cause – from proud displays of the latest war gadgetry to expressions against American foreign policy, and cries against perceived failures of justice within the domestic state.<sup>2</sup>

As the exchange with Mr. Bochicchio suggests, it is also a place for active military and veterans to linger, at times for seemingly no reason other than for chance encounter. Yet we were struck by the glib, distant intonation of the stranger's 'Thanks for serving' with nothing more, spoken at a time when the United States was fully embroiled in what has now become its longest-running war, waged at quietly staggering cost.<sup>3</sup>

Times Square, arguably one of the world's great public intersections, has an estimated 350,000 people passing through it every day. The site seemed the ideal circumstance to initiate and inform a poignant exchange of ideas and to will intimacy in an instance of its opposite. We proposed a structure to house absent yet pressingly critical social dialogue for our time.

## PEACE & QUIET

Located far opposite the US Army Recruiting Station, *Peace & Quiet* was a temporary dialogue station installed in the north end of the square from November 11 through 16, 2012 (Figure 1). It provided a tranquil place where veterans and civilians – two wide-ranging groups whose paths increasingly do not cross – could openly engage in conversation, share stories, leave notes, or just shake hands. Abstractly interpreted, these two structures were intertwined portals, bracketing experiences the vast majority of Americans only hear about in the news; events at the forefront of our national identity and economy, and yet often remote to those who do not, or dare not, enter these situations directly.<sup>4</sup>

Rather than reiterate the construction strategies, publicity and programming of the project, which are well documented online, this review addresses the term 'design activism' and reflects on some of the actions and reactions encountered in the process of the station's becoming.<sup>5</sup> How do you practically design to activism? What are the resistances to it?

Robin Cembalest, writing in *ARTnews*, situated 'this curious little structure' as 'being in the spirit of relational esthetics, the artistic



strategy used to spark social interaction'.<sup>6</sup> While this expresses an interpretative stance within the discipline of art criticism, it was not the consciousness by which we entered into the idea. *Peace & Quiet* insistently stems from an architectural response to a specific urban space and set of parameters; we were first designing a place to shelter an identified need, and not as long-standing advocates for a specific cause. Its designation as 'public art' certainly was due to it being presented by Times Square Alliance Public Art, however the relative obscurity and recent emergence of the term 'design activism' possibly prevented it being categorised otherwise, and 'architecture' is both too grand and too staid for its diminutive size. 'Activist Art', on the other hand, is often central to definitions and objectives of contemporary art conceived for public space.

## (A)POLITICS

After *Peace & Quiet* was green-lighted for installation, our 'kick-off' meeting with the Times Square Alliance entailed each party carefully gauging the stance of the other: were the potential implications understood by the Alliance, and to what extent did we intend this to be an overt political statement of an express position or not? While the station was not ever conceived to be a centre for reflection on war's deceased, Maya Lin's powerful Vietnam memorial on Washington Mall was undoubtedly influential. Arguably regarded as the most moving invocation of war in its making visible the tragic loss of life, its design is often interpreted as resulting from an anti-war position. Lin herself however considers it to be thoroughly apolitical. 'As I did more research on monuments, I realized most carried larger, more general messages about a leader's victory or accomplishments rather than the lives lost ... I made a conscious decision not to do any specific research on the Vietnam War and the political turmoil surrounding it. I felt that the politics had eclipsed the veterans, their service, and their lives.'<sup>7</sup>

We hoped to achieve a similar elusive sensibility: the endeavour would be to connect individuals on a personal basis through design and a neutral program, and not suggest any endorsement for or against the ethical validity of such conflicts. The approach

Above

Figure 1: Siting and situation of Peace & Quiet in Times Square, New York.  
Drawings: MATTER

would be strictly non-political, absent of judgment and beyond stereotype, yet with aspirations it would quietly probe civic and communal thought on the cost of conflict in our society, and spark some public discussion. Activism, even if unstated, requires a minimum amount of ambitious idealism.

The charge put to us by the Times Square Alliance was to source a 'client', who could advise the project from the veteran/military perspective. As we weren't veterans, didn't know veterans, or even have any contact with US veterans, there would be no shortage of irony if a place for military/civilian dialogue was designed without this very dialogue being part of the process. Our lack of connection with this community was due in part to being from an urban environment in the northeastern part of the United States, which has the lowest enlistment rate in the country, the relatively isolated profile of the military domestically, and the metrics of the deployment since 2000. Conscripted was abolished in the United States in 1973, and all conflict since that time has relied on an ostensibly all-voluntary force. Just one-half of 1% of Americans have served in uniform at any given time in the last decade; during the Vietnam era, 9.7% of the population (30% of those eligible) served; in WW II, that figure was at 12%.<sup>8</sup>

## THE GAP

Identifying 'a client' to approach took some time. Many organisations for veterans were involved in advocacy with set and necessary agendas, or they did not strike us as having the right tone for enabling a neutral program. In the protracted delay to committing to the project, we began to recognise our own fear and ignorance in stepping into the actuality of the project, despite an intellectual attraction to its ideas.

