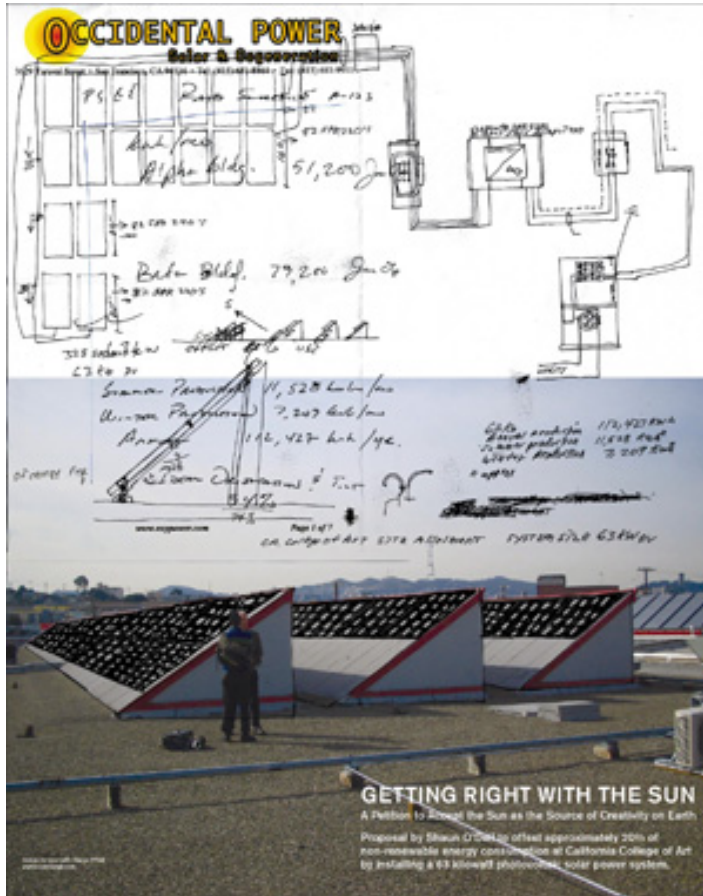


Kurtz, Katie, "Get Right With the Sun", WORLD CHANGING PRESS, April 6, 2007

## Get Right With the Sun



Bay Area artist Shaun O'Dell breathes new life into the timeworn cliché of harnessing creativity with his "site-specific" *Petition to accept the sun as the source of all creative energy on earth*. Placed near the entrance of California College of the Arts' (CCA) San Francisco campus, O'Dell's proposal is serious: that the 100-year old art institution install photovoltaics on the college's roof to offset twenty percent of the school's nonrenewable energy. The proposal isn't that much of stretch as the building has been recognized for several sustainable features that were added during its redesign ten years ago.

Built in 1951 to house Greyhound bus company's administrative offices and maintenance shop, the redesign was drawn up by Skidmore Owings & Merrill to accommodate the school's new graduate programs. Based on Bauhaus principles, the central nave acts as a flexible space for architecture pin ups, design crits, MFA reviews, and campus-wide events. Individual studios run along one side of the central nave while open classrooms and textile workshops run along the other. End-to-end skylights make artificial lighting mostly unnecessary during the day and, even during inclement weather, the building vibrates with light. According to an article in *Architecture Week*, passive solar panels heat the building and natural ventilation keeps it cool. (Although, as a current student, I can attest that this doesn't apply as much to the library, classrooms and school auditorium.)

O'Dell's proposal initially appeared as part of *How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later*, a group exhibition inspired by the Philip K. Dick essay of the same name. (In it, Dick explicates the two primary questions that motivated his writing: "What is reality?" and "What constitutes the authentic human being?") O'Dell's own artwork – ink and gouache drawings on paper and the occasional sculptural piece – explores master narratives so entrenched in the American psyche that they are seemingly impossible to dislodge. Those narratives for O'Dell are primarily about the violence of colonization and toward nature. *Petition...* isn't that radical of a departure for O'Dell and marks a turn toward his work embodying ways to amend the problems his artwork critiques.

The proposal is neither conceptual nor motivated by blind idealism. An actual petition hangs beside the proposal and so far 125 people – including one of the school's trustees, several professors, and visiting artists – have signed it. Signatures alone won't make it happen so O'Dell has been meeting with CCA representatives over the past few months to determine its feasibility. He's discovered that there's plenty of space on the roof to accommodate a 60-kW system and then some. Southeasterly-facing structures leftover from the building's previous life provide readymade platforms to mount the panels. O'Dell has also been working with Occidental Solar who have drawn up a pro bono estimate for the project: \$550,000. However, this number doesn't include estimated rebates of \$180,000 and a possible \$100,000 donation. Savings derived from the offset means the remaining amount would be paid back in less than ten years. In fact, O'Dell says that at a certain point the meter could potentially start running backwards since there is less activity during summer months. CCA's location near Potrero Hill, one of the sunniest areas in a city of extreme micro-climates, also helps.

Banners currently hung on light poles around San Francisco announce CCA's 100-year anniversary with the tagline "The Future of Culture." As far as O'Dell and others are concerned, that future is now.