UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

You Are Here / Estas Aqui

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Visual Arts

by

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2012

The thesis of Glen Wilson is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

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DEDICATION

To Zeke and Elijah

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

You Are Here/Estas Aqui

by

Glen Wilson

Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts

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Professor Ernest Silva, Chair

You Are Here/Estas Aqui was a neighborhood-specific project realized in the San Diego community of North Park. Punctuated by two interrelated, experiential components – a series of public film projections and a mixed-media, group installation – the project evolved over several months to reflect both the fleeting and sustained daily rhythms and rituals of North Park through the participation of neighborhood individuals. This thesis explores the evolution and manifestation of the

project, foregrounding that exploration in a brief discussion of earlier documentary and artistic expressions that inspired my work in general, and the thesis project in particular. Though initially conceived as a visual project anchored in the mediums of photography and film, *YOU ARE HERE* ultimately came to be defined more by an emphasis on transformative experiences, everyday encounters with residents in my own richly diverse neighborhood, than by transformed objects. As is discussed in the essay, I sought an approach that I hoped might blur the perceived distinctions or boundaries between art and everyday life. The essay elucidates how the dual components of YOU ARE HERE served to hold up a mirror of sorts to the neighborhood and to provide a real-time reflection of the daily intersections, negotiations, and paces that define the character of a pedestrian-driven California community situated amidst the backdrop of the automobile-bound commuter culture prevalent in the region. The essay is populated throughout, and concludes with a series of vignettes and descriptions of the everyday people who became central to the realization of the project.

YOU ARE HERE

Modes of Observation

Photography as an intuitive intermediary means to observe the world around me and to express a range of ideas, evolved for me concurrently with my broader study of the history of art, that lead me to gradually emphasize evolution and role of photography itself. I recall being initially intrigued by the work of Eugene Atget, and by the expanded use the Surrealists later made of his haunting mid to late nineteenth century images. Through a Surrealist’s interpretive lens, Atget’s visual record of Parisian alleys, street corners, and shop windows were viewed as dreamlike dispatches from the subconscious, an alternate mapping of the city, more ghostly and ethereal than concrete. I later found myself gravitating to the photographic work of artists from decades later, again chiefly street photographers, whose modes of observation resonated similarly with mine. As I wandered the streets of New Haven, Connecticut snapping images I would later develop, print, and hang for weekly critique in my university photography classes, I began to

more deeply consider my identity behind the camera, my relationship to the subject matter I chose to photograph, and the context of my approach to making images.

Robert Frank's photographic work, that of Roy DeCarava, Garry Winogrand, and Diane Arbus among others, made a profound early impression on me and provided inspiration for the work I hoped to make. Robert Frank's image entitled *Charleston, South Carolina, 1955*, DeCarava's *Boy, man, and graffiti. 1966*, Winogrand's *Central Park Zoo, New York, 1967*, and Arbus's *Young man and his pregnant wife in Washington Square Park, N.Y.C. 1965* provide singular examples of images which resonated for me and heightened my awareness as to the potent intersections that could be navigated through the medium.

Viewed separately, each image possesses a striking degree of candor. In the examples of Frank and Arbus, the portraits are intimate, yet maintain a tenuously respectful distance from their subjects. The orientation of the subject's gazes toward the lens are different; Arbus's couple looks directly into her lens, Frank's subjects - an older African American woman and a porcelain complexioned infant she is holding, display a peripheral yet discernible awareness of the

photographer’s presence. DeCarava’s image is sparse, spontaneous and haunting. It is a glimpse of a glimpse, a portrait that seems almost accidental, played out against a stark white wall that functions as a canvas for an absent graffiti artist and for DeCarava alike. A young boy passes in profile to the left of frame; on the right, a simple glyph-like graffiti tag of a skull seems to hover with implied meaning. The boy and the skull flank the frame’s central figure, a passer-by whose gaze appears to have met DeCarava’s lens at the precise moment the photographer released the shutter. The resulting trinity of figures fills the frame with a sense of symbolic weight, and implicates the viewer in its cryptic meaning.

Winogrand’s provocative tableau of a smartly dressed couple holding two children - a contained family unit - presumably enjoying a day at the zoo, becomes more ambiguous and complicated the moment one realizes the “children” pictured are actually chimpanzees. The ambivalence of a casual observation is subverted by a disruption of identities and assumptions around the “family unit”. Moreover, the disruption implicates the image’s broader social context, when one considers that

in 1967 “anti-miscegenation” laws forbidding interracial marriage were still on the books in many states. Winogrand’s curious image of an interracial couple may well have served to stir opposition to, or support of, theories around racial purity that reflected prejudices pervasive at the time. The image moves decisively toward the theatrical; it teeters, as is often the case with Winogrand’s images, on a divide separating dispassionate everyday observation and the performance of everyday life. Winogrand’s choice to wander the Central Park Zoo with his camera provokes a discussion around the dialectics of observer and observed, public versus private.

Taken together, these four moments, each a visual document of a specific place and time (underscored by the simple notational captions that serve as de facto titles), call the very idea of a “dispassionate document” into question, elicit questions beyond form and content, and set up the dialectics of presence versus absence, proximity versus distance, and ultimately, what is inside (content and intent) versus what is outside (a larger context and the function of the image beyond that context) the frame. Each photographer’s mode of wandering

observation, and the dialogues that arise in the subtext of their resulting images proved influential to my own subsequent visual explorations.

I seek expression at an intersection where private and public identities collide and may be mutually transformative. Throughout much of my work one can find negotiations of identity and meditations on the fluidity of contemporary identities and communities. While my work is rooted in the study and practice of photography, with a particular emphasis on its documentary trajectories, my most significant recent projects have introduced elements of film, digital video, and performative aspects, each of which encourages and preserves an experimental dynamic in the process of creating new visual work.

A Neighborhood Perch

> Between the immobility of the inside and that of the outside…the windowpane…a transparent caesura between the fluctuating feelings of the observer and the moving about of an oceanic reality…
>
> -Michel De Certeau[i]

> Every so often, ever so once in a while, somedays a woman gets a chance to set in her window for a minute and look out...New York is not like back down South with not much happening outside...In Harlem something is

> happening all the time, people are going every which-a-way...No matter which way you
>
> look, up or down, somebody is always headed somewhere, something is happening...For some it is ‘Hello, so glad to see you!’
> For some it’s ‘So long! Dig you later.’
>
> -Sister Mary Bradley[ii]

In their widely acclaimed 1955 photo/text collaboration, *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*, photographer Roy Decarava and poet Langston Hughes managed, as curator Peter Galassi put it, to “distill an elixir of affection,”[iii] from one community’s oceanic reality. They located meaning and memory in the everyday comings and goings, and individual gestures of daily life in New York’s uptown community of Harlem. Through the visions and words of Sister Mary Bradley, a fictional Harlem resident created by Hughes, *The Sweet Flypaper of Life* presented an intimate, poetic narrative to the reader. Sister Bradley offers a perspective from the perch of her brownstone window, evoking images and sharing stories rendered in a soft vernacular voice bearing an insider’s authenticity. At times the revelations feel private; images she describes could be taken from her personal photo album, or framed on a nearby dresser. The stories are offered like glimpses or secrets; and we are no

longer just readers, or listeners, but confidantes. At other times, her observations place the reader out in public, at street level, on a stoop, or in a doorway. Through the images, we peer outward, yet hold an interior space with Sister Bradley as she delivers her elliptical and intimate commentary.