In early 2012, we identified a non-profit social justice organisation via an article in the *New York Times*, 'Talking Out Loud About War, and Coming Home'.<sup>9</sup> Veteran-Civilian Dialogue™ (VCD) was an evening-long bi-monthly workshop held at the Intersections International storefront in New York and occasionally other cities. VCD was created and directed by two licensed practicing psychotherapists who are both veterans: Scott Thompson, a former army chaplain; and Lawrence (Larry) Winters, almost twenty years his senior, who had served in Vietnam.<sup>10</sup> Roughly seventy people, equal numbers veteran and civilian of all ages, came together for carefully facilitated social interactions developed to open channels of unfettered conversation around issues affecting both groups. The only thing off limits was politics. The key goal was to bridge the gap between veteran/military and civilian worlds. The fit with the objectives of *Peace & Quiet* seemed perfect.

Admittedly we were a bit apprehensive going to the first of these workshops – with misplaced fear of awkwardly facing a shell-shocked individual with simmering emotional volatility. Newspapers, even those with ostensibly 'advanced' reporting, can be informative while also thoroughly forming of stereotypes. In the absence of experience qualifying the degree to which a behaviour occurs,

we found it impossible to evaluate the probability of encountering post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or even how adverse such an experience would be.<sup>11</sup> We began to recognise the extent of our own presumptions about the military/veteran community and realised we were far less informed than we imagined ourselves to be.

Swiftly debunked were assumptions that there was a largely dominant or unified political stance, reason for serving, demographic homogeneity, or singular response to the experience among veterans; or that there was a lack of critical reflection of their roles both as ostensible protectors of the country and uninvited guests in foreign lands. One of the most charged conversations was around the moral dilemma of being from a society that dictates 'thou shalt not kill', while having had a job requiring this fundamental ethic be put aside. As Paul Wasserman (Iraq war veteran and poet with a Masters in philosophy and comparative literature), put it during one of the dialogues – 'That is *the* gap'.

The prevalence of stereotyping among the civilians became stark as we shared the project with peers, who would often launch unbidden into what it must be like to work with military or veterans; we recognised their projections as views we also once incorrectly believed.<sup>12</sup> Veterans, in turn, burdened by popular media profiling from movies (*Rambo* or *Born on the Fourth of July* were often cited) were suspicious and reluctant to share stories with civilians, and often automatically deemed them incapable of comprehending the complexity of the veteran situation.

The further *Peace & Quiet* was researched and developed, the more unlikely it seemed it could ever effectively function as bridging this perceptual divide. Mining this gap became acutely more necessary.

## MISSION (IMPOSSIBLE)

Over several months we had many long, insightful, and deeply invaluable discussions with Larry and Scott to hone actions for the station from which we would develop its design. In this sense, the process differed from more common standards of design practice, whereby the client establishes the program as the brief for the architect's design. As with many projects engaging social or economic themes, the role of the designer/architect was expanded to include initiating the programmatic brief and identifying the purpose for the design itself. Through this process, which was so eye opening, *Peace & Quiet* shifted from being referred to as a 'Discharge' Station to one of 'Dialogue'.

Our 'clients' asked probing questions, most likely to ascertain to what extent our intentions were genuine, but in answering we were forced to go beyond declaring the project as simply being a good idea. Why were we inspired to do it? What was our personal connection to the issue? Why did we believe it was important? What did we want *them* to do? Initially it seemed straightforward: as dialogue was so successfully being realised through their VCD program, we would host dialogues

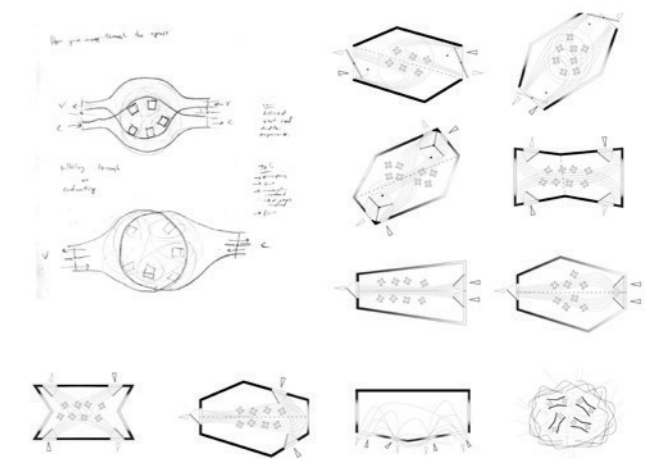
to engage the public in a critical subject that is often avoided or viewed with apathy. However issues of scalability, replicating an event tailored for a certain number of people to a different context, or managing potentially very private exposure in a public place did not present easy or agreed upon solutions.

