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Shining Light on Local Elections: Luminous Intervention

Projects

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On November 2nd and 5th, 2012, Baltimore-based activist project Luminous Intervention ran two actions in the lead-up to that Tuesday's local and national elections.

On November 2nd, in collaboration with the artists [Rachael London](#) [2] and [Siyade Gemechisa](#) [3], Luminous Intervention gathered in Baltimore's Station North Arts District in order to cast a series of images onto the famous Smyth Jewelers Billboard (the one where the Natty Boh guy is proposing to the UTZ girl). The light projections were of a double male and female character that each embraced their counterpart. Written were sentiments promoting Marriage Equality for same-sex couples through voting for Question 6 on the upcoming ballot.

On November 5th, the day before elections, Luminous Intervention projected three separate messages onto a bridge over Route 83 during rush hour traffic. On their [website](#), [4] Luminous Intervention describes the messages via: "First, we're in favor of Ballot Question Four, the Dream Act, because we believe education is a human right and an investment in Maryland. Second, we're

in favor of Ballot Question Six because we believe that marriage between any two people is a civil right. And third, we're against Ballot Question Seven because we believe the proposal amounts to an unnecessary tax break for casino owners."

Luminous Intervention is a group of local artists and activists that utilize light in order to make "large-scale outdoor projections highlighting social and economic issues relevant to Baltimore and its people." You can find out more about their past projections: [here](#) [5] and [here](#) [6].

Most of their past projections have focused on topics as varying as gentrification to rape culture to Occupy Wall Street to educational/prison systems to so on and so forth. However, this is the first time that the grassroots group has tackled an issue regarding legislation.

Indyreader caught up with the activists in order to discuss the action.

Luminous Intervention: Thanks for your interest in covering our projection from November 5th. It's true that this was our first projection that spoke directly about legislation. We chose to do the project because of our shared views about the ballot initiatives in favor of gay marriage and the Dream Act, and against table games in MD. We felt that this was an historic moment, in which Maryland residents had the opportunity not just to be one of the first states to vote in favor of marriage equality (as opposed to state legislature or the courts legalizing it), but also to be one of the first states in history to vote in favor of the addition of ANY civil rights for a minority. We felt we had to jump at the chance to encourage such legislation.

The intention of this action was very clear: to display highly visible, clear messages to a large audience with a dash of humor. And instead of partnering with another organization, we created this projection ourselves. We also used humor in these projections - which we believe can help bring further engagement with a topic.

We are incredibly pleased that Marriage Equality and the Dream Act passed! More work will have to be done, but we feel like if we have to help tip viewpoints towards openness and equality.

Dan Zink (of Luminous Intervention): Also, the use of humor was intentional to separate us from the hate that was coming from the opposition, especially on Question 6.

When this was suggested, it seemed like a natural step for Greenpants to take; two themes that have run through many of our projections have been increased civic engagement and a fairer distribution of power in all of its manifestations, from access to education and marriage to making large corporate casinos pay their share. It's more of a traditional form of civic engagement, and it's probably not as edgy as other things that we've done, but I'm glad we were involved in a unique and creative way.

I didn't feel a need to push for Obama - he was likely to take Maryland no matter what we did, and I think telling people WHO to vote for as opposed to WHAT to vote for gives politicians too much of a pass. The ballot questions seemed much more direct and up in the air - I anticipated Marriage Equality which is long-overdue, and I was surprised and thankful that Marylanders passed the Maryland DREAM Act.

Mike McGuire (of Luminous Intervention): We focused our projection on three ballot measures: Question 4 (the Dream Act); Question 6 (Marriage Equality); and Question 7 (table games for MD casinos). We avoided talking about Obama and Romney. It's disgusting that the multi-millionaire

(and probably billionaire if we knew about his holdings abroad) CEO of a private equity firm was running as president, with a plan to continue directing public money into the hands of his colleagues. Yet, our critique of Obama runs deep. There are many, many good reasons to not want to vote for Obama -- his escalation of deportations and drone attacks, his FBI's continued entrapment of Muslims and activists, his shoveling of public money into the hands of bankers ...demanding NOTHING in return; etc.

One of the most exciting parts of this election, locally and nationally, were citizens voting on ballot measures written by fellow citizens. This future looks a lot more interesting than voting on candidates competing in multi-billion dollar elections. A direct action affinity group called the Green Bloc used "overgrow the government" as a slogan. As voters across the country affirm marriage equality, the Dream Act, drug legalization, and living wage measures, it seems that these ballot measures might be an effective strategy that reaches beyond the deeply entrenched two party system.

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As Luminous Intervention utilizes their creative tactics in order to spread further political messages/critiques, we look forward to see where they "intervene" next.

Source URL: <https://indyreader.org/content/shining-light-local-elections-luminous-intervention-projects>

Links:

[1] <https://indyreader.org/contributor/corey-reidy>

[2] <http://www.rachaellondon.com/>

[3] <http://nopage.com>

[4] <http://luminousintervention.org/content/ballot-questions-over-rt-83#more>

[5] <http://indyreader.org/content/rape-rape-action-upset-rape-culture>

[6] <http://indyreader.org/content/illuminating-baltimores-hidden-histories-occupy-offshoot-greenpants>