Title: The Environmental Image Game [International Concept Design Competition for an Advanced Information City -- Five Proposals for Kawasaki, Japan]

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Entry by: Shinichi Okayama
Collaborators: Masashi Sagabe and Masayoshi Takeuchi

Shinichi Okayama and his colleagues take up the challenge of developing new urban traditions, the theme of the Campus City Festival. The group proposes to alter the traditional form festivals take and make them “environmental,” temporary images within everyday settings and time frames. The concept seeks to exploit the nonhierarchical and instantaneous qualities of the new media to stage ubiquitous hit-and-run events throughout the city. Okayama searches for the city’s “loose holes,” all those underused and neglected spaces like parking lots, highway right-of-ways, and off-time school yards, to be transformed into playful, interactive media settings, galvanizing the neighborhood. His is the approach of the high-tech pirate, the digital grafittiist, the youthful urban offender, an electronic Robin Hood distributing data to the masses. Company- and city-sponsored festival trucks are to be filled with media gadgets, and public telephones booths mutated into interactive kiosks. The events will radically alter the city image, or at least its afterimage, by temporarily reversing figure and ground of the urban structure.

The proposal suggests that many dangers connected by today’s technological prospects, such as authoritarian determination of social reality, invasive surveillance, and civic control, are not inevitable, but are related to the degree of intelligent popular access to these media and to the political consensus and social attitudes about their development and use.