For many, a successful dialogue could only be achieved through something akin to the slow unpeeling of an onion, with participants reaching a moment of inner catharsis or revelation, where each person was introduced to something unknown about the other, and through this exchange could better recognise and situate themselves. While the dialogues had been constructed as a supportive outreach program defined as being distinct from therapy sessions, they could not be disassociated from a concept of mutual 'healing'. Veterans and civilians each needed something from each other to complete that process. This begged the question of how one could be 'healed' if they, particularly civilians, did not consider themselves 'sick' in the first place.

Several people we consulted declared conversational intimacy would be impossible without an extended and controlled build up. As such the experiential sequence of the station had to be highly scripted if it were to work at all. Many veterans (later we noticed they were all from the Vietnam era) disagreed with the premise of 'exposing' this discussion in such an open forum. For this generation, so condemned or cast aside by history's placement of that war, conversations of this nature were only possible in established safe houses, far from public view. At times it seemed there was an underlying accusation of being 'carpet-baggers' for sensationalist reasons, making a sideshow out of a sensitive subject we did not own.

Conversely, others at Intersections International saw an opportunity for marketing on a scale they'd never had, leading to ideas being floated that were logistically and fiscally out of reach. Suggestions included station activity streamed to neighbouring billboards (this would have involved negotiations for global advertising's most expensive space!) in conjunction with national broadcast; or banks of touch screens connected to social media, allowing anyone anywhere to participate and contribute to dialogues. The promise of Times Square, it seems, leads to an expansion of ideas, to grander and grander dreams. Media interface as the visitor experience began to dominate proposals for programming – both as an advertising opportunity for VCD, but also as a means to sidestep the challenge of facilitating face-to-face conversation in an unfiltered environment. However if the end goal of connecting would foremost be virtual, possible anywhere at any time, what would be the reason for building a physical place?

Apart from a creeping sense plans were becoming unnecessarily complicated and over-prescribed, this trajectory of development enabled us to more clearly determine what had to remain as the station's core experience. Cass Sunstein, the American legal scholar, has written extensively about the phenomenon of 'cyberbalkanization' and its potential impact on democratic society: counter-intuitively the world wide web, while connecting people over far-flung physical geography, also



fosters the human tendency to selectively gravitate towards like opinions and experiences. This effectively shuts down exposure to information that may challenge or encourage one to rethink one's beliefs.<sup>13</sup> This was counter to what we were hoping to achieve; the station needed to remain a strictly analogue, physically present experience – even if documentation and outreach would be shared via contemporary social media. It would absorb 'the risk' of unscripted, and as such unpredictable, exchange between strangers. Looking back this now is seemingly obvious, yet it was not readily identified until it began to slip away.

## COMMUNICABLE FORM

While schematic renderings and models had been produced for fundraising and approvals before we initiated programming collaboration, we chose to not present or develop them further while we jointly explored what the station needed to do and communicate. There were some given site parameters – it could not exceed 200 ft<sup>2</sup> (18.6m<sup>2</sup>) or be more than ten feet (three metres) high. It had to be deployed and fully installed in less than twelve hours, and be able to withstand a stampede. A few of the early gestures – the conceptual signifiers – we would retain: the shallow pitched roof, simultaneously channelling the icon of 'house/home' and the field tent, and an interior that significantly dampened any exterior sound (Figure 2).

As the experience brief developed, we felt it became more immutable and unaccommodating – in a sense unwittingly imagining a passive (and captive) audience instead of activating citizens. We insisted, correctly or not, that meaningful exchange could be attained even if the encounter was fleeting, unexpected, and left open-ended – which was most likely to be the case in Times Square. Drawing in a larger crowd would require offering several ways to enter into 'dialogue' as we were aware that any sense of inflexibility or feeling pressured without choice, coupled with the associated fear of the subject, could potentially deter many people. Much time was devoted to exercises 'choreographing' visitor movement, which were intended to occasion unscripted and genuine interaction (Figure 3). While in retrospect these exercises seem somewhat absurd, they were invaluable as sketches for imagining likely engagement by people as they moved in and around the structure.

