Spark Gap

Lillian Cox-Richard

Virginia Commonwealth University

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SPARK GAP

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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May 2008
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Abstract

SPARK GAP

By Lillian Cox-Richard, MFA

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2008

Director: Gregory Volk
Associate Professor, School of the Arts

“Spark Gap” is an invisible force made visible in spaces between things. Specifically, this describes the space of air between two conductors; a non-conductive gap in an otherwise complete electric circuit, across which a quick, luminous, disruptive electrical discharge occurs. This interstice is the distance between two ideas, arced with a running leap. The arc can also be a difference, a gap that becomes apparent only when the two are held in close proximity. My thesis exhibition, “Spark Gap,” is named after an interstitial charge, but this charge is found in spaces of intersection as well. Imagine the friction created by rubbing together the circles of a Venn diagram: the overlapping section would begin to spark. It is in these gaps and overlaps that I find the impetus for my work.
Figure 1: Spark Gap
Frisson and Friction

“Spark Gap” is an invisible force made visible in spaces between things. Specifically, this describes the space of air between two conductors; a non-conductive gap in an otherwise complete electric circuit, across which a quick, luminous, disruptive electrical discharge occurs. This interstice is the distance between two ideas, arced with a running leap. The arc can also be a difference, a gap that becomes apparent only when the two are held in close proximity. In my thesis exhibition, “Spark Gap,” a sea urchin-shaped orb sits atop a hexagonal tower of ladders. The orb is broken into five sections and reassembled, each fault line occurring along the perfect zigzag line of its cellular structure. On the floor, there is a linen shag rug, marked as if struck by lightning. This exhibition is named after an interstitial charge, but this charge is found in spaces of intersection as well. Imagine the friction created by rubbing together the circles of a Venn diagram: the overlapping section would begin to spark. It is in these gaps and overlaps that I find the impetus for my work.

Figure 2: Venn Diagram
In May 2007, I created *At Stake and Rider* for my candidacy exhibition. This sculpture takes the name and form of a frontier-style split rail fence, usually made of raw timber rails stacked together without the use of nails or other hardware. The surface of my fence appears calcified, sparkling and moldy. The greenish tinge could be caused by the paint I used, or maybe it's the result of coating treated wood with plaster. I don’t know - the painting and seeping happened at the same time. This piece was a breakthrough for me: it was unpredictable and it posed questions that weren’t mine (Can a fence that for me captures the essence of American innovation also address issues of national security? Could my feelings of love and disgust get mixed up to form an alchemic reaction which then patinates the surface?). This marked a major development in my practice: a shift in the relationship between research and making art.

Figure 3: *At Stake and Rider*, 2007
I made *At Stake and Rider* while researching World’s Fairs and the role they played in developing American national identity. Initially sprawling, this investigation coalesced into a fractal-like system: every road I pursued had tangential paths. As I zoomed in, each path became as complicated and fascinating as the one before. (For example: World’s Fairs → 1893 Chicago World’s Fair → the architecture of the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, the first Ferris Wheel, and Frederick Jackson Turner’s *Frontier Thesis*.)

Esoteric research, regardless of how fascinating, is not what my art is about. Most of the time, my research and art making are concurrent and parallel. Each sustains my excitement for the other, and brings me in closer. Totally immersing myself in this kind of investigation has led to a more impulsive and experimental studio practice: stacking and restacking fence rails, marking vague boundaries like where water meets shore, making the potential for a line with a pile of surveying markers, sending myself a trans-Atlantic telegram about wireless communication, or having the electrical-branching pattern that can appear on the skin after being struck by lightning, henna-stained on my shoulder.

In the past ten months, my research has expanded to include lightning, electricity and wireless communication. Invisible forces that can take on a mythic stature. Two particular things that I have kept close while working on this are Nikola Tesla’s Wardenclyffe Tower and Bruce Springsteen’s album, *Darkness on the Edge of Town*. In the following pages, I will share some of this research and the sparks, gaps, and overlaps that led to this exhibition.
2008: Be More Romantic

For the past several years, I’ve taken New Years’ resolutions quite seriously. My resolve is much more serious than the resolutions themselves, which have ranged from flossing daily to learning to wear high heels. I think 2008: Be More Romantic came out of wanting to believe in something, but not being quite sure what that something was. Maybe it wasn’t even an issue of becoming more romantic, but rather of embracing being romantic. Either way, this resolution set the stage for making Spark Gap.

