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In Their Own Words

Ken Montgomery

The Ministry of Lamination is a project of sound artist Ken Montgomery a.k.a. Egnekn, The Minister of Lamination, in The Kingdoms of Elgaland & Vargaland. Having laminated thousands of objects since his career as a laminator began in 1989, Montgomery describes the spirituality of his work and the difficult recent quest to publicly laminate a slice of cake. His next Lamination Ritual is at Sound Symposium XII in St. John's, Newfoundland, July 8-18.

Lamination as Virtual Metaphor

Lamination Ritual celebrates the transformation of the mundane into the realm of OFFICIALDOM, of the ordinary into extraordinary. Lamination is INTERACTIVE and accessible to everyone. Lamination is versatile. It can be an object of utility or whimsical extravagance. It can warm the body and open the mind. Lamination preserves, brightens, and protects indiscriminately. Lamination counters our increasingly fast-paced world by stalling the entropy process. Lamination provides a way to preserve for years fragile and transient items that would otherwise be lost or discarded in a few days, or even seconds.

Lamination Ritual pursues concepts such as the transformation between finite and infinite and celebrates the moment in between the two. Many of the objects laminated during a Lamination Ritual are ordinary. They are transformed into permanent keepsakes, completing the evolution from disposable consumer objects into collectibles. In a confusing world, lamination produces security, satisfaction, and a sense that *something is happening*. Lamination opens perceptions to new possibilities and challenges. While pushing the envelope, lamination, like life, is not always a piece of cake, nevertheless, it can be just as sweet.

The Lamination Ritual

Lamination Rituals evolved out of a Make Life Not Art campaign propagated in 1989 in my studio-turned store/gallery/network/hub called GENERATOR Sound Art Gallery. Originally located in the East Village, GENERATOR featured experimentation in sound/noise/music/listening experiences. It was also the official Art Lamination Headquarters of New York City, among its other functions.

As a noiseician using film projectors and ice crushing machines as instruments, it was a logical step to amplify the laminator. Lamination Ritual became an ever-changing, ongoing sonic listening experience stimulating the mind and body while producing original, tangible, transformed personal objects lasting...almost forever.

During the ritual, a laminator is set on a table, surrounded by necessary supplies (different for each event). Contact microphones attached to the laminator amplify The Sound of Lamination.



Egnekn, Minister of Lamination (Ken Montgomery) inspecting laminated bugles at Gigantic Artspace (2004) (Photo: Eran Bendheim)

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The public is invited to engage its imagination to embellish, objectify, and officialize these objects by adding personal elements and permanently sealing them while contemplating The Sound of Lamination. The process becomes ritualistic as the artist/laminator creates a neurological memory that associates with his or her experience of the "officialized" document. He/she then takes away a documentation/souvenir of this heightened moment. There are usually many questions being asked. A constant dialogue keeps the laminating station as crowded as a hot dog stand. Everybody enjoys the laminating process. There is no end to the variety of objects laminated, or to the enthusiasm, interest, confusion, excitement, and fun people have shown when they experience this re-thinking of and listening to lamination.

It seems really simple, but it's really mind-expanding.

You Can't Lamine Your Cake and Eat It Too!

I've laminated pancakes, bubble gum, licorice, Fruit Loops, Bugles, bubble wrap, lobster fins, coffee cups, soda cans, and more. I had the idea to laminate cake. I'd laminated so many things in the past that I was sure I could do it. I vowed to celebrate the *Laminography* retrospective at Hudson Guild Gallery II, which detailed my 16-year career in the lamination arts, by laminating a slice of cake.

When laminating cake, the butter and the icing melt and ooze from the cake's edges, preventing the plastic from sealing. These ingredients attach themselves to the rollers of the laminator, and when the laminator is shut off and cools, the cake hardens on the rollers, causing lamination jams and the acrid smell of burnt cake. Believe me, I tried. For months I experimented with different kinds of cake—cake left out to get stale, cake without icing, and cake from the health food store that was dry as a cracker. My studio always smelled like a bakery.

Evoking Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* and the spirit of Dada, I reveled in the anticipation and excitement of laminating the cake—right up to the moment I stood in front of my audience, cake raised to the laminator—before I hesitated and announced the difficulties I had encountered. After recovering from the initial shock of realizing I couldn't laminate cake—and knowing that I had a photo of a cake in front of the laminator on my invitations promoting a series of *Cake Lamination Workshops*—I remembered why I continue to love laminating. Haphazardness and failure have been ongoing inspirations in my work as an artist, and this was no exception. To be alive is to dream and to desire. I had failed to actually laminate the cake, but also gained inspiration from the challenge.

We found plenty of other things to laminate that night. And, in the spirit of ritualistic ceremony, pieces of the cake were either eaten by attendees or placed into their laminations and hung under a banner, which read, naturally, "It's NOT a Piece of Cake!"

For more information on Ken Montgomery and The Ministry of Lamination, visit:

www.ministryofLamination.com
www.home.earthlink.net/~kenmontgomery
www.soundsymposium.com
www.krev.org



Ken Montgomery
 Official Ministry of Lamination Cake (2004)
 baked, decorated, and donated by Jean Pauget and
 Les Desirs Patisserie
 (Photo: Ken Montgomery)