Above left

Figure 2: Study models of the station in development.  
Photograph: MATTER

Above right

Figure 3: Flow studies of circulation, based on scripted dialogue events.  
Drawings: MATTER



Within any population only a relatively small percentage can be relied on to enter an enclosed room and engage in conversation with strangers; the majority, if the exterior of the station was an attractor, could be prompted to stop, read, and contribute if they saw others doing so; and a smaller number were likely to watch from afar, disinclined to leave any trace.<sup>14</sup> Candy Chang's deceptively simple *Before I Die* installation, realised in downtown Brooklyn in late 2011 not far from our office, was stunning in how it captured this desired range of interaction.<sup>15</sup> Her strategy of using words as a motivator yet at an architectural scale was a synthesis of one of the VCDs existing outreach projects 'Your word for war (or peace) is \_\_\_\_\_' and the urban siting of *Peace & Quiet*.

The station's exterior would have to function as an attractor screen of sorts from afar, signifying its purpose, and causing people to stop. It would also be a surface for registering dialogue through pinned notes answering to a well-crafted probe. There would be two doors, one at either end, suggesting more than one path in, but also more than one escape route out; the station was a room, but also a passage. Inside there would be an informal arrangement of round tables and chairs, a carpet to absorb sound, and an acoustic pin board along one wall. If more privacy were desired, semi-sheer curtains could be drawn over the clear transoms and doors.

STATION

Ultimately, to remain true to the project as it had been conceived, we had to broaden the veteran community outreach by working with more than one collaborator, each hosting the station on varying days and each bridging the veteran-civilian gap through different portals. The Pat Tillman Foundation, an organisation sponsoring post-military career studies at notable universities, had its local scholarship recipients host conversations and be available to answer any question thrown at them ('Ever wonder what it's like to sleep in a hole in the Iraq Desert?').<sup>16</sup> Scott Thompson, who was no longer running VCD but still working with us as a key consultant, and Benjamin Duchek, former artillery officer and founder of Socialgence, moderated intimate dialogue and led brainstorming on probes for the pin board;

Code of Support Foundation, a non-profit group communicating the isolating effect prolonged war has had on military families, sought common ground through the domestic environment of the station; Brian Halloran, a socially-engaged artist whose work focused on communication campaigns between disparate demographic groups, hosted *Protected* – a wall of correspondence; and StoryCorps Military Voices Initiative teased out topical oral histories from veterans and civilians, which were posted as audio clips to their site. In this way *Peace & Quiet's* character of activity varied from day to day, not unlike the varying cycle of inhabitation at a railway station over the course of twenty-four hours.

All –  
*Just thought to share a note about coordinating verbiage on just what to call this thing we're building, as we're all about to launch outreach and chat.*

*We refer to the P&Q structure precisely as a 'station' – as opposed to booth, tent, kiosk, hut, etc., even though it channels those definitions as well. We honed this designation due to a Station's architectural connotation as a port of arrival and departure; a place of (ex)change and connection; an intersection of strangers passing through in close proximity and perhaps recognizing a shared path; the possibility of encounter, distinctly tied to instances in time; a necessary moment in any journey – sometimes to destinations unknown. Does it seem the same as we left it, when we return?*

Excerpt from MATTER's email sent to all collaborators on the eve of TSA's official press release.

DEPLOYMENT

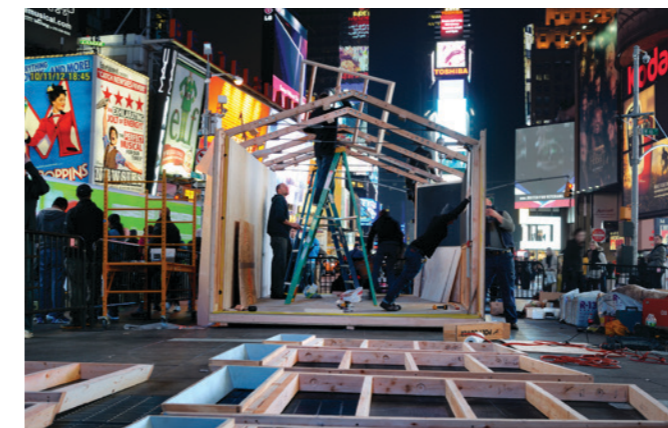
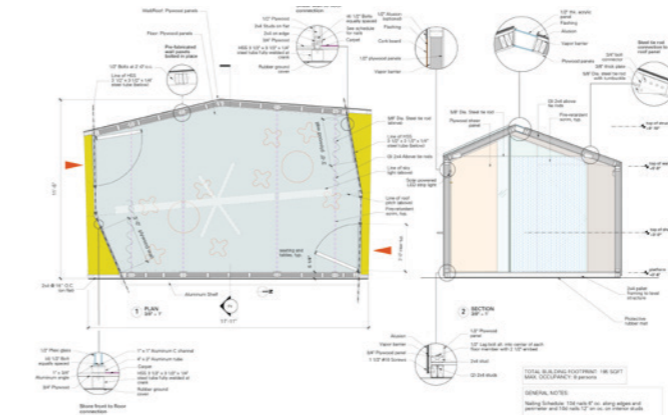
How *Peace & Quiet* was made in the end was based on an economy of materials and basic framing construction (Figure 4). It was pre-fabricated in entirety as a set of demountable components in an available storage room barely larger than its footprint, that was located on the same floor as MATTER's office and shop. The exterior cladding was Tectum, an interior acoustic panel product, painted with aluminium coating typically used