Though this collaboration between DeCarava and Hughes may have initially sprung from what Galassi described as “a passing acquaintance”[iv], it is clear that they shared a deep affinity for the Harlem each called home. Both were active proponents and contributors to Harlem’s powerful creative, intellectual, and political currents. Moreover, their mutual familiarity and trust in the other’s art practices, similarly grounded in, and composed of a visually expressive language of fragments, suggests that DeCarava and Hughes understood the potent and vibrant fabric that might be woven of their distinct visions.

One need only imagine the thousands of frames DeCarava must have made tracing a photographer’s path through Harlem’s streets, moving amongst strangers, friends, and family, in order to deliver an enormous selection of prints to Hughes. In selecting images and

drafting an accompanying text, Hughes then essentially retraced DeCarava's steps. In a sense, he walked back through DeCarava's frame(s) into a realm of observation and memory. Conjuring Sister Bradley, Hughes and DeCarava were transfigured in the process. Through her voice, possessive of a local authority and everyday folk wisdom often attributed to elder church going women in a community, the boundaries of the narratives originally contained in DeCarava's individual frames take on expanded meanings.

As the pages of *Sweet Flypaper* turn, its narrative fluctuates from the vast to the intimate, and back again. In lyrical sequences of images, we move broadly from the intimate gesture of a father's embrace of a child around a dining table, to Harlem's vacant lots; we ride nearly empty subway cars, then find ourselves returning to the dining table, this time that of Sister Jenkins, Sister Bradley's friend and neighbor, from the "tidy apartment" across the hall.[v] Space is preserved within the text for the reader to locate oneself both intimately as kin, or anonymously as a passer-by in an oceanic urban flow. In its object form, the book acts as a distilled, localized document, a talisman or time capsule that punctuates,

evokes, and memorializes a place and time, even as the story of that place continues to exist beyond the book's end pages.

Sweet Flypaper resonates as a seamless visual poem, from the singular vantage point of its narrator. Through Bradley's voice, Hughes offers distinct descriptions of post-war Harlem on the eve of the Civil Rights movement. Its particular rhythms and cultural idioms are palpable through Bradley's revelations, which are, in reality, Hughes' responses to DeCarava's visual poetry. Thus this "singular vantage" is actually layered and intertextual. Owing to this inherently collaborative process, arising first in the ongoing engagement by DeCarava and Hughes as individuals within their community, and secondly, in the interaction between fellow artists, the evolution of *The Sweet Flypaper of Life* possesses dimensions that begin to suggest an early collaborative approach that verges on public art.

With DeCarava and Hughes' collaboration, Michel DeCerteau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, and Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* in mind, I initially envisioned a photography-based project that would evolve as a visual log of everyday occurrences in North Park, a

kind of mapping project of the San Diego neighborhood that was my home from 1995-98. An invitation to participate in InSite97 offered me the opportunity to formalize a set of ideas within a “community engagement” proposal.

My ultimate proposal would combine filmed sequences and a mixed-media installation presenting me with an opportunity to work in a different visual mode and consequently the challenge to cede some measure of formal control. Rather than making images in the mode of the solitary, silent observer, an approach that tends to reinforce a somewhat obscured or aloof artistic position, I sought to initiate and sustain a conversation, with fellow North Park residents, at an intersection of art and everyday life. Yet, working with a camera, albeit in a slightly different capacity, would still allow me to bring many of the impulses and interests that inform my art practice to bear. In this conception, the term community, like the identity or memory, does not simply exist, but rather might be constructed of fragments and multiple stories.

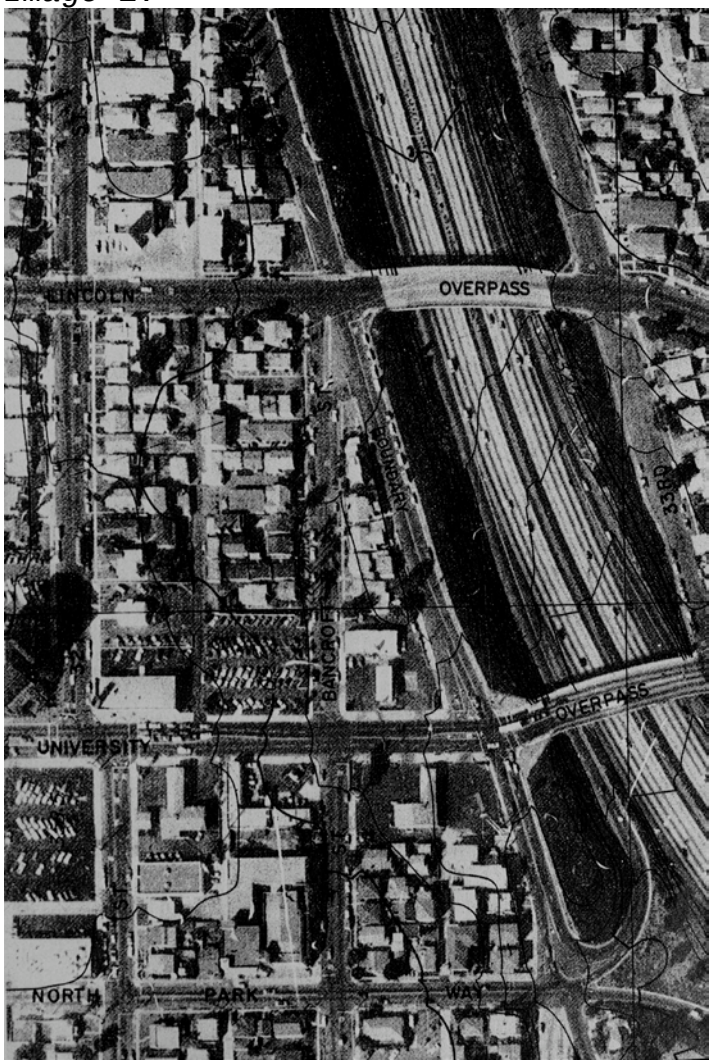
I proposed the title *YOU ARE HERE*, because it could call up a singular or communal presence, act not only to

locate or affirm, but to further prompt corollary questions, “Where am I?” or “Where is here?”. In partial response to such questions, I rooted the project in one of North Park’s crossroads spaces, establishing a vantage point from one of the neighborhood’s oldest storefronts, where multiple histories and perspectives, individual and collective narratives might overlap and connect. I sought to make work that was more explicitly collaborative in an embrace of the dynamics that inevitably arise within the space of encounter around the camera. By contrast to previous collaborative projects, working with colleagues in youth-based programs that involved clearly defined structural and thematic elements, I sought to leave more space for an organic layered rhythm to emerge.

