

## The Futility of Making Salad

Community Is

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By Marcus Civin

My friends work hot, like line cooks and dishwashers. Together, we wire, plumb, lay sequins with the stitchers. We spit, tape-up our fingers, crunch and whine like linebackers; we want more linebackers... Who answers the panicked phone call? Who matches the color on whose prints? ... Who edits the statements, cuts out the difficult letterforms: 'e', 'a'? Who builds the crate, drives the fork? Who stays? Who sharpens then spackles, sands, spot rolls, scrapes paint from the floor, sweeps, mops? Who always makes dinner? Who is honest, handling cash? Who, then, puts the waters on ice? Who pours the wine?

Progress does not emanate from individuals. Really, we are round, rolling, roped together, and approaching a plank.

If you visit Walter De Maria's Lightning Field, open the black binder on the large and worn, wooden dining room table in the overnight cabin. At the back of the binder, you will find a two-page list of the names of every contractor, fabricator, high school class, and rancher who participated in the construction of The Lightning Field, or who participates in its upkeep.

In 1975, Nancy Holt bought a remote piece of Utah desert to site her Earthwork, Sun Tunnels. Holt writes: "I didn't know anyone there, and was totally outside any art-world structure. I was one individual contacting other individuals. But by the time Sun Tunnels was finished, I had spent one year in Utah and had worked with 2 engineers, 1 astrophysicist, 1 astronomer, 1 surveyor and his assistant, 1 road grader, 2 dump truck operators, 1 carpenter, 3 ditch diggers, 1 concrete mixing truck operator, 1 concrete foreman, 10 concrete pipe company workers, 2 core-drillers, 4 truck drivers, 1 crane operator, 1 rigger, 2 cameramen, 2 soundmen, 1 helicopter pilot, and 4 photography lab workers." Holt continues: "Making business deals does not come easy to me; it was often very exasperating. I don't have any romantic notions about testing the edges of the world that way. It's just a necessity. It doesn't lead to anything except the work."  
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For 8 days, for \$12 an hour plus a free lunch each day, I drill the star-map of holes in the concrete Sun Tunnels. It is sweltering, and the foreman is a jerk. Still, I am an artist. I am fascinated. This motion is meaningful to me.

In Peter Fischli and David Weiss' sculpture, "The Way Things Go," everyday objects work together to defy gravity. Chain reaction: a medium oil drum hits a 1-foot diameter wooden spool, the spool slalom ambles down a plank, across a short stretch of cement floor, taps a tire, which turns, spills oil into another tire, which turns, spills into a third tire, 2 more tires gain momentum this way (from the re-distribution of the weight of the oil), the car tires gain momentum, momentum UP the rungs of a laid-out ladder, 2 more tires, up another horizontal-ish ladder, up another plank, this tire bump-starts a succession of spinning spent rolls of tape that then slap a stick... eventually, we get a jolt, a jumping

jack, or fire, a cataclysm, or Diego Rivera's 5-panel fresco, in the lobby of the theater at San Francisco City College, in the Outer Mission, The Pan American Unity Mural, 1940, a peopled infrastructure, a fantastic symbiotic, networked honor roll of collaborators that includes: Simon Bolivar, emancipator of slaves in Venezuela; Yaqui Deer Dancers; Olmec carvers; children, swimmers and divers, quilters, painters, goldminers, industrialists; Samuel Morse, inventor of the telegraph and Morse code; Frida Kahlo; Charlie Chaplin as Adenoid Hinkle.

There is nothing nice in this romanticism. We assume we agree. We agree only for a period of time... Who stays longer, stays anyway? Progress is the true stories of intersected friendships, whatever it takes. All that together time building boxes might make us slow to answer text message invites to tea. I'm responding now to your question, in your message: Mostly, I agree.