to deflect solar rays on roofs. Its gleaming, strangely textured surface subtly reflected the changing glow from surrounding electronic billboards, a small faceted jewel appearing suddenly overnight (Figures 5, 6, 7).

To cover the costs of construction many vendors willingly donated or discounted materials and furnishings. Station hosts provided some support, and there was a small grant from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs. Regardless of the lack of funds, there was a strong commitment to move forward. Interestingly enough, *Peace & Quiet's* Kickstarter crowd-sourced fundraising campaign, while successful in reaching its goal, did not gain viral momentum. This surprised us a little given the

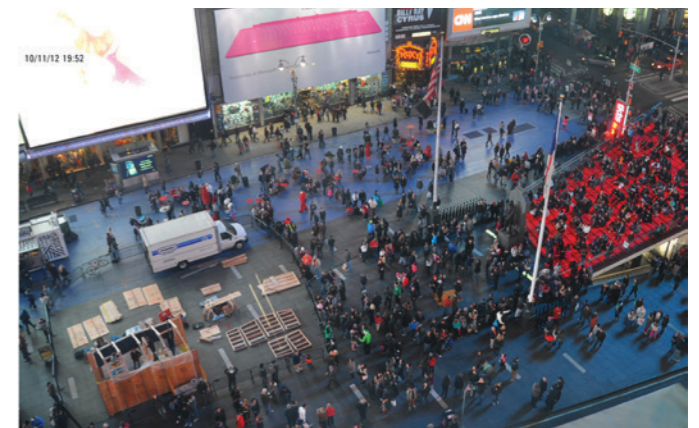
sheer number of veterans in the United States, and the universal support and appreciation *Peace & Quiet* received whenever it was presented. We wondered if its name, initially devised as being a descriptive counterpoint to Times Square's din, was what failed to resonate – that it was interpreted as a politically leftist anti-war, anti-veteran statement. That the timing of our campaign coincided with federal elections – always a bona fide circus in American politics with no shortage of partisan fundraising – and the flooding of New York City probably didn't help.<sup>17</sup>

There were other, late-breaking, pressures. As the date of installation approached – November 11, Veterans Day, and in the



**Above top left**  
 Figure 4: Final drawings submitted for structural and permit approval. Drawings: MATTER

**Above bottom left**  
 Figure 6: November 10 at 18:45. The project was delivered and installed in less than 12 hours. Photograph: Martin Seck.



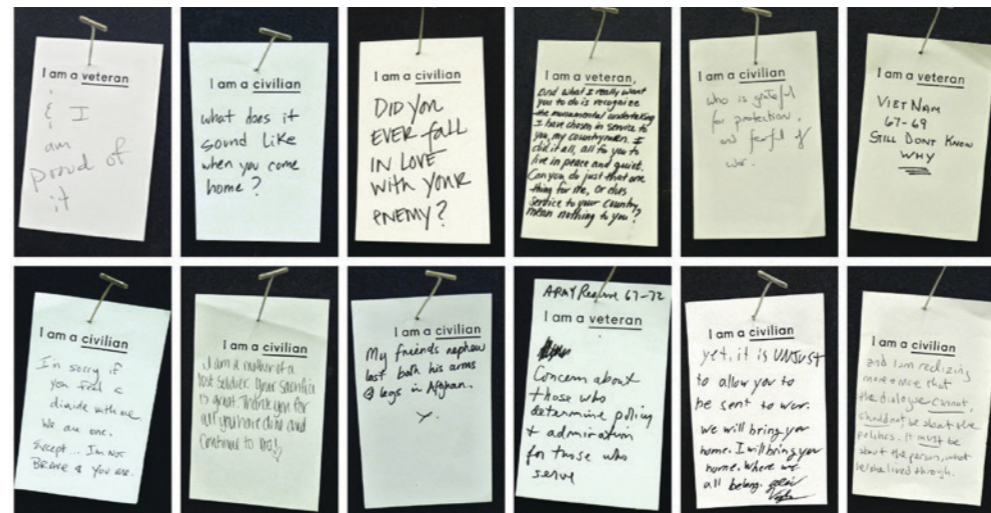
**Above top right**  
 Figure 5: November 10 at 16:44. Installation; first leveled floor panels, followed by walls. Photograph: Martin Seck.

