

common room 2 at nyit

**old westbury campus
education hall, northern boulevard, old westbury, ny**

www.common-room.net

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in the field
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“Community building,” that is, the bringing together of people who share common interests, values, and desires, has become an extremely important feature of popular culture over the last couple of years. The success of social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook.com rests upon their ability to generate advertising dollars by fostering communication and leveraging the interactive capabilities of the web. Consumer product manufacturers such as Apple and Patagonia have thrived on account of the fact that they market themselves more as fraternal organizations or clubs and less as consumer product manufacturers: when you enter the Apple store in SoHo or on the East Side of Manhattan, you are meant to feel like you’re walking into an exclusive bar or discotheque. It’s a place to pick up a date and not just a computer.

Why has community, the need to belong, become such an important part of contemporary consumer culture, and are there ways in which this desire can better promote democracy and not just commerce? In many ways, this is the question that defines the pieces included in this show. Titled “Table of Contents,” it catalogs a series of artistic and architectural interventions that probe the relationship between communication, community, and collaboration in contemporary culture. It asks whether digitalization and economic globalization -- the two defining forces of the last decade -- cannot be harnessed for the purpose of reinvigorating the public sphere and promoting open-ended dialogue and reflection about politics and democracy as they relate to the built environment. Part installation, part exhibit, it seeks to raise basic questions about the ways in which basic architecture and art are being redefined in the light of the radical technological and social changes that are occurring around us.

“Table of Contents” was curated by Common Room, a New York-based collaborative office for cultural production that focuses on the built environment. The exhibition was originally shown at Common Room 2 (465 Grand Street, New York), a mixed-use gallery space and public lobby that showcases projects that critically engage space, politics and society.

-Nader Vossoughian, Exhibition Coordinator, NYIT