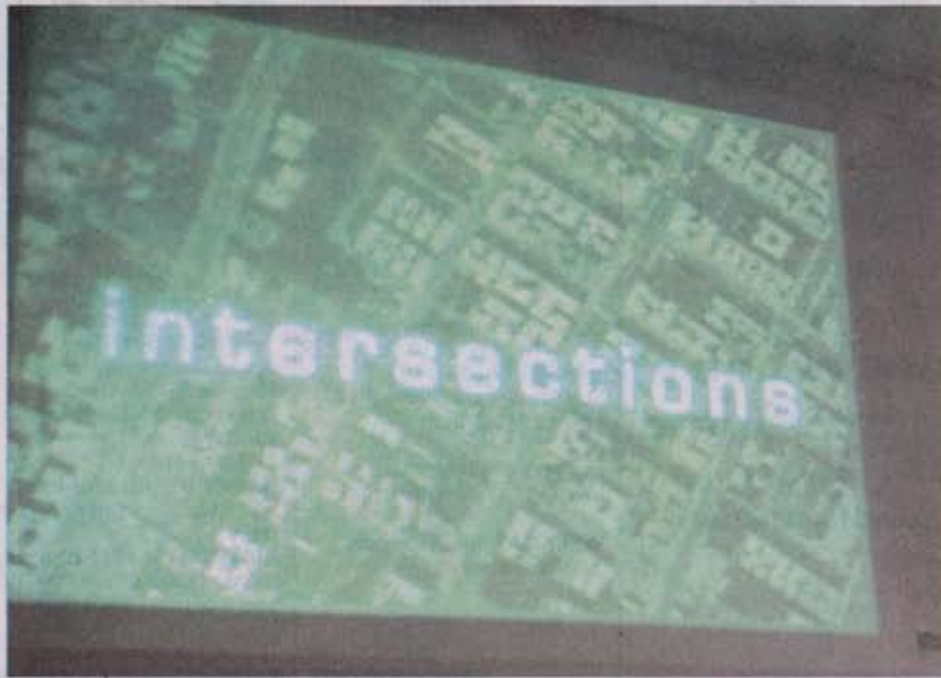


# ART Seen UPTOWN: HECTOR CANONGE



**Title:** "Intersections," 2009

**Exhibited:** Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance, 178 Bennett Ave. at W. 189th St., 3rd Floor

Maps used to be the primary means for people to find their way around an unknown area, before digital GPS systems began appearing in cars, cell phones and even MP3 players.

Using a host of new media, artist Hector Canonge's newest installation "Intersections" at the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance gallery, reinvents the map to include barcodes and a projection of videos onto one of the walls of the gallery.

In the main component of his three-piece installation, Canonge has taken a map of upper Manhattan and placed bar codes on a number of intersections where local street vendors have set up shop. When an intersection's barcode is scanned, a video interview with the vendor is projected onto the wall.

"The people that are talking in the interviews are talking about food, yes, but they are also talking about their stories," Canonge said of the interviews.

One woman he interviewed singlehandedly crushed Canonge's perception of the "American Dream" that the

street food vendors were living.

"I thought it was great that here are these Hispanics who own their own businesses, but the more I spoke to them, I found out that...they are just employees," he said of his interview with Juana on the corner of Sherman Avenue and W. 207th Street.

Canonge's goal with the interviews was to show the human side of the food vendors, and to have them tell the stories themselves.

The second component of the installation is a set of neon light panels that emulate the signs found on the food trucks operated by the vendors in the interviews.

One reads "Comer pa' Vivir" (Eat to Live), and another reads "In a hurri." Both are replicas of actual signs that Canonge had seen during his six months of research on the streets of Washington Heights.

The "In a hurri" sign seems very appropriate, given that the food trucks selling "chimichurri" style food are the Latino equivalent of fast food. From afar, Canonge read the sign as "In a hurri," but as he neared the sign,

he saw that it actually read "Latina Chimicurri," but a portion of the lights had burned out, leaving the alternate message.

The final component of "Intersections" is a set of organic materials, which are actually from the vendor trucks. Orejitas – fried pork ears – and a large bowl of the grease used to cook the food is displayed along with the map and lights.

"I just wanted something that came directly from the trucks. For me it was very important to bring the street element into the museum. For that people reflect – whether they get shocked, or they get hungry, whatever it is, it makes them think," Canonge said of the perishables.

To learn more about the project, visit it in NoMAA gallery. Also visit Canonge's website, [www.hectorcanonge.net](http://www.hectorcanonge.net).

~Elyssa Ramirez