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GO ECO by Lillian Ball
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GO ECO is an interactive installation that illuminates the different perspectives of several participants involved in a wetland preservation project. The concept is metaphorically based on the ancient Asian game of Go, (originally, one of the Four Arts of China along with music, painting, and poetry) which uses strategies to capture territory through balancing tactics. One ecosystem has spawned yet another - the wildlife, plants, and predators have generated a parallel web of interdependence that encompasses science, politics, conservation hierarchies, and real estate interests.

GO ECO also functions as a “serious game” played through informative video vignettes. Digitally manipulated images with sound are projected in quadrants on the screen to lead players through to the next move. The viewpoints of biologists, landowners, government officials, and neighbors are activated by moving the “stones” on the game board. A camera sensor placed above the 10 x 10’ game board transmits the actual moves to the computers that project the corresponding video clips. Any number can play, but odd numbers of players (1, 3, or 5) are preferable as in the game of Zen Go. Odd numbers encourage cooperation - you must see the other side’s point of view since you will be the other side on your next turn. The game can only be won when both sides capture territory, a solution that enables participants to win together.

GO ECO addresses questions that apply to many locations in coastal areas, though it is inspired by the artist’s participation in a community activist project to preserve a 200-acre wetland in Southold, NY. This globally rare "Maritime Freshwater Interdunal Swale" includes native cranberries, varied wildlife, and the endangered

Iris Prismatica that are all being threatened by development. After protests and lawsuits, progress is being made in community awareness. Several lots have already been preserved with support from town and county government and through donations to the Peconic Land Trust. Restoration, invasive species control, and education efforts have received 2 grants from the Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The artist was recently appointed to the Southold Town Land Preservation Committee, which is saving wetlands and farmland across the North Fork of Long Island.

The resulting “game for change” is a documentation of the activist process, a presentation of wetland facts, and an inspiration for others. It demonstrates how crucial it is to speak out while taking into account the diverse perspectives involved. *GO ECO* allows players of many ages to be empowered and learn about the issues through an art experience that maps paths of action.

Lillian Ball: *GO ECO* is made possible with support from the New York Foundation For the Arts (NYFA)