**Above bottom right**  
 Figure 7: November 10 at 19:52. Installation in progress, with an audience. Photograph: Teresa Cacho.



shadow of yet another much-publicised American mass public shooting event<sup>18</sup> – a previously unexpressed nervousness about the project and its potential to cause controversy began to emerge. The Times Square Alliance, which was supporting the project through permitting logistics, security, and media outreach, asked for a pre-determined outcome for the station. Instead of being an event open to the random passerby, security required participation in dialogues be via web-based sign-up for pre-reserved time with locked-down scripts for moderation in place; pinning notes was eliminated from the exterior, so that no user-generated comments would be visible to a passing public; and 'Rules of Engagement' had to be prepared and posted, clearly spelling out the allowable nature of the conversations. It was requested we arrange for professional trauma specialists to be on hand to assist anyone in need; installation dates were cut back from eleven to six days, inclusive of only one weekend day. While we were able to push back on some of the suggestions, most we had to accept.<sup>19</sup> It was fascinating to watch a project selected and, to date, championed exactly for its promise to spark open civic discussion in a public square – the *agora* fulfilled in every sense of the word – being hastily required to adopt measures limiting its accessibility and discouraging spontaneous engagement.

The underlying reasons for the precautions were understandable – the liability if something *did* actually happen on NYC publicly operated land – but they also underscored why this particular conversation was so necessary. The gap between veteran and civilian worlds was such that the majority of civilians regarded any venture into this unknown territory with fear, and this only serves to perpetuate the problem.



DIALOGUES

In the end, almost no one used the web sign-up portal to pre-sign up for a dialogue, and this didn't matter. What occurred was a fairly steady stream of people entering *Peace & Quiet's* doors (interestingly enough this was more likely when they were closed). Many talked and left notes, some read, others recorded, a limited few wept or were amicably not quite sane (Times Square denizens). A good number were visiting New York as post-Super Storm Sandy relief workers. A retired army major general spoke at length to a street 'kid' who had dropped out and was living the underground party scene in NYC; a young woman who had pre-enlisted at age 17 explained how her crisis at having 'collected' souvenirs in Iraq led to a post-military degree in museum studies as a way of examining the meaning of artifacts and ownership of stories; a military officer riveted a couple for more than an hour as they asked question after question of what he did (they had never talked to anyone who had actually been to Iraq or Afghanistan before); an army wife encouraged children to write notes to an imagined child their age whose father was deployed; oral histories were recorded and posted online; tourists were asked to share their country's civilian relationship with their military. One of the most significant crossings was with a high school social studies class from the Bronx who were on assignment in Times Square to interview passersby on their opinions regarding gun possession in civilian communities. We invited them in to write letters about what it means to 'be protected'.<sup>20</sup> (Figures 8, 9, 10, 11).

As described in ARTnews: '*Peace & Quiet*, despite its chaotic location, created a safe space too ... The site achieved that certain alchemy, so elusive and potentially life-changing, that makes taboos dissolve. Once the audience accepted the station as a transformative setting, the personal could

**Opposite left**  
Figure 8: Station hosts facilitated dialogue through conversation, letter writing, and recording stories.  
Photograph: MATTER.

**Opposite right**  
Figure 9: The exterior was used to inform and spur contemplated engagement on the military-civilian gap.  
Photograph: MATTER.

**Above left**  
Figure 10: Notes from the station.  
Photograph: MATTER.

**Above right**  
Figure 11: View of the interior with letter/message board, white-washed ply panels, and Emeco furnishings.  
Photograph: MATTER.



replace the political and words and thoughts could flow that had been blocked before.<sup>21</sup> On the last day of the station we painted a navy blue rectangle on one of the station's facades and took the notes outside, as originally intended. It more than tripled active involvement, and no one got hurt. Mainstream network media began to take notice, and then the next day the station was gone.

## RETURN

In June 2014 we were contacted by the Center for the Art of Performance (CAP) at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). They were interested in reinstalling *Peace & Quiet* as a collaborative effort in conjunction with their presentation of *BASETRACK Live*, a theatrical performance piece that tells the impact of war on veterans and those close to them 'without representing the characters as either heroes or victims...just ordinary people fundamentally changed by the extraordinary experience of fighting a war'.<sup>22</sup> UCLA CAP would develop and host the programming and manage the construction. This opportunistically spurred re-examination of *Peace & Quiet* as a replicable model, where we would design its structure and provide guidelines for the express tone and nature for dialogues, but others would inhabit those parameters to make it their own.