I have come to realize that my strongest projects often reveal themselves through the arc of an ongoing process. Additionally, certain work may be enriched by an engagement with, or participation by others. My work may evolve out of spontaneous exchanges, or involve recurrent trips to locations in search of vestiges of a previous encounter with a person or the environment itself. Yet I also seek immersion in the places I inhabit. And where there are spaces to be shared with others, I am

consistently drawn to the patient reciprocity of exchange inherent in stories told and listened to. Such patience strikes me as an increasingly scarce human commodity. And it was in search of this spirit that I embarked upon *YOU ARE HERE*.

Image 1.



Aerial sectional survey of North Park, San Diego (eastern boundary). This section includes the University Avenue and Lincoln Avenue 805 freeway overpasses. Survey date unknown.

Traces and Places

> We now inhabit a sociocultural universe in constant motion, a moving cartography with a floating culture and a fluctuating sense of self.
>
> -Guillermo Gomez-Pena[vi]

> To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place – an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations, compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric…
>
> -Michel DeCerteau[vii]

Contemporary Southern California's urban development stretches out broadly amidst striations of retrofitted concrete. The region's immense superhighway system continually extends it's habitable reach inland from corridors that loosely parallel the coastline, and arteries roughly outlining the region's topography of hills, mesas, and canyons. Within these contoured interstices, or *Autopia,* as Reyner Banham once deemed it[viii], motorists bypass the grids of Southern California's oldest urban communities. Moreover, *Autopia* allows

motorists to remain “aloof…and disentangled…from the murky intertwining” of the ordinary surface streets they manage to avoid[ix]. Those bypassed neighborhoods, historically cleaved, if not outright flattened by freeway construction, have struggled as the region increasingly becomes a terrain of economically homogenous enclaves. More recently developed suburban communities laid out amidst the region’s sprawling geography, and purposefully remote from its traditional urban hubs, have siphoned away not only residents but resources, in an accommodation of the daily ex-urban flight.

Ironically, many of the neighborhoods from which these exoduses have proceeded, were themselves the region’s first planned residential tracts, originally marketed to prospective homeowners as the city’s “newest restricted communities.” Access to purchase lots in these carved out places was limited to buyers who qualified not only in financial terms, but also in specific racial or ethnic categories. Over nearly half a century, in the years from 1920 to 1968, legal barriers imposed through racially restrictive zoning and covenants were systematically challenged, and gradually eroded (though

many would argue lasting socio-economic damage had been done).

The San Diego neighborhood of North Park is one such place. Once envisioned and cultivated as a lemon grove on a bluff northeast of the city's vast Balboa Park, it was eventually cleared for residential and commercial development. Along University Avenue, the neighborhood's alternately thriving and struggling commercial thoroughfare, a multiplicity of agendas and visions manifest. Pedestrians go about their everyday activities, anonymously exchanging gestures and negotiating shared public spaces, in an ongoing project of neighborhood. Through shifting dynamics and demographics, North Park has evolved into a racially and economically heterogeneous place where residents, as close neighbors, form an interconnected urban milieu.

The Project

YOU ARE HERE was a neighborhood-specific installation project, realized in North Park, and ultimately included as part of inSite97, a bi-national program of site-specific art installations and

engagements throughout the San Diego/Tijuana border region. Punctuated by two interrelated, experiential components, including a series of public film projections, and a mixed media, group installation, the *YOU ARE HERE* project presented an opportunity for me to engage in an organic, collaborative approach to public art making.

As Michel De Certeau may have observed, North Park's quotidian "ensemble" of exchanges and negotiations, echo in a "chorus of idle footsteps"[x]. They form a traceable but fleeting topography of intersecting currents, not seen in official cartographies, nor detected by aerial survey. De Certeau's influential analysis of common pedestrian acts – walking in particular – describes ways in which functional everyday movements might be "read" as figures, which taken together form an urban text. Just as storytelling, preaching, song and poetry act upon the terrain of language, urban "spatial practices" he suggests, operate to "affirm, suspect, try out, and transgress" the boundaries, symbols, and planned logic of a neighborhood. Framed in this way, the rhythms of pedestrian movements and gestures "write, announce, and

enunciate,"[xi] themselves, allowing for an alternate reading or mapping of place.

Over a period of several months, *YOU ARE HERE* required me to perform multiple roles as artist, instigator, facilitator, curator, construction worker, and documentarian. Moving between the functions of each role, I sought consciously to avoid the distinctions typically drawn between "art-making" practices and everyday practices. Rather than locating, signaling, or emphasizing specific issues through the content of images I would create on film, or through a linkage to a central art or filmmaking discourse, I pivoted toward an emphasis on process. I resisted the impulse to advance an explicit narrative in order to leave a blank and open page. I took up a *listening* position, sensitive to North Park's neighborhood dynamics, not as an afterthought, but in a real time engagement.

Richard and Gabriel: RITUALS

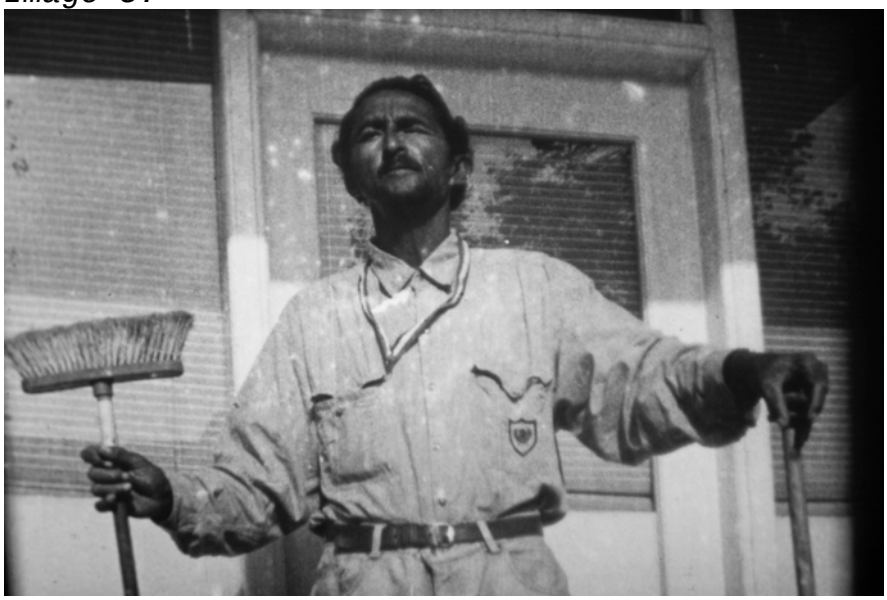
Richard, an older African-American man in my neighborhood who, in his own words, "got out" nearly every morning for a ritual stroll that covered only two

or three blocks. His stroll was not about distance but repetition. Sometimes he circled the block several times in one morning. Impeccably put together, from the gold rings that adorned each finger, to his Louisiana straw hat, he was a regal pedestrian. Smoothly, he leaned into his cane with each step, plotting a path, maintaining a slow, dignified rhythm. A swirl of activity swelled around him. He was a familiar face to the morning set. He greeted folks with loud, throaty laughter and a raised cane. Periodically his stroll was punctuated by a moment of pause. Taking a seat on an empty bench, he observed the passing morning as he sipped from a bottle in a brown paper sack.

