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Sep
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Summer Slow Down: Making All- Night Art with Mystery Spot Books

by American Studies

In this third installment of “What I Did on My Summer Vacation,” UT AMS doctoral student Emily Roehl recounts her experience creating time-based, activist art in Minneapolis as part of the Northern Spark arts festival this past June.

In June, I traveled to Minneapolis to work with Chad Rutter, my **Mystery Spot**

AMS :: ATX is a blog dedicated to representing the many activities and interests of the department of American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. Together with the department’s Twitter feed, this blog exists to serve the AMS and Austin communities by acting as a hub for up-to-date information on events and opportunities at UT and beyond.



Books collaborator, on our first foray into time-based art. On June 10, we took part in **Northern Spark**, an all-night arts festival that popped up along the Green Line of the Light Rail between Minneapolis and St. Paul. For our project, **The Slow Down**, we commandeered a road construction sign and displayed a series of messages from participants, who were encouraged to consider practical ways to live with less of what the construction sign represents – a culture fueled by petrochemicals. On the night of the festival, we asked people why they might want to live with less oil. Their reasons were programmed into the construction sign and displayed on an ever-changing loop from sundown to sunrise.



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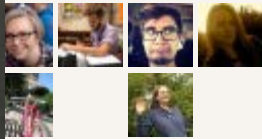
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Here are some of our favorite reasons collected during the night:

- ...because things should matter.
- ...because I like to see my city at the pace of a slow walk.
- ...because fear keeps us from considering new, more resilient possibilities.
- ...because I need a lot less than I think.
- ...because it's not all about comfort.

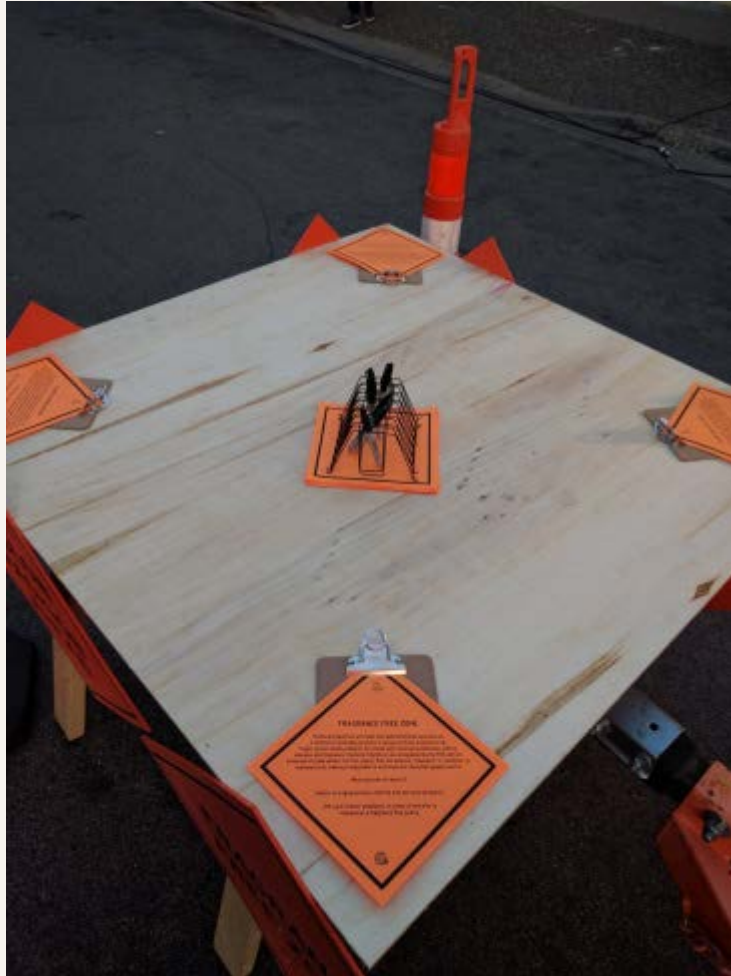
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...because oil fuels conflict.

...because the world is changing and so are we.

...because *this* is our heaven.



Oil shapes our everyday lives. Cars are a large part of this, but so is our food system, the microfibers in our synthetic fabrics, and the personal products we apply to our bodies. From fast food to electronic devices to interstate highways, oil contributes to the speed of our lives. Rarely do we slow down and think through the everydayness of oil. By asking participants to slow down and extract a small part of their daily lives from oil, this project explored new ways of being at home in the world that do not rely on

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Our work for Northern Spark will find its way back into our primary medium: the artist's book. Building on our recent series of publications called the [Energy Landscapes of St. Louis](#), we will publish a book inspired by the reasons to live with less oil we collected at Northern Spark. This will be the first publication in our Energy Landscapes of the Twin Cities series.



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