Pecha Kucha (pronounced pe-CHECK-u-cha) is the invention of two architects working in Tokyo. The Japanese expression means 'chit-chat' but the idea has been translated into a popular form of presenting ideas in quick succession. In the classic form, there are 20 'slides', each lasting 20 seconds. A presenter typically narrates for 6 minutes, 40 seconds. Our version asks presenters to prepare remarks lasting 6:40 but the 'slide' images will be made up for them, independently. The idea is to disconnect the text from the images, allowing each to talk to the other without the 'caption' functionality. Participants can contribute images and present texts, but there will be no correlation during the actual presentation.

20x20. Pecha Kucha is 'almost there' as a means of disconnecting ego and intentionality from the audience's engagement of texts and images. And, while most would say that the point of a presentation is to convey specific intended ideas, supported by illustrations, the text becomes the slave and the image the quick master. By disconnecting the two modes of content, the common(s)/commune pecha kucha aims to restore aurality to a position equal to and sometimes discordant with image so that counterpoint can take place. Counterpoint is a 'no pain no gain' situation!

Participants are asked to contribute images, texts (rehearsed to fit within 6 minutes 40 seconds), or both. Texts will be read in person or pre-recorded. Reading rates may, like one of John Cage’s experiments, be stretched out so that the time span is filled by a varied density of timed phrases.

Image contributors will be allowed to impose order for only limited sequences, maximum three slides. Images will be assembled by an independent team of designers who will strive to achieve a balance between narrative and random juxtapositions.

Contributed images must be defendably within the 'fair use' category of copyright law, just in case some of them are inadvertently included in permanent media. Exceptions may be tagged so that they appear only in performance mode.

Images must be still images that fill the full projection frame, 1280x720, or a 16:9 aspect ratio. Images should be 72 dpi or 144 dpi, jpg format. If you don’t know how to set these sizes, put images to be reduced/shaped into a separate folder. Submit images on a CD or DVD if you can. Exceptions can always be made, within the technical limits of the digital projector.

The best images will be those that provoke a thought or seem to be a fragment of a story. With the first amendment in mind, free speech is protected while the audience’s welfare, in the broadest sense, is uppermost.

Most pecha kucha presentations involve a succession of 20 still images. If you want to create a dynamic presentation that involves animations and overlaps that nonetheless fit within the 6:40 limit, these can be shown at a special show where the continuity of animation sequences is preserved. The idea behind using still images is to allow for maximum mix and match.

The 'Ken Burns effect' — random panning and zooming of images automated within many slide-show utilities — is discouraged except when the pan and/or zoom is essential to advancing the meaning of the image. Transitions between slides will be simple cross-fades, no fancy effects that might add unintended content or compete with the images themselves.

To regard the idea of the still image as an advantage rather than a limitation, look to the inner contradictions of 'still' and question the temporality of images as 'slices of time' (a very limited idea).

Creation of the narratives uses the 20x20 format, though filled by images unknown at the time of composition, as a musical score that has a time signature but no notes. The 20-beat metronome lets you think about using 20, 40, or 60 second 'islands’ to hatch out a thought. Pacing can change within the framework, in fact varying the tempo can interact in interesting ways with the randomly appearing images. A more ambitious presentation might not be fully composed but, instead, open to on-spot adjustments as the reader encounters the images. Think of the text and image series as jazz improvisation rather than blind mechanical encounter.