Image 2.

YOU ARE HERE, Untitled Film Still, (Richard).

Image 3.



YOU ARE HERE, Untitled Film Still, (Gabriel).

Another man, Gabriel, from Cuba, also showed up in the mornings to perform his ritual tasks. Though he had no home – I sometimes saw him sleeping in Balboa Park - he was always clean-shaven, with a trimmed mustache and smooth, leathery, brown skin. He wore a red, white, and blue ribbon around his neck as a permanent accessory to his attire. He explained that it was to show President Clinton that he is a “community worker”. Despite the supple contours of his leathery brown face, his expression was hardened. One of his eyes remained

permanently closed, and when he spoke – which was rare – it was almost exclusively in Spanish.

Each morning, Gabriel pulled dry flowers; fragments of appliances; small pieces of cardboard, cut and painted to resemble houses or churches; and empty plastic soda containers transformed into lanterns from a full shopping cart. After setting these items out along the sidewalk, he pulled out the tools of his daily trade. With multiple brooms and dustpans in-hand, Gabriel swept the sidewalks around the intersection of University Avenue and 30th Street. He was methodical in his rhythm, as he moved about the intersection.

One morning, as I was talking with him about his sidewalk installations, a man swiftly approached us and accused Gabriel of stealing his girlfriend’s bike. Apparently, the man had seen Gabriel sleeping in the alley behind his apartment earlier that morning. Gabriel’s expression, usually impenetrable, was briefly one of surprise, then anguish, that he might be blamed for such an act. After several moments of interrogation he suddenly straightened his posture, and patted his chest and shouted in English, “No! I am a community worker, I have nothing; I ask nothing”. His accuser

lingered only moments longer, then walked away seemingly convinced of Gabriel's innocence. Watching him go, Gabriel paused, then looked at me and repeated, "I am community worker, no pay, no food…I sweep streets." Gabriel would move on by the afternoon, leaving the intersection always tidier, if temporarily, than before. And nearly everyday he left behind a small combination of collected fragments, a bottle or jar with a flower or an American flag, indicating that he had been there.

The ritual everyday paces of North Park's residents drift, meander, and flow across real and imagined boundaries. Identities (stakeholders, entrepreneurs, drifters, politicians, poets) are presented, negotiated, and ultimately thrown into relief with each passing moment. And as such moments pass, their meanings are likely carried with them, echoed in the fluctuations and multiplicity of lived community experiences. Official and unofficial narratives about place are traded, compete, and comingle. North Park's sidewalks, alleys, bus benches and newsstands provide the platforms where "floating cultures" and "fluctuating selves" act and overlap.

If these public places could loosen from their obdurate, opaque geometry, perhaps they would reveal fleeting traces or glimpses of an unseen pedestrian cartography, fluttering like translucent pages turned by passersby, reciting a fragmented poetry of the everyday.

Images 4 and 5.

YOU ARE HERE, Untitled Film Stills TOP: (Advertise!!!). BOTTOM: (30th and University).

Embedded in both the projected films and the installation were multiple perspectives, multiple narratives, and multiple possible meanings. The films focused on the rhythms of the everyday in North Park, and evolved first through encounters around the camera during the filming process, and subsequently through encounters during the public projection of the films. The approach and composition of *YOU ARE HERE* concurrently evolved out of, and responded to collective expressions, of memory, identity, home, and community by individual residents of North Park. Through the life of the project I hoped to bring those expressions together, if temporarily, under one roof.

The Films and Projections

Over a period of many weeks, I roamed North Park to capture short sequences of everyday activities and gestures. I filmed moments ranging from neighborhood residents watering their gardens, a short order cook frying eggs and bacon on a griddle, to groups of school kids waiting for a city bus. I filmed in available light

and utilized as little equipment as possible – a camera (CP-16 or Bolex 16), a tripod, and a light meter, ensuring me mobility and flexibility. While the operational requirements and attendant spectacle of filmmaking is slightly different than that of still photography, the process of making images in the street was nevertheless familiar. As with my previous photographic work, I recognized the camera as a tool that provokes and elicits inevitable questions. “What are you taking pictures of? What are you looking at? What are you looking for? What are the pictures for?” became the curious refrain of encounters on the street.

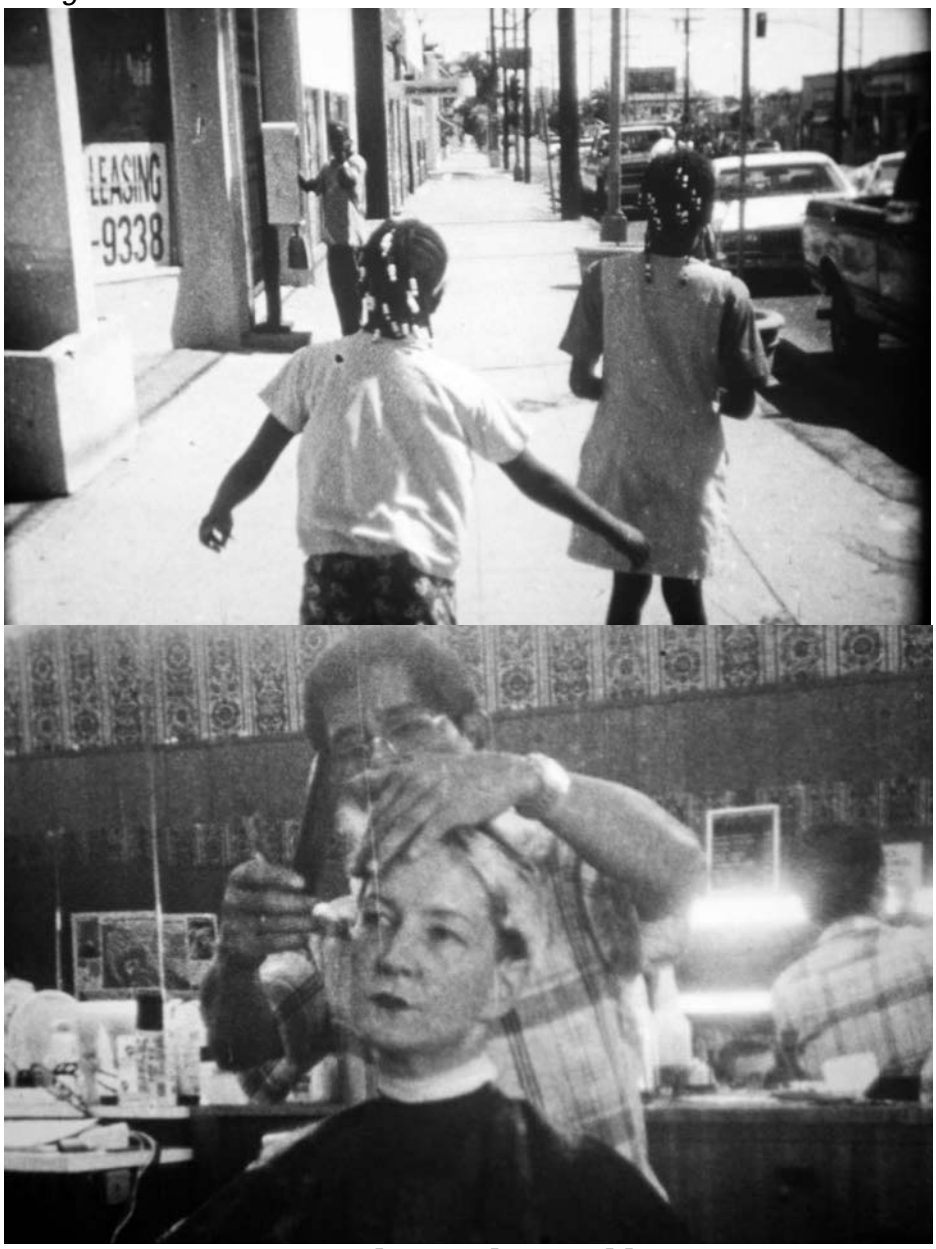
After shooting nearly five thousand feet of film, I chose to forego a professional lab and instead processed the footage by hand. I plunged four hundred feet of film at a time into large buckets of chemicals in a darkroom, after which I hung it on fishing wire to dry. This consciously imprecise process challenged every sensibility that years of darkroom training, maintenance, and etiquette had imprinted on me. The negatives were inconsistent and dirty, literally layered with minute environmental artifacts such as dust and hair, and were invariably scratched and blotched where overlapping

