

# Lightship

A proposal for the Portland Building Installation Space

by Noah Nakell

*“A lightvessel, or lightship, is a conventional ship which acts as a lighthouse, usually anchored permanently and having no means of propulsion. Lightvessels are used in waters that are too deep for a lighthouse.” -- Wikipedia*

When a visitor approaches the installation, they see an interior wall with a full scale window frame in the middle of it. The window frame contains a pull-down roller shade, closed to about 6 inches from the windowsill. The window behind the shade is open. Peering through the open portion of the shade, the viewer sees a night scene at sea, with what appear to be large ocean swells that come up directly to the window and, across the water, a house lit by moonlight, afloat on the waves. The interior of the house is lit, and inside, viewers will see a simple domestic scene.

Taken to a logical conclusion, the concept is that if there is a house out there on the water, the window we're peering through is part of another house on the water. Perhaps there are more out there somewhere, acting as beacons in a vast ocean.

This piece speaks to the idea that, in western society, we insulate ourselves from the natural world, as well as from social interactions in the human world around us. Increasingly, we find ourselves trading in real world experiences and interactions for a world made up of laptop and cellphone screens. Not long ago, a local café would be a meeting place, filled with conversation. Often times, these days, cafés are as quiet as libraries. Every seat is filled with someone staring at a laptop, headphones on -- out in the world but isolated.

In constructing this piece, my goal is to create something lightweight, yet sturdy. The false wall will be constructed out of thin ¼ plywood panels, sandwiched with a cardboard honeycomb core and will be anchored to the real wall behind the piece. The windows will be false (no glass), as they will be hidden behind the shade. The window frame will be constructed out of a lightweight wood. The water scene will be constructed of a variety of materials, including bass wood for the house. Lighting of the water scene will be done with LEDs and will be plugged into the wall. All materials will be constructed in pieces off-site and with final assembly taking place at the Portland Building.

I have no prior experience creating installation work, but this is a direction I would strongly like my work to go in. I see much of my current work as “mini-installations”, where I can work things out conceptually before attempting to mount a full scale installation piece. This piece in particular, is directly related to a piece called “Ark”, created this year. Much of the scenery work (lighting, modeling) will be created using the same techniques used in the smaller pieces. For construction of the false wall, I will be consulting with an outside source to ensure safety.

It is my hope that with this piece, the curious will be rewarded. Passersby who take the time to peer through the window will have a chance to reflect on what they see and perhaps interact with others about the piece. Those who don't will only see a blank wall reflected back at them.