I fell for Nikola Tesla while researching the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. Tesla won the bid to light the fair; his plan to use alternating current (AC) was much more efficient and far cheaper than Thomas Edison’s direct current (DC). This was the first worlds fair to incorporate light and electricity to such great effect, and was strategic in showcasing American innovation to the world. At dusk on the opening night of the fair, President Grover Cleveland addressed the crowds, “As by a touch the machinery that gives life to this vast exposition is now set in motion, so at the same instant let our hopes and aspirations awaken forces which in all time to come shall influence the welfare, the dignity and the freedom of mankind.” He then touched a gilded electric button and the great engine of 8000 horsepower was set in motion.¹

¹ Frederick Saunders, Ed. “Address by Hon. Grover Cleveland, President of the United States, at the Opening of the World’s Fair May 1, 1893,” Our National Jubilee (New York, 1894) p 1005.
Tesla was born in Croatia in 1856. His family was among the educated aristocracy in the Serbian community, and young Tesla was groomed as a future clerical leader. As a child Tesla had out-of-body experiences and vivid powers of eidetic imagery, and by age twelve had successfully experimented with acts of self-denial and self-mastery.\(^2\) He nearly died of cholera at 17; after nine months in bed, he suggested to his father “Perhaps I may get well if you will let me study engineering.” His father promised him the best technical institution in the world, prompting Tesla’s recovery.\(^3\)

Tesla began work on his AC induction motor while working at the American telephone exchange in Budapest. It was there that he was introduced to the work of Thomas Edison. In 1882, he moved to Paris to work at the new Edison lighting company, and two years later moved to New York to work for Edison himself. Tesla couldn’t convince Edison of his AC invention. As the story goes, Tesla was promised $50,000 if he could find a way to refigure the prevailing DC machinery. He spent every waking hour on the project and when he presented the new system to Edison and asked for his payment, Edison scoffed, “When you become a full-fledged American, you will appreciate an American joke.”

Cheated and hurt, Tesla left the company and struck out on his own. In the first few years, he filed several patents, but made no money. He was forced to work as a ditch digger, laying cable for an Edison company, while he continued to work out his plans for AC power. The AC/DC Current Wars ensued, and Tesla worked with George Westinghouse to promote AC electricity. By the late 1890s Tesla was experimenting with

radio control, radiation, robots, and conducting high-voltage, high-frequency experiments in the wireless transmission of power.

In March 1901, Nikola Tesla began construction on his Wardenclyffe Tower and adjacent laboratories. This “World Telegraphy Center” would transmit across both Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. In addition, the tower would employ the ionosphere to provide free wireless electricity to the world. Tesla also thought it would be possible to use the tower to end war (with his macroscopic particle beam weapon, also called the "Peace Ray"), control the weather, and light the ocean.  

J. Pierpont Morgan, who was the financial backer for the project, encouraged Tesla to take things one ocean at a time. When it became apparent that the Tower’s immediate profitability was not a concern for Tesla, Morgan refused to release the remainder of the funds promised, and blackballed his efforts to secure funding from anyone else.  

There had been problems from the beginning. The project was impossible to budget because Morgan himself had wreaked havoc on Wall Street. In order to regain majority holdings in his own company, Northern Pacific Railroad, he issued an order to buy back the stock at any price, effectually crashing the stock market and skyrocketing the price of steel. The cost of materials rose two to three times more than originally estimated. The project’s architect, Stanford White (the man behind Niagara Falls Power Plant and one of the architects of the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair), was distracted by his daily

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5 Seifer, pp 264-265.
courting of Evelyn Nesbit, a 16-year-old artists’ model and showgirl. Meanwhile, Tesla had redesigned his tower to be twice as tall (refusing to “take it one ocean at a time.”)

Figure 7: Wardenclyffe Tower

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6 Seifer, p 270. The affair would lead to his murder in 1906. A famous crime of passion, White was shot in the face three times, by Nesbit’s sadistic (horse whips!) and cocaine addicted husband, Harry K. Thaw, while attending a musical premiere at Madison Square Roof Garden, which White himself designed. Wardenclyff would be White’s last project. Seifer, p 322.
Construction of the tower slowed, and Tesla’s plans were ambushed. On December 13, 1901, Guglielmo Marconi sent the first trans-Atlantic radio transmission: three taps, Morse Code for the letter S. Marconi won this race by pirating Tesla’s inventions and patents. In 1904, the patent for radio was reversed and awarded to Marconi. Tesla immediately began his fight to re-acquire the patent, but it wasn’t until shortly after his death in 1943 that the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged that Marconi’s work wasn’t original, and the patent ownership was given back to Nikola Tesla.