lengths of film had prevented the proper activation of the emulsion during development. Once again in ceding some degree of formal control the hand-process served to amplify the film's "found" or "homemade" qualities.

I then sent the film to a lab, to have a work print made. On a humorous note, I had to convince a lab technician over the phone that I actually wanted to go ahead with a work print from the negatives I had sent, which he described as "practically unsalvageable" before I explained that their condition was intentional.

After receiving the work prints, I commenced my first ever film edit process. Seated at a Steenbeck flatbed editing machine, I initially logged the footage by isolating a frame representing each scene and drawing quick sketch in a sort of rudimentary storyboarding process. This allowed me to place scenes side by side, and play with juxtapositions based largely upon contrasting rhythms and subject categories.

Images 6 and 7.



YOU ARE HERE, Untitled Film Stills.
TOP: *(Roller Girls)* BOTTOM: *(People's Barber)*

Cut and spliced, the loosely edited silent films portrayed grainy, black and white imagery of the rituals, fleeting exchanges, and gestures of North Park's everyday. In one slow-motion sequence, two girls appear

to glide along a neighborhood sidewalk. Their gliding, roller-blade propelled movement plays in contrast to a scene of a dapper elderly man who advances methodically forward with the help of his cane. In another sequence, pixelated scenes of customers in the chair at “The People’s Barber Shop” play against scenes of customers at the counter of a local diner. Golfers leisurely swing clubs at a public course, and a self-appointed community worker sweeps the streets at a busy North Park intersection.

Where I saw a blank wall or façade on a nearby building devoid of signage or graffiti, I had a potential projection site. It was crucial that locations had minimal competing ambient light that would quickly diffuse the luminosity of the projections. This necessity invariably led me away from major intersections awash in light from street lamps, traffic lights, illuminated billboards and business signs, and toward odd corners and entrances to alleys. Yet I still attempted to situate the projections as near as possible to intersections likely to have nighttime pedestrian traffic. Armed with two reels of film, coming in at just under an hour of running time, a projector, a heavy-duty wooden crate, and a

portable (and quiet), I commenced with guerilla projections throughout the neighborhood.

These sites constituted an impromptu street theater, and secondary spaces for encounter. During the projections, audiences spontaneously gathered on the sidewalks, usually one or two passersby at a time, though on a few occasions, small groups of between five and ten people gathered to watch. Recurrently, and somewhat surprisingly, the concrete beneath the flickering spaces of the projections provided a testimonial platform. Perhaps owing to the silence of the films, passers-by were often compelled to supply their own commentaries. They became street orators, told stories, asked questions, evoked neighborhood memories, and gave testimonies about community, ultimately providing a narrative around the projections.

At a few of the locations drivers passed inadvertently between the projector and the surfaces reflecting the images. For an instant, they essentially became a part of the projections as their cars cast moving shadows within the frame of the projected images. Often drivers slowed, paused extra long at intersections,

and in some cases parked their vehicles to watch the films in a kind of instant urban drive-through theater.

One Picture, One Thousand Words

One night at 29th Street and University, a man on a bicycle stopped. As scenes unfolded, he announced the locations as they appeared, “That house used to be right down here on Pershing…that was over here near the park…” as if the places no longer existed. After a spirited narration, he congratulated me and felt compelled to launch into a vivid, if fragmented vision of his own activism:

> …If I didn’t speak, it wouldn’t be done. They’re gonna do it…I’m a straight on community activist… I’m it as far as I can see …there’s maybe a few others around…some men of color…but I have not seen one other white man out here trying to better the society we live in…it’s a friggin' problem man! It pisses me off…I don’t see anything…only people man…

At a different projection site on another evening, a middle-aged Latino man spoke at length to the small group

who had gathered. He spoke exclusively in Spanish, though his gestures and gesticulations communicated across any language differences. I attempted to affirm his commentary, nodding in agreement, though somewhat disappointed that I could not verbally engage with a common language. Yet, before the man walked away, he placed his hand on my shoulder, then pounded his own chest, and said, breaking into English, “They don’t do enough like this brother…nothing at all like this…it’s experimental…it’s good for the people…”. Walking away, he repeated several times“…remember…one picture…one thousand words…one picture…one thousand words!”

In both instances these passers-by had chosen not only to stop and watch the images quietly projected onto the walls; they were prompted to engage the moment, and occupy a fleeting platform of sorts. In the first example the man spoke of community and identity. In the next, the man also alluded to community, and perhaps the need for more open dialogue, or perhaps more spontaneous art experiences. It is interesting to note that in both moments these passersby referenced a broader idea of audience, beyond themselves.

Image 8.

YOU ARE HERE, 16mm Film Stills, (Full Set).

The Installation

Stories about places are makeshift things…
they are composed with the world's debris.

-Michel De Certeau[xii]

Concurrent to the filming and projections, I transformed a vacant storefront space on Ray Street into a functional workspace, and designated a large portion of the interior as an exhibition space. I constructed new interior walls, rewired and replaced electrical outlets and lighting fixtures, and repaired plumbing issues. I bartered with an adjacent screen printing and sign-making business, exchanging some photographic services for vinyl lettering that read "You Are Here: A North Park Public Art Project". These signs were pressed in place on one window front. Thinking of the man I had encountered at the aforementioned projection I placed additional letters reading "Estas Aqui" in the other window front. Taking a cue from the maps at the entrances to shopping malls, my signs included a line that extended as a location marker from each phrase, and pointed to the entrance of the studio.