The artist Brian Halloran joined us in the studio during one of the programming discussions we had with Meryl Friedman, CAP's Director of Education & Special Initiatives. In his evaluation, while Times Square was a key generator of the concept of the project, it also almost guaranteed its impossibility as an interior garnering mass participation. The impracticality with its immediate context was almost too great for many people to reconcile; the pace was too quick for anyone to linger long enough to slow into the zone of opening themselves up. Hence the challenge of reaching an inner sanctum of true dialogue possibly rendered *Peace & Quiet* a symbolic act rather than any kind of functional activism. As designers and architects we are trained to anticipate a set of uses and then provide the form or place to enable those uses to take place. But we can only anticipate, plan for an unfolding of circumstances and give the work over to whatever is the will. *Peace & Quiet Los Angeles* was installed from October 6 through

10, 2014 on Royce Quad, UCLA's oldest and most symbolic intersection. Its volumetric form was unchanged but the panelised acoustic shell, which in Times Square had isolated interior from out, was replaced by two layers of woven silver fabric that produced a gauzy translucent screen, defining place and providing refuge from the blistering sun. The upper halves of the walls were pin boards mounted below the fabric. There were no doors, just open portals.

On the inside was mounted a timeline exhibition of correspondence, documenting the evolving form of letters home from the First World War to the present. People could sit, talk, or write letters to service people stationed overseas, which would be delivered. Or leave a note. On the exterior there appeared each day a different question added in large type, with new pre-printed cards to respond. After less than one week, all the boards were completely covered.

*How do you serve?*

*A hero is...*

*When do you feel protected?*

*What's the bravest thing you've ever done?*

*What does peace look like?*<sup>23</sup>

## CREDITS: PEACE & QUIET, Times Square

*MATTER project team, design and construction*

Sandra Wheeler and Alfred Zollinger, co-directors. Chelsea Crisafulli, John Brandes, Christopher Malloy, Samuel Weston, Jessica Barnhouse, Danae Colomer, Teresa Cacho, Luke Eddins, Sarah Leenen, Robert Miller, Emily Mak, Takuya Toyama

*Station hosts*

StoryCorps Military Voices Initiative, Pat Tillman Foundation and Tillman Military Scholars, Code of Support Foundation, Socialgence, Brian Fernandes-Halloran, Scott Thompson

*Structural engineer*

Hage Engineering PC

*Station graphics and identity*

VosBrenner: Michael Brenner, Nele Vos

*Selected metal fabrication*

Indianapolis Fabrications

*Programming advisors*

Scott Thompson, Lawrence Winters



Above

Figure 12: View of the installed station from the south.  
Photograph: Martin Seck.

## NOTES

1. Michael Wilson, "With a Focus on Recruiters, Not a Recruiter to Be Found," *New York Times*, July 1, 2010, A29.
2. The photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt's iconic image of the sailor spontaneously kissing the nurse, taken on V-J day, cements Times Square's association with the victory parade. Informal marches typically start in Union Square and wind to Times Square, such as those in protest of the Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown shootings.
3. As of September 15, 2014 almost 7,000 US personnel have been killed, and over 52,000 have been wounded in action. "Casualty Status," U.S. Department of Defense, accessed September 15, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/news/casualty.pdf>
- As of April 14, 2014 there have been at the very least 174,000 violent civilian deaths as a result of the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. "Civilians Killed and Wounded," *Costs of War*, last modified May 2014, <http://costsofwar.org/article/civilians-killed-and-wounded>.
- The United States has already spent close to \$2 trillion on conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, with a final cost estimated to be \$4-6 trillion. Robert O'Neill, "Counting the Costs of War," *Harvard Kennedy School*, last modified summer 2013, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/news-events/publications/impact-newsletter/archives/summer-2013/the-costs-of-the-iraq-and-afghanistan-wars>. Sabir Shah, "US Wars in Afghanistan, Iraq to Cost \$6 Trillion," *Global Research*, last modified September 20, 2013, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-wars-in-afghanistan-iraq-to-cost-6-trillion/5350789>.
4. In a report published by the Pew Center, more than three quarters of civilian adults aged 50 or older had an immediate family member who served or serves in the military; for many this took place before the end of conscription in 1973. Only 57% of civilians aged 30 to 49 could make that claim, and that figure dropped to one-third for those aged 18 to 29. Donna Miles, "Survey Shows Growing Gap Between Civilians, Military," *US Department of Defense*, last modified November 28, 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=66253>.
5. For a timeline/blog of *Peace & Quiet*, from its pre-fabrication for Times Square through reinterpretation in Los Angeles, see <https://www.facebook.com/Peace.and.Quiet.Times.Square>
6. Robin Cembalest, "The Military Is Present," *ARTnews*, March 2013, 85.
7. Maya Lin, "Making the Memorial," *Nybooks.com. The New York Review of Books*, November 2, 2000, accessed September 2, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2000/nov/02/making-the-memorial/>
8. Karl W. Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, "Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart," *New York Times*, May 27, 2013, A17.
9. Karen Zraick, "Talking Out Loud About War, and Coming Home," *New York Times*, February 8, 2011, A24.
10. In April 2012, Scott Thompson resigned from Intersections International to pursue VCD work independently. He is currently Director of the Veterans Mental Health Coalition of New York City. Larry Winters is Senior Psychologist and Director of Veterans Treatment at Four Winds Hospital. They are continuing to facilitate and develop the Veteran-Civilian Dialogues through 'Stories We Carry'. [www.storieswecarry.org](http://www.storieswecarry.org)
11. Statistics vary on the actual incidence of combat related PTSD depending on how it is defined. One of our program collaborators placed the percentage among post-9/11 veterans at slightly less than 20%, with 2-5% showing any outward affect. This seems supported by articles on the subject. Lisa K. Richardson, B. Christopher Frueh and Ronald Acierno, "Prevalence Estimates of Combat-Related PTSD: A Critical Review," <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2891773/pdf/nihms206209.pdf>
12. As one young veteran, now working towards a graduate degree, told us: 'In the age of the internet, I'd say most of us knew what we're in for when we signed up, and yet a lot of people assume I served because I was a poor boy who didn't know any better or it was my only way to escape where I was.'
13. Cass R. Sunstein, *On Rumors: How Falsehoods Spread, Why We Believe Them, What Can Be Done* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2009).
14. Approximate values for this were seen as analogous to typical visitor metrics for public exhibitions MATTER designed: approximately 10-15% of people are ten minute rushers and will only read the introductory panel and stop