The Tower was never completed. During World War I it was dismantled and salvaged for raw materials. The salvaging was ordered by George Boldt, who held the deed for Wardenclyffe. Boldt was the proprietor of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, where Tesla lived. Tesla had temporarily signed it over to him as a kind of “I owe you” for back rent. Boldt, increasingly impatient with Tesla’s strange behavior (odors emanated from his room, and Tesla’s propensity to bring home sick and injured pigeons) demolished the tower to make room for more viable enterprises.

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7 The messages were sent from Cornwall, England and received in Newfoundland on December 12 and 13, 1901. In Mark Seifer’s biography of Tesla, there is emphasis on the messages being received on Friday the 13th (during a lull in an especially miserable hail storm). Fridays and the 13th day of the month were Tesla’s favorite days (in defiance of superstition), making the news even harder for him to bear. Seifer, pp 255, 274, 315.

Bruce Springsteen’s first commercial success didn’t come until his third album, Born to Run. This hit record was a poetic wall of sound, full of the freedom of youth and the hardship of broken young-love promises. A legal battle with his manager had kept him out of the studio for 2 years.\(^9\) Springsteen’s next album was not recorded until 1978; Darkness on the Edge of Town was leaner, rawer, darker, and made with greater determination. Springsteen’s 1978 Darkness tour became legendary for the intensity of his performances.\(^10\) Los Angeles Times critic Robert Hilburn wrote “seeing Springsteen push himself so hard on stage and listening to the eloquence of his songs made me forget about doubts and think


\(^{10}\) Footage of the Capitol Theatre, Passaic, NJ. Sept 19, 1978 concert, including “Badlands,” “Streets of Fire,” “Darkness On The Edge Of Town,” and “Promised Land,” are excellent examples and posted on YouTube.com.
about my own dreams again." Thirty years later, Springsteen’s performances, specifically of songs from this album, have the same resonance for me.

I don't give a damn
For just the in betweens
Honey, I want the heart, I want the soul
I want control right now
talk about a dream
Try to make it real
you wake up in the night
With a fear so real
Spend your life waiting
for a moment that just don't come
Well, don't waste your time waiting

Bruce Springsteen, “Bandlands” *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, 1978

Lives on the line where dreams are found and lost
I'll be there on time and I'll pay the cost
For wanting things that can only be found
In the darkness on the edge of town

Bruce Springsteen, *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, 1978

As one salon.com review of *Darkness* says, “The darkness on the edge of town is the thing that lies just out of reach, that pulls you out of bed in the morning, that seems to get further away the faster you drive toward it but, still, you gotta have it. The darkness feeds your ambition. The darkness is your dream.”

The Darkness is the Tower. This relentless optimism seems driven by a sense of vocation. Believing in work that you call yourself to do, such that your faith in it is driven deeper each day that you are faced with the fact that it not yet realized. Believing in the
promise of things getting better, and being confronted daily with the reality that they haven’t changed. In this disappointment, finding a deeper understanding of your own limitations, and with those limitations, a greater determination not to surrender to them.

Both Tesla and Springsteen found themselves at the mercy of their financial backers: Tesla as he struggled to build Wardenclyffe Tower, and Springsteen while he was barred from the studio. Their ambitions were in the control of someone else’s financial interests, yet they believed in the providence of their work. Instead of acquiescing to their dreams being hijacked, both continued to work on their projects, with faith that the means to produce them would become available.

The story of Tesla’s Tower and the stories told in Springsteen’s songs are incredibly dark, yet the relentless will they describe inspires hope. Spark Gap is about what Tesla dreamed that his tower could do, about how forces like electricity and lightning could be the same as love, vision, vocation; how dreams sprawl out of control and get impossibly wild; how not reigning them in could result in them never coming to fruition, but how confining them could result in something even worse.
In a performance for VH1, Springsteen walked the audience through lyrics of the song “Devils And Dust,” explaining the relationship between love, fear, and faith on both an individual level and a larger political level. After a line by line explanation he said, “So, how much of this was I thinking about when I wrote this song? None of it. I wrote all of that yesterday morning at my kitchen table. How much of it was I feeling when I wrote this song? All of it.”