Simultaneously, I attempted to build an interest and awareness of the project within the neighborhood. I rented the apartment above the studio and spent my days

and nights in and around Ray Street. I regularly invited those I encountered in the street to visit the space, and left the door open to curious passers-by. Almost immediately, I was paid a visit by representatives of the North Park Business Improvement Association, and separately by a neighborhood historian. Typically, I shared the ideas behind the proposal for the InSITE project, and spent a good deal of time listening to stories about the neighborhood. The flow of people and ideas to the studio space seemed to reflect the rhythms and energies of the street outside. For a time I sought to maintain a “blank canvas” quality to the studio environment promoting a space where ideas could be shared and sketched. In certain instances, I saw potential participants only once. Others returned daily, to “hang out”, or to discuss installation ideas. For some, the simple relating of an idea seemed to satisfy a cathartic need. Others demonstrated a deeper more sustained interest in the project.

The Collaborators

Images 9 and 10.

YOU ARE HERE, Untitled Film Stills, (Grace).

Grace Anderson*, "Tweaking-Lesbian-Dumpster-Diver"*

Grace and I met serendipitously in a North Park alley, early on a Saturday morning. I was startled when she called out to me from the dumpster she was standing in up to her shoulders. She wanted to know what I was

doing in the alley with my camera. I responded that I was making images of different spots, seeking an alternative mapping of the neighborhood – working an idea for a documentary of sorts. I also explained that vital hours of my formative years had been spent exploring, plotting, rummaging, and just hanging out in the hidden throughways of the suburban neighborhoods surrounding Columbus, Ohio.

She told me that she likewise considered herself a neighborhood documentarian, a role stemming from an intimate knowledge of North Park, gathered throughout her tenure as a “dumpster-diver”. Soon, we were immersed in a “garbological” discussion about community and waste; we shared a malt liquor she had stowed in a shopping cart brimming with her morning finds. I rummaged through the dumpster myself and took some photographs. We eventually hauled the stuff to her alley apartment a couple blocks away.

Floor to ceiling, from the furniture and appliances, to the food in her fridge and cupboard, everything in Grace’s home was retrieved from the neighborhood’s dumpsters. Her home was essentially an amazing and complicated mixed-media installation, combining thousands of found objects, some unaltered, others transformed

through assemblage, collage, or painting, and installed amidst a functioning domestic space.

Bottles and jars held collections of shells, and rocks, forming organic altars around discarded plastic containers, broken toys, and beads. An elaborate and beautiful garden ran along the side of her home, planted with cacti and succulents, cast-offs exhumed from the dumpsters of the neighborhood. She had hundreds of images representing different passages of her life – photos of her childhood in Minneapolis, aged photos of her Swedish parents, and images she photographed herself in Chicago.

Grace in effect also rummaged through North Park's afflictions and addictions. Through dumpsters, she uncovered the refuse of private lives, unofficial archives of discarded habits and memories. Sunday nights, she explained to me, were best for diving; people tended to discard the detritus of their lives on the weekends. Black folks, white folks and Asians, according to Grace, threw away distinctly different trash. She claimed to find differences between gay and straight trash, and an ability to distinguish Christian trash from that of "evil-worshipping" households.

Grace’s home was quite a stunning installation, precisely curated and presented. My immediate reaction was to invite Grace to participate in the project. I imagined that her approach to the installation at the studio on Ray Street would reflect these strong impulses. Initially she was very enthusiastic about contributing to YOU ARE HERE. Many of our exchanges revolved around new ideas she had, generally based upon her prolific poetry. Regardless of her bold and confident personality, she was however, prone to invalidating her own ideas, and frequently changed her mind suggesting that she might not be ready to show work, or that she did not want to “ruin” the exhibition that might evolve. I gradually reassured her that by the very nature of the project she might consider allowing the work to evolve over time, and to reflect her different moods.

Ultimately, for her part in the installation, Grace claimed a section of wall space and created a kind of rotating poetry altar. She painted a section of wall black, and suspended a window frame before it. She then painted (in white lettering) a favorite poem she had written carefully around the window frame itself, extending down to the floor. Below the window she placed

a nightstand and a table lamp that she asked be illuminated at night. She visited the studio at unpredictable intervals to replace the poems currently displayed with different works. The last poem she displayed was a piece she had written nearly a decade earlier. As the show came to a close she had gradually removed all of the objects, and left the poem taped directly to the wall. She also affixed a handwritten note on the studio door that read: “Glen, thanks for the show, let’s do it again, keep the last poem and think of me – tweaking, lesbian dumpster-diver. Fight the Power, GVA”

Manjelika and Tuumba: Their Gallery

The following stories are transcribed from the originals written by two North Park resident participant/collaborators. I met Manjelika Iseka and Tumba Nzeba through my role in a youth mentorship program at the San Diego Alliance for African Assistance, an immigrant and refugee services organization based in North Park, and located just around the corner from the *YOU ARE HERE* studio. I had become familiar with the Alliance when the organization hired me to as a

photographically document the Alliance's varied outreach programs and subsequently continued my involvement as a youth mentor.

Kids from the Alliance program often stopped by the studio as they moved about the neighborhood. Through the mentorship program I organized excursions exploring North Park with cameras, taking photographs, and field trips throughout San Diego. We filmed one memorable trip to the Torrey Pines State Beach, to commemorate many of these kids' first experience of the ocean. On several evenings, I projected those images onto the screenlike window façade of the Ray Street studio.

Among the many kids, Manjelika and Tuumba in particular enjoyed spending time hanging out at the studio. They dropped by frequently with friends, and suggested ideas for the space that they called "their art gallery". I informed them that in order to spend time in the space they would need to contribute to the evolving installation. The next day they arrived bearing items they determined "Would be good for the gallery." Manjelika brought in a small hand carved, well-aged wooden doll, painted bright red. Tuumba brought in a framed photograph of a group of men in feathered costumes

– a troupe of actors in Kenya I later learned. After some days on display, I asked them if they knew the stories behind their objects. They presented the following stories (unedited), portions of which were then painted on the walls to surround and contextualize the objects themselves:

> *Well, My Grandmother has this doll that's*
> *special to her. My Grandmother told me that she*
> *was born*
> *And raise in Zaire…the doll she also did too.*
> *Her best friend gave her the doll because she*
> *wanted*
> *My Grandmother to keep it…So She will remember*
> *some*
> *Thing about her. And there was something else*
> *My Grandmother's friend was dying of some kind*
> *of Sickness. The Color Taklo – Taklo is my*
> *Grandmother's Best friend's name – well she*
> *colored the doll red*
> *Because that's my Grandmother's favorite color.*
> *And she also made her a poem it went like*
> *We were best friend and we'll stay best friend*
> *To the beginning to the end.*
> *One day I asked my Grandmother if I could*
> *Put the doll in my room for one night*
> *She said no at first and then she said fine*
> *I took the doll in my room put up on my*
> *Bed shelf an went to bed I couldn't sleep*
> *So I just started staring at the doll and it*
> *just*
> *Moved I was scared the next day I gave the*
> *Doll back to my Grandmother and said keep it*
> *I'm never putting the doll back in my room.*
> *I have magic with that doll.*
> *I think the doll and me have a connection.*
>
> *By Manjelika Iseka, age 13*

Image 11.