at eye-catching moments. Most (75-85%) are the 30-40 minute visitors reading major text panels and looking at all the material. The most rare (5%) is the three-hour visitor, who will read every single label. These fall roughly into the same curve as described in Diffusion of Innovations theory, the social science theory describing how likely a new idea, product, or practice will be adopted by a given culture.

15. 'After losing someone she loved, artist Candy Chang painted the side of an abandoned house in her neighborhood in New Orleans with chalkboard paint and stenciled the sentence, "Before I die I want to\_\_\_\_\_." Within a day of the wall's completion, it was covered in colourful chalk dreams as neighbours stopped and reflected on their lives.' [www.candychang.com/before-i-die-in-nola/](http://www.candychang.com/before-i-die-in-nola/)

16. Each day new introductory signage, written by station hosts, was generated and posted on *Peace & Quiet's* Facebook portal. It usually began with a question. 'Ever wonder what it was like to sleep in a hole in the desert?' (Tillman); 'What have you ever wanted to say or ask a veteran/civilian, but felt you couldn't?' (Thompson); 'Ever wonder what it's like to be married to the military? Or have a parent serving in the armed forces, or have a childhood shaped by war?' (Code of Support); 'While we have all been protected...to speak of being protected is not an easy task.' (Halloran).

17. On October 29, 2012, New York City a storm surge caused by "Superstorm Sandy" flooded streets, tunnels, and subway lines, cut power in many areas, and caused devastating fires in Queens.

18. On July 20, 2012 12 people were killed and more than 70 injured at a movie theatre in suburban Denver, Colorado, when a gunman set off tear gas grenades and fired into the crowd using semi-automatic assault firearms.

19. At a security planning meeting with everyone involved in the project present, one of the station hosts – a veteran and business degree scholar – was to assess the risk of a potentially inflammatory situation, to which he gracefully and graciously replied 'I think it's very good we're thinking about these concerns, but I'm not too worried about it...I don't believe it is likely to happen, and as combat veterans we have experience with fairly intense situations.' The request for on-site trauma specialists was dropped.

20. Close to 3,000 teens and children die from gun violence every year. One needn't travel overseas to live on the front lines.

Children's Defence Fund, "Gun Violence," *The State of America's Children*, 2014: 40-41, accessed October 17, 2014. <http://www.childrendefense.org/child-research-data-publications/state-of-americas-children/gun-violence.html>

21. Cembalest, *ARTnews*, 85.

22. For more information on *Basetrack*, see <http://basetracklive.com/about/>. In a coincidental looping of connections 'Stories We Carry' dialogues hosted by Scott Thompson, and StoryCorps MVI was sourced as the complimentary programming to accompany *Basetrack* in other cities where it was performed.

23. Station questions developed by the team at Center for the Art of Performance, led by Meryl Friedman, Director of Education & Special Initiatives.