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Symposia

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PUBLIC ART / HOUSING PUBLICS: CONVERSATIONS ON ART AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

GLOBAL URBAN HUMANITIES SYMPOSIUM FALL 2014



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SYMPOSIUM DESCRIPTION

PUBLIC ART / HOUSING PUBLICS: CONVERSATIONS ON ART AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

A GLOBAL URBAN HUMANITIES SYMPOSIUM

Location: Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA

Date/Time: 11/21/2014, 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

The Public Art/Housing Publics: Conversations on Art and Social Justice Symposium explored innovative collaborations across cultural and social justice sectors. How can we sustain affordable housing and healthy neighborhoods in our communities? How can we sustain a thriving artistic life for our citizens? Most importantly, how can we answer both of these questions together? Timed to coincide with the residency of UC-Berkeley Regents Lecturer, Rick Lowe of Project Row Houses, participants included artists, scholars, civic organizers, and affordable housing developers from around the Bay Area.

Public Art/Housing Publics: Conversations on Art and Social Justice is co-sponsored by the Arts Research Center, Global Urban Humanities Initiative, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, and UC-Berkeley Regents Lecture series. Special thanks to Amanda Eicher and OPENrestaurant.

Conference Organizers:

Shannon Jackson, Susan Moffat, Lauren Pearson

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

1:00 Welcome-

- Introduction with Shannon Jackson, Arc Director

1:15 - 3:15 Taking Ownership: Grass-Roots Place-Based Art, Housing, And Community Development

What does it take for a neighborhood-based arts organization to secure its future? Does owning your own building help? What kind of partnerships and cross-sector communication does non-profit real estate development require? What is the connection between housing and art? What does place-based creativity mean, and how does ownership in the broadest sense relate to authenticity? The partners who created the Eastside Cultural Center discussed the development of the original center, which included space for community arts creation and 16 units of affordable housing, and their current plans to build more units as well as expand arts programming.

Featuring-

- Elena Serrano, Collective Member, EastSide Arts Alliance; maisha quint, Collective Member, EastSide Arts Alliance;
- Paul Okamoto, Architect, Okamoto Saijo Architecture; Aubra Levine, Senior Project Manager, Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA);
- Andrea Papanastassiou, Northern California Community Loan Fund;
- Rick Lowe acted as respondent.

3:30 - 5:30 Artists Working Across Sectors: New Knowledges And Scales Of Practice

This session explored the new knowledges, techniques, and vocabularies that social justice artists have acquired to anchor and to extend their practice. Panelists discussed the obstacles and opportunities for imagining their work at different scales; considering issues of immigration, gentrification, urban planning, cultural policy, land rights, and environmentalism, they discussed their personal and collective strategies for working across sectors.

Featuring-

- Walter J. Hood, UC Berkeley Professor of Landscape Architecture & Environmental Planning and Urban Design;
- Jordan Simmons, Artistic Director, East Bay Center for the Performing Arts;
- Raquel Gutiérrez, YBCA In Community Program Manager, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts;
- Rick Lowe acted as respondent.

5:30 - 6:00 Closing Remarks

6:00 Reception

- Food curated by OPENrestaurant



Rick Lowe, founder of Project Row Houses, in front of duplexes designed by Rice University students to provide low-income rental homes as part of the project.

Photo Credit: Michael Stravato for The New York Times.

SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS



Rick Lowe- Artist, Project Row Houses

Rick Lowe is an artist whose unconventional approach to community revitalization has transformed a long-neglected neighborhood in Houston into a visionary public art project that continues to evolve, two decades since its inception. Originally trained as a painter, Lowe shifted the focus of his artistic practice in the early 1990s in order to address more directly the pressing social, economic, and cultural needs of his community. With a group of fellow artists, he organized the purchase and restoration of a block and a half of derelict properties—twenty-two shotgun houses from the 1930s—in Houston’s predominantly African American Third Ward and turned them into Project Row Houses (PRH), an unusual amalgam of arts venue and community support center.

