

EBB AND FLOW
Hybrid Narrative Filmmaking and Collaborative Art Practice
by

Todd Chandler

An Abstract of a Thesis Submitted to the Graduate
Faculty of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major Subject: INTEGRATED ELECTRONIC ARTS

The original of the complete thesis is on file
in the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Library

Examining Committee:

Igor Vamos, Thesis Adviser

Branda Miller, Thesis Committee

Pauline Oliveros, Thesis Committee

Kathleen Forde, Thesis Committee

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Troy, New York

December, 2009

ABSTRACT

Flood Tide is a narrative feature film about a journey down a river in a time of economic and ecological collapse. It is a multi-layered collaboration that combines fictional narrative, improvised dialog, cinema vérité, music, installation and performance to tell a story of possibility, memory and escape.

The film was shot amid the *Swimming Cities of Switchback Sea*, a project dreamed up by the artist Swoon and built by an eclectic group of artists and performers who also make up the cast and crew of *Flood Tide*. In the summer of 2008 we built and floated seven large boat-sculptures down the Hudson River, putting on performances in towns along the way.

While documenting the real life journey, *Flood Tide* is an independent fictional feature film that uses the voyage as its centerpiece. The film and its small crew traveled down the Hudson River shooting vérité footage of the boats underway as well as staging structured, fictional scenes in the middle of the activity on board and on shore. The cast consists of five musicians (non-actors) who play themselves with fictionalized storylines. They perform music on camera and have also collaborated to create the film's score. In addition to screening in conventional settings such as festivals and theaters, the film will tour contemporary art centers and community spaces featuring a live musical score and, when appropriate, an installation component.

As a filmmaker and musician with a background in documentary, for me *Flood Tide* is an exploration of a new form of work that synthesizes elements of my various practices. It both draws inspiration from and feeds back into the community of artists from which it came. In the following paper I reflect on the process of developing and creating *Flood Tide*, investigate its influences, historical contexts and the underlying themes of the film.