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## Off the Grid, Into the Air

By Marisa Olson on Monday, April 7th, 2008 at 12:24 pm.



On view at the [Neuberger Museum of Art](#), through June 1st, is a group show entitled "Off the Grid," which presents the work of thirteen artists injecting a sense of ecological responsibility into a world increasingly polluted by an obsession with power, energy, and wireless communication. In this case, the concept of "the grid" takes on multiple meanings. While it initially invokes the act of unplugging from a communications network, it also means escaping the rigid conventions artists have traditionally followed in addressing environmental issues. This is to say nothing of the historical role of the grid, in modern art, in entrenching the perspectives and organizing principles of machine culture. Curators Jacqueline Shilkoff (of the Neuberger Museum) and Galen Joseph-Hunter, Tianna Kennedy, and Tom Roe (of [free103point9](#)) say that they sought to include "contemporary works which formally and/or conceptually challenge conventional and commercial infrastructures"--a wise idea, since it is commercial enterprise that has delivered us to the messy environmental quandary in which we now find ourselves. These works include [Seth Weiner's Cryptographic Payphone](#) (2008), which "employs a chaotic motion system to encrypt wireless data transmission, modeled upon the patented use of lava lamps to generate random numbers for the creation of cryptographic codes;" [Nina Katchadourian's Ant Static](#) (2003), a continued exploration of inter-species collaboration in which a mass-mob of ants are assigned the creative role of meditating on the levels of competition and technological conflict found in nature; and Cary Peppermint and Christine Nadir's (a.k.a. [EcoArtTech](#))s *Environmental Risk Assessment Rover-AT* (2008), a "solar-powered, all-terrain mobile station that collects real-time risk data relative to its GPS coordinates," thus reacting to and changing its environment by projecting videos (cued by a 14-tier threat level system) onto immediate surfaces. Also included in the show are Benjamin Cohen, Dylan Gauthier and Stephan von Muehlen, eteam, Max Goldfarb, Louis Hock, Kristin Lucas, Joe McKay, Trevor Paglen, Temporary Services, and Bart Woodstrup. - Marisa Olson

Image credit: Max Goldfarb, *Ambulant Transceivers*, 2008, vintage first-aid kits made into two-way radios.

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