Since its founding in 1993, PRH has served as a vital anchor for what had been a fast-eroding neighborhood, providing arts education programs for youth, exhibition spaces and studio residencies for emerging and established artists, a residential mentorship program for young mothers, an organic gardening program, and an incubator for historically appropriate designs for low-income housing on land surrounding the original row houses. While inviting constant collaboration with local residents, artists, church groups, architects, and urban planners, Lowe continues to provide the guiding vision for PRH as he pursues his overarching goal of animating the assets of a place and the creativity of its people. He is not only bringing visibility and pride to the Third Ward by celebrating the beauty of its iconic shotgun houses; he is also changing the lives of many PRH program graduates and expanding the PRH campus to cover a six-block area in an effort to preserve the historic district’s character in the face of encroaching gentrification.

Lowe has initiated similarly arts-driven redevelopment projects in other cities, including the Watts House Project in Los Angeles, a post-Katrina rebuilding effort in New Orleans, and, most recently, a vibrant community market in a densely populated, immigrant neighborhood in North Dallas. Lowe’s pioneering “social sculptures” have inspired a generation of artists to explore more socially engaged forms of art-making in communities across the country.

Rick Lowe attended Columbus College and studied visual arts at Texas Southern University in Houston. He is currently the artist-in-residence at the Nasher Sculpture Center and a Mel King Community Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and his work has been exhibited at such national and international venues as Houston’s Contemporary Arts Museum and Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea, and the Venice Architecture Biennale. His other community building projects have included the Arts Plan for the Seattle Public Library, the Borough Project for the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, and the Delray Beach Cultural Loop in Florida, among others.

Raquel Gutiérrez- YBCA In Community Program Manager, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

Raquel Gutiérrez is the YBCA In Community Program Manager. Raquel is a writer, live performer, film actor, curator, playwright, and cultural organizer. She writes on art, culture, music, film, performance and community building and creates original solo and ensemble performance compositions. Raquel earned her MA in Performance Studies from New York University in 2004. She is an expert in creating artist-community partnerships for a range of institutional and community-based organizations.

Walter J. Hood- Founder of Hood Design Studio & Professor of Landscape Architecture & Environmental Planning and Urban Design, UC Berkeley

Walter Hood is the creative director and founder of Hood Design Studio, a cultural practice working across art, fabrication, design, landscape, research, and urbanism, in Oakland. Hood is also the David K. Woo Chair and a professor of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning at the University of California, Berkeley. He lectures on and exhibits professional and theoretical projects nationally and internationally. He was recently spent the spring 2020 Diana Balmori Visiting Professor at the Yale School of Architecture. Hood creates urban spaces that resonate with and enrich the lives of current residents while also honoring communal histories. He melds architectural and fine arts expertise with a commitment to designing ecologically sustainable public spaces that empower marginalized communities. Over his career, he has transformed traffic islands, vacant lots, and freeway underpasses into spaces that challenge the legacy of neglect in urban neighborhoods. Through engagement with community members, he teases out natural and social histories as well as current residents' shared patterns and practices of use and aspirations for a place.

Aubra Levine- Senior Project Manager, Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA)

Aubra Levine is Senior Program Manager at Satellite Affordable Housing Associates. Throughout her career, She has worked in affordable housing finance and tax credit syndication, city government, and taught affordable housing finance. She holds a Masters in Regional Planning from the University of North Carolina and graduated with High Distinction from the University of Michigan with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and is also a LEED Accredited Professional under the LEED for Homes program.