YOU ARE HERE, Installation Detail.

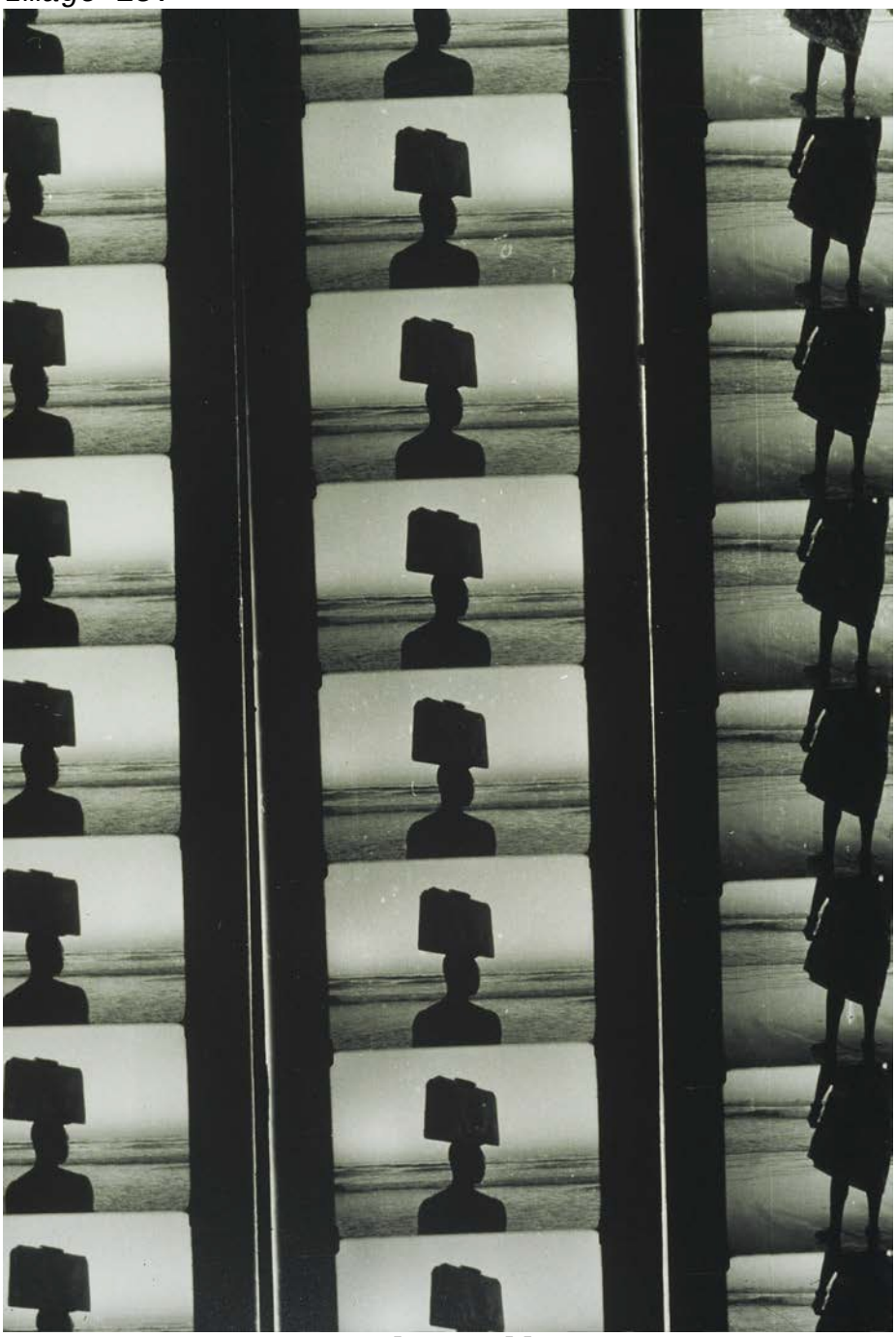
Image 12.

YOU ARE HERE, Installation Detail.

Well I will be telling you about this picture of my uncle and his friends doing a play. The picture was given to my grandparents by my uncle from Africa. It is special because it's interesting. It's different from other pictures. My Grandma told me when we used to be in Africa it was hard for her because when my uncle used to go do the play he would have to go to another city and she wouldn't see him for couple of months. When my grandmother would right to him he wouldn't write back sometimes. So my grandmother would be worried and he decided to send this picture to us to show us what was he doing in the play. My grandparents felt better to know that he was ok and doing well. He started making a lot of money and he would travel. My grandparents would be worried but they knew he was all right. So ever since then we had this picture with us. So that's the end of my story.

By Tuumba Nzeba, age 14

Image 13.



YOU ARE HERE, 16mm Film Stills, (Nomad).

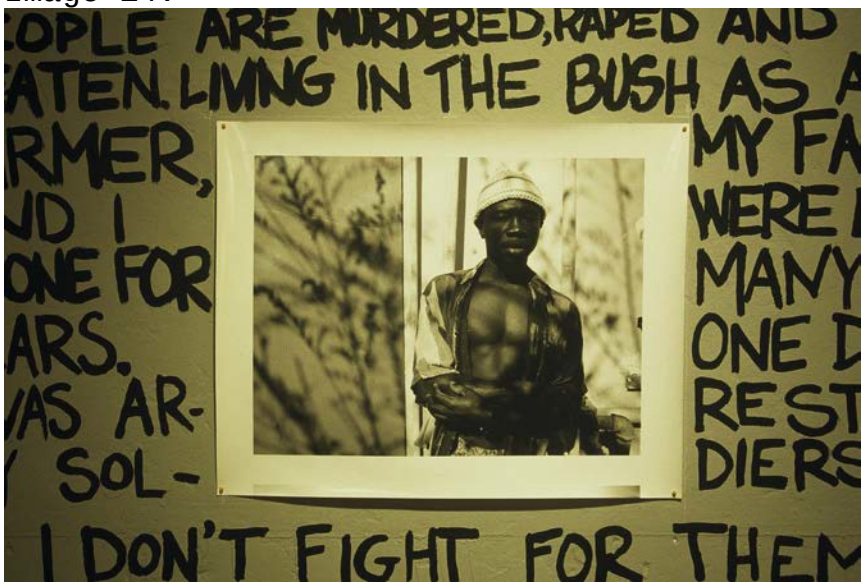
Harold Weber: North Park Transplant

Upon meeting Harold Weber, a Liberian-born political refugee seeking political asylum from his country's civil war, a more intimate and sustained partnership in the project developed. *YOU ARE HERE* became Harold's first home in the United States.