Nikola Tesla and his Wardenclyffe Tower became richly fantastic and overwhelming for me, and I was intimidated to even attempt making work “about” it. Everything I imagined creating seemed destined to point from the shadows, acting as merely a referent to a much better story. Even if I found a way to capture something of the story, that wasn’t enough – I wanted to make sculpture that captured not only the genius of Tesla, but the intensity of Springsteen, the idealism of America, the magic of nature and the history of electricity. Like trying to light the oceans and end war at the same time, this too seemed bound to fail. And like Bruce Springsteen, I was adamantly not interested in making work about failure. I had to let go: let the research be research, let it lead me, let it be fascinating, but not try to make it the content of my sculpture. I could try to let go of all of the little tiny fractal branches in the research, but I couldn’t let go of the feeling that all of the details
seemed to share. I wanted to keep that feeling close and I had to trust that all of this was going somewhere.

In September, I started to build a small model of Tesla’s Tower. I found a sea urchin shell that was the same shape as the top of the tower. The urchin even had small bumps on the surface, similar to the bumps in some of the drawings of how the tower was projected to look. Through my involvement with Tesla, I had been thinking about the history of electricity in America, going back to Benjamin Franklin, the enlightenment, and early lightning rods. The shell of the urchin shares the form of the top of Tesla’s tower, but the spines that usually cover the urchin vary by species to resemble lightning rods, antennas, or satellite dishes. I found a form in nature that seemed to bring together so many of the forms in my research, but I still had no idea of what should come of it. Still in model-making mode, I set out to cast some sea urchin shells, thinking that this way I could play with the form and see what might happen. What happened was the shell broke and something clicked. The shell of the urchin is made up of hexagon-shaped plates with clean zigzag lines, along which it broke. These lightning bolt fissures separated the shell into five similar shards. I abandoned work on the model and started to make a large shard that I could cast to make several similar parts, and then have the potential to create the whole orb.

At some point I became so invested in the shards as pieces, I let go of the idea that they would form a tower. I worked with them as organic modular sections, piling them up in different arrangements. One night during critique, only a few weeks before I installed Spark
Gap, my colleagues asked how the pieces fit together. I admitted that I hadn’t yet tried it. This was in part because I wasn’t sure if it was important anymore, but also because I needed the help of several people to attempt it. Five of us huddled in a circle holding pieces while someone ran to get straps and rope. It actually worked – the pieces fit together.

In January 2008, I traveled to Caguas, Puerto Rico for the exhibition of “Four Play” at Area Gallery. David Grainger, James Sham, Jesse Robinson and I worked onsite in the gallery and surrounding area for ten days to create new work for the exhibition. My plan was to give the tower a break, focus on hexagons, and see where it led. Hexagons are everywhere: honeycombs, chicken wire, soap bubbles. What began with stuffing balloons into chicken wire forms to re-create the close-packing cellular systems of hexagons in nature, became balloons stuffed into small plastic cups. Soon, strands of these “lights” were strung all over the gallery. Despite myself, I found my way back to electricity.

Figure 9: Soap Bubbles Figure 10: Close-Packing (balloons), 2008
Figure 11: *White Lights, Bright Lights* (detail), 2008
Figures 12-13: Blitzfunk (tower details), 2008
A month later, I did a similar short residency and exhibition at Kompact Living Space in Berlin, Germany. In preparation for my trip, I tried to find out what German lighting rods look like. Instead, I found a 1922 New York Times article about “Lightning Wireless Service” (called Blitzfunk in German), an innovation in radiotelegraphy. This seemed like the perfect sub-text for my project there, so before I left, I sent it to myself in a telegram (Appendix D). The Fernsehturm (known in English as the Berlin TV Tower) is the most prominent landmark in Berlin, and looks a lot like a giant lightning rod. In my Kompact studio, I made Blitzfunk fast and furiously: small towers grew out of the big tower like the spines of a sea urchin. It was a tower exploding with towers, bolts of electricity, and disco balls.

For Blitzfunk, I stripped the bark off willow branches to create the arcs of electricity that surge from the tower. This wasn’t the first time I saw branches as electricity: lightning and other electrical surges often leave their mark as a branching pattern called a Lichtenberg figure. Sometimes, when a person is struck by lightning, the pattern appears on his or her skin. It’s not a burn and fades away after a few days. Although research isn’t conclusive, doctors and scientists think that it might be the result of the electrical charge bursting the blood capillaries in the skin. In another instance, lightning struck a flagpole and the pattern

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11 In researching American lightning rods, I learned that the reason our rods are prominent has much to do with the history of lightning and electricity in this country. The reason that early French and American lightning rods are pointed and the British ones are blunt, has everything to do with 18th century politics. Philip Dray, Stealing God’s Thunder (New York: Random House, 2005) pp 129-137.
was burned into the surrounding grass. For Spark Gap, the pattern is made with the grass-like linen fibers of the rug.

![Figure 14: Spark Gap (rug detail), 2008](image)

I’ve always wanted to know what it’s like to see my work for the first time. To have that moment before recognition, to see it without already knowing it so intimately. I imagined it to be like when you unexpectedly catch your own reflection in a mirrored window, and you notice something – shoulders pitched forward – before you recognize yourself. What would I notice in my work if I didn’t recognize it?

Two weeks before Spark Gap opened, everything changed. It happened fast: the shards fit together, the rug was finished, ladders became the tower. When the elements
of the work came together for the first time in the gallery space, the rug was unrolled and the
orb hoisted atop the ladders, I saw Spark Gap together for the first time and I didn’t

Figure 15: Spark Gap (tower detail), 2008
Bibliography
Bibliography


APPENDIX A

“Badlands”
Bruce Springsteen

Darkness on the Edge of Town

Lights out tonight
trouble in the heartland
Got a head-on collision
smashin' in my guts, man
I'm caught in a cross fire
that I don't understand
But there's one thing I know for sure girl
I don't give a damn
For the same old played out scenes
I don't give a damn
For just the in betweens
Honey, I want the heart, I want the soul
I want control right now
talk about a dream
Try to make it real
you wake up in the night
With a fear so real
Spend your life waiting
for a moment that just don't come
Well, don't waste your time waiting

CHORUS
Badlands, you gotta live it everyday
Let the broken hearts stand
As the price you've gotta pay
We'll keep pushin' till it's understood
and these badlands start treating us good

Workin' in the fields
till you get your back burned
Workin' 'neath the wheel
till you get your facts learned
Baby I got my facts
learned real good right now
You better get it straight darling
Poor man wanna be rich,
rich man wanna be king
And a king ain't satisfied
till he rules everything
I wanna go out tonight,
I wanna find out what I got
Well I believe in the love that you gave me
I believe in the love that you gave me
I believe in the faith that could save me
I believe in the hope
and I pray that some day
It may raise me above these

CHORUS

mmmmmmmm, mmmmm, mmmmmm

For the ones who had a notion,
a notion deep inside
That it ain't no sin
to be glad you're alive
I wanna find one face
that ain't looking through me
I wanna find one place,
I wanna spit in the face of these badlands

CHORUS
“Darkness On the Edge Of Town”
Bruce Springsteen

Darkness on the Edge of Town

They're still racing out at the Trestles
But that blood it never burned in her veins
Now I hear she's got a house up in Fairview
And a style she's trying to maintain
Well if she wants to see me
You can tell her that I'm easily found
Tell her there's a spot out 'neath Abram's Bridge
And tell her there's a darkness on the edge of town

Everybody's got a secret Sonny
Something that they just can't face
Some folks spend their whole lives trying to keep it
They carry it with them every step that they take
Till some day they just cut it loose
Cut it loose or let it drag 'em down
Where no one asks any questions
Or looks too long in your face
In the darkness on the edge of town

Some folks are born into a good life
Other folks get it anyway anyhow
I lost my money and I lost my wife
Them things don't seem to matter much to me now
Tonight I'll be on that hill 'cause I can't stop
I'll be on that hill with everything I got
Lives on the line where dreams are found and lost
I'll be there on time and I'll pay the cost
For wanting things that can only be found
In the darkness on the edge of town
“Devils & Dust”
Bruce Springsteen
_Devils & Dust_
Released: Columbia Records, April 26, 2005.

I got my finger on the trigger
But I don't know who to trust
When I look into your eyes
There's just devils and dust
We're a long, long way from home, Bobbie
Home's a long, long way from us
I feel a dirty wind blowing
Devils and dust

Now every woman and every man
They want to take a righteous stand
Find the love that God wills
And the faith that He commands
I've got my finger on the trigger
And tonight faith just ain't enough
When I look inside my heart
There's just devils and dust

I got God on my side
I'm just trying to survive
What if what you do to survive
Kills the things you love
Fear's a powerful thing
It can turn your heart black you can trust
It'll take your God filled soul
And fill it with devils and dust

Well I've got God on my side
And I'm just trying to survive
What if what you do to survive
Kills the things you love
Fear's a dangerous thing
It can turn your heart black you can trust
It'll take your God filled soul
Fill it with devils and dust

I've dreamed of you last night
In a field of blood and stone
The blood began to dry
The smell began to rise
Well I dreamed of you last night
In a field of mud and bone
Your blood began to dry
The smell began to rise

We've got God on our side
We're just trying to survive
What if what you do to survive
Kills the things you love
Fear's a powerful thing
It'll turn your heart black you can trust
It'll take your God filled soul
Fill it with devils and dust
APPENDIX D

“American Land”
Bruce Springsteen
We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions
American Land edition released: October 3, 2006

What is this land America so many travel there
I'm going now while I'm still young my darling meet me there
Wish me luck my lovely I'll send for you when I can
And we'll make our home in the American land

Over there all the woman wear silk and satin to their knees
And children dear, the sweets, I hear, are growing on the trees
Gold comes rushing out the rivers straight into your hands
When you make your home in the American Land

There's diamonds in the sidewalk the's gutters lined in song
Dear I hear that beer flows through the faucets all night long
There's treasure for the taking, for any hard working man
Who will make his home in the American Land

I docked at Ellis Island in a city of light and spires
She met me in the valley of red-hot steel and fire
We made the steel that built the cities with our sweat and two hands
And we made our home in the American Land

There's diamonds in the sidewalk the's gutters lined in song
Dear I hear that beer flows through the faucets all night long
There's treasure for the taking, for any hard working man
Who will make his home in the American Land

The McNicholas, the Posalski's, the Smiths, Zerillis, too
The Blacks, the Irish, Italians, the Germans and the Jews
Come across the water a thousand miles from home
With nothin in their bellies but the fire down below

They died building the railroads worked to bones and skin
They died in the fields and factories names scattered in the wind
They died to get here a hundred years ago they're still dyin now
The hands that built the country were always trying to keep down

There's diamonds in the sidewalk the gutters lined in song
Dear I hear that beer flows through the faucets all night long
There's treasure for the taking, for any hard working man
Who will make his home in the American Land
Who will make his home in the American Land
Who will make his home in the American Land
APPENDIX E

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Berlin Starts Service of 'Lightning Wireless'

By Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
BERLIN, Jan. 10.--'Lightning wireless service' was inaugurated today between Berlin and Hamburg. Technically termed 'Blitzfunk,' or 'lightning spark,' the dispatches are to take precedence at a tenfold rate over all other wireless traffic, and everybody handling lightning messages has orders to speed up to the limit Teuton only possible the personnel specially selected for the lightning service. The first message was filed in the main telegraph office at Berlin at 9 o'clock this morning, transmitted at 9:03, receipt acknowledged at 9:05, and telephoned to address at 9:10. Unfortunately, American correspondents see no prognostications of lightning wireless to New York.

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sent by
Lily Cox-Richard

NNNN
VITA

Lillian Cox-Richard
Born February 24, 1979

education
2008 MFA Sculpture, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond VA
2001 BFA with High Distinction, Jewelry/Metal Arts, California College of the Arts, San Francisco CA

solo exhibitions
2008 Spark Gap, Arlington Art Center, Arlington, VA
2007 At Stake and Rider, Civilian Art Projects, Washington DC
2006 PRE-Fabulous, Archinofsky Gallery, Las Vegas, NV
2005 Magic Moments, Soap Factory Project Room, Minneapolis, MN
2003 Altered Perspectives, Platteforum Arts, Denver, CO
2001 Over-the-Road, CCAC North Gallery, Oakland, CA

selected group exhibitions
2008 Grey Area Stakeout, Crane Arts, Philadelphia, PA
2007 Company Picnic, Metro Space Gallery, Richmond, VA
2006 Dynamic Field, Civilian Art Projects, Washington, DC
2005 Medium, Area 405, Baltimore, MD
2004 EDAW/CCA, EDAW, San Francisco, CA
2003 The Out-of-Towners, Transformer Gallery, Washington, DC
2001 Caution, Nexus, Berkeley, CA
2000 Fuzzy Logic, Southern Exposure, San Francisco, CA

awards and residencies
Fellow and Resident, The Core Program, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, TX, 2008-2009
Artist in Residence, Virginia Center for Creative Arts, 2008
Jacob K. Javits Commended Scholar, 2007
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Graduate Fellowship, 2006
Graduate Fellowship, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006
Carole Stupell Award to support promising artists, American Craft Council, 2006
Artist in Residence, Fellowship, Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT, 2005
Artist in Residence, PlatteForum Arts, Denver, CO, 2003