Paul Okamoto- Architect, Okamoto Saijo Architecture

Paul Okamoto is a partner in Okamoto & Suijo, leading work bridging community-based regional planning and green building. He has overseen projects including the East Side Arts Cultural Center (Oakland), Dolores Hotel (Mission district-SF), Chinatown Corps Community Center (North Beach-SF), Rubissow Farmhouse (Napa), and the conceptual design for the Alameda Creek Watershed Center (Sunol), as well as leading affordable housing projects in San Jose, Morgan Hill and Cloverdale for EAH Housing. Paul, who holds a Bachelor of Architecture from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo and a Master of Architecture from University of Adelaide, Australia, is Past President of Urban Ecology. He was a Loeb Fellow at Harvard's Graduate School of Design.

Andrea Papanastassiou- Deputy Director of Consulting, Northern California Community Loan Fund (NCCLF)

Andrea Papanastassiou is an affordable housing developer in the Bay Area, where she is currently with the Northern California Community Loan Fund (NCCLF). Before joining NCCLF she served as Director of Real Estate Development for Eden Housing in Hayward, and developed affordable projects for Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition. Her projects have won design awards from Sustainable San Mateo County, Pacific Coast Builders Conference, and Builder Magazine. Andrea received a Dual B.A. with Honors in Environmental Studies and Urban Studies from Brown University and an M.A. in Urban Planning from UCLA.

Maisha Quint- Collective Member, EastSide Arts Alliance

Maisha quint is a Collective Member and Community Programs Director at EastSide Arts Alliance in Oakland, advancing intersectional approaches to cultural strategy and place-based equity, with a particular focus on the development of a Black Cultural Zone in East Oakland. She also served several years with the statewide network Legal Services for Prisoners with Children as Communications Director and Family Advocacy Coordinator, helping families advocate for policies on behalf of their incarcerated loved ones. A Bay Area native, Maisha holds a BA in African American Studies from Barnard College, Columbia University, and an MFA in Poetry from Mills College.

Elena Serrano- Collective Member, EastSide Arts Alliance

Elena Serrano is the Program Director and founding member of the EastSide Arts Alliance Collective. As Program Director for EastSide Arts Alliance she coordinates community and cultural events and the annual Malcolm X JazzArts Festival, and oversees EastSide Arts Alliance’s fundraising efforts. She previously worked with La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley and the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts in downtown Oakland. Elena has served as a cultural strategist for the City of Oakland’s Department of Transportation (OakDOT) and is currently with Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST).

Jordan Simmons- Artistic Director, East Bay Center for the Performing Arts

Richmond native Jordan Simmons served as Artistic Director of the Center for Performing Arts from 1984-2021, and as a faculty member since 1974. A graduate of Reed College, active *Mestre* of Capoei director, licensed Shakuhachi (Japanese flute) teacher, and theater director, Jordan’s portfolio includes more than 50 productions for theater and film, many focusing on the lives and concerns of youth and young adults from Richmond’s Iron Triangle and surrounding neighborhoods. His awards include the Governor of California’s Award for “Outstanding Individual in the Arts,” the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences “Outstanding Contribution to the Bay Area Arts,” an inaugural *City of Richmond Human Rights Award*, and the San Francisco Foundation’s Helen Crocker Russell Award, presented to an “under-recognized, mature artist who has made a significant and ongoing contribution in the SF Bay Area.”



SYMPOSIA VIDEO

VIDEO FROM RICK LOWE'S NOVEMBER 2014 ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCY



Did you miss the Arts Research Center's 10-day residency with acclaimed artist and community organizer Rick Lowe? Did you want to learn more about his stay with us or about his practice?

The Arts Research Center (ARC) documented the many events, lectures, and meetings that acclaimed artist and community organizer Rick Lowe participated in with our community partners, students, and faculty during his 10-day, November 2014 artist-in-residency, co-sponsored by GloUH. ARC produced this short 10-minute video, with an introduction by ARC Director Shannon Jackson, in which you can hear Rick speak about his work with communities and how he navigates his "socially engaged" practice.

A big thank you to ARC's Media Fellow, Nick Randhawa, for his time and dedication to making this video project come to fruition!

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