Fortuitously for both of us, I met Weber through the Alliance for African Assistance within a couple of weeks of signing the lease for the Ray Street storefront. He needed an American sponsor and a place to land after spending six months at an Immigration and Naturalization Services detention center. I needed assistance transforming the Ray Street storefront into a gallery. Harold offered to assist me in building out the space and I in turn, offered him a place to stay. Together we designed and constructed the physical space. The back area of the studio functioned as a living space for Weber – his first "home". During those months of living and working in the studio, Weber and I shared numerous stories about our roots. As we constructed physical walls other invisible walls fell; he shared a vivid description of his former life as a farmer in Liberia, near its border with the Ivory Coast. Weber also told extraordinary stories about his abduction from his home

village by “recruiters” for Charles Taylor’s military efforts in Liberia and blood diamond agenda in Sierra Leone.

Image 14.



YOU ARE HERE, Installation Detail.

While Weber prepared his INS court case, I asked him if he would feel comfortable sharing any part of his story in the context of *YOU ARE HERE*. He generously agreed, and we brainstormed on ideas for both a film segment and an installation piece. In the studio, Weber had decided that he wanted to claim a section of the wall, hang a portrait I had made of him, and surround it by a fragment of his story of escape from the soldier roundup. He chose a simple photograph – one of many I had

taken over months – that he said reminded him of both his home in Liberia and his new home in North Park.

Weber also appeared in the films, but in a role different from the candid snapshot-like images that characterized the bulk of the segments. We decided to create a short sequence that might resemble a home movie from Liberia, and in some way symbolize of his journey. For weeks Weber had been making humorous observations about the inefficiency of American perambulation and manual labor. One day, he balanced a suitcase on his head while holding paint cans in either hand. He remarked "This is how we do it in our area…everybody carry everything this way." His jest inspired the segment we filmed. In it, the Torrey Pines State Beach, just north of San Diego, doubles for the Liberian coastline. Here, Weber strolls along the sand and peers across the horizon, meditating on his impending transatlantic move. He is wearing traditional clothing, and has a suitcase balanced atop his head.

Neighborhood Collisions

By contrast to the spontaneous and transitory filmmaking process, the installation coalesced primarily through my sustained availability to, and interactions with, individual participants, and through the intermingling of individual ideas and processes, rather than through organized group strategies. Each participant-artist contributed not only a unique perspective, but also a distinct energy and degree of engagement. Occasionally participant's paths overlapped in the studio. As I provided the common link, such intersections in-person were usually preceded by a familiarity borne of installation materials cohabiting the space - poems, photographs, objects - and stories I had related among them. Participant's visual strategies cross-pollinated with one another as the individual installations evolved into a larger more cohesive group piece.

Viewed as individual moments, the installation's tangibles - photographs, objects, poems, and stories written on walls - served to punctuate, rather than summarize, much longer autobiographical stories exchanged over months in the space. Absent the artists who created them, the walls were left to mirror one another a

reflection of fragments, echoing unlikely connections across not only the space of the gallery, but also across the social boundaries of their authors. I was intrigued by the manner in which the vacant storefront had become an intimate object-filled space, triggering meditations on home, homeland, family, memory and identity. Similar to the way that the films had evoked narratives around memory, presence and absence, the installation contained similar themes. Ultimately, the significance and larger meanings of such connections were nomadic, carried in each individual's experiences of the process.

DEXTER SMITH "Picture Store"

Dexter Smith stacking a selection of snapshots, pulled from a shoe box:

Look!
That my dad…
Here go my dad…
Here my dad…
Here my dad"

(And Dexter's Mother)

"Why the only ones you care about
Are the one's of your daddy?

You can't really even see a face
In them pictures

He don't know

That's not even his real daddy
He's too young to understand

One afternoon, a seven-year-old neighbor of mine, Dexter, dragged me by the hand to his apartment to meet his mother. Over many weeks during the development of the project a friendship had evolved from our sidewalk rapport. Whenever he saw my car coming down the street, Dexter ritually raced to greet me as I opened my door, usually with a rollerblade-propelled collision on the street. He liked to assist me in watering my sidewalk garden, and frequently offered me live snails he had collected along the street. He seemed to delight in my squeamish refusals. Dexter grew comfortable hanging out on my porch, and venturing into my home if the door was unlocked and the screen door creakingly ajar. Once inside, he methodically surveyed my domestic arrangements. "What this?…what this?…what this?" he would ask repeatedly, thoroughly examining any and all loose objects.

Once he discovered my camera equipment, they became a central draw for his visits. Two or three times a week, he would show up to turn a twisted or contorted face toward the lens, commanding a photo be taken. "Acting the

fool” for the camera, as his sister Tiffany called it, was Dexter’s standard performance. In the summer, Tiffany, Dexter, and their crew of neighborhood friends arrived, almost daily, with props (such as flowers from the neighbor’s garden or toys), and requests to have their portraits made. An instant Polaroid offered immediate gratification, laughs, usually followed by brutal critiques of each other’s pictures.

One day, I presented Dexter and Tiffany with twenty by twenty-four inch prints I had made of them, printed from medium-format negatives I had shot weeks earlier amidst one of our sidewalk encounters. Impressed by the size of the prints, Dexter dragged me to his home demanding that we immediately show his mother. Sparing introductions, he stood back to gauge her response as he presented her with the large photographs. She smiled and nodded in approval.

Dexter, who had disappeared, soon returned bearing a ragged shoebox. In his small brown hands, its contents – dozens of paper envelops with hundreds of four by six snapshots - spilled over onto the floor. Gathering a select few, the instamatic snapshots he showed us portrayed blurred, oddly tilted, close-up fragments of a

man in uniform - a single hand, an indiscernible profile, a torso. Wider shots showed sailors on an aircraft carrier's deck, standing shoulder to shoulder, their backs to the camera. Like the rigid, anonymous, neatly trained rows of sailors in the photos, Dexter carefully placed each picture on the table, side by side. Mesmerized, with each faded square he laid out, my seven year-old friend repeated, "Here go my dad…here go my dad…here my dad…that my dad…that my dad…". Dexter insisted that I include these images in the installation at the studio, which he called the "picture store" alongside those I had created of him and his friends and siblings, and he proudly brought his mother and aunt to You Are Here to show them the images on display.

Through the Frame

> I'm always looking outside, trying to look inside. Trying to tell something that is true. But maybe nothing is really true. Except what's out there. And what's out there is always changing.
>
> -Robert Frank[xiii]

> But what a spiral man's being represents! And what a number of invertible dynamisms there are in this spiral! One no longer knows right away whether one is running toward the center or escaping.
>
> -Gaston Bachelard[xiv]

The duality expressed in this brief reflection by Robert Frank, a text most often found accompanying his *Mabou Winter Footage (1977-79)* film stills, conveys ontological tensions inherent to the practice of photography, namely those between observer and the observed, between truth (the photograph as “evidence”) and interpretation. To these tensions one might also elaborate questions of intention and audience.

Philosopher Gaston Bachelard echoes the spirit of Frank’s dilemma, suggesting a tension that exists within what he calls “the dialectics of outside and inside.”[xv] Where Frank’s words evoke the image of a window, a frame to look outward seeking truth, Bachelard evokes a “spiraling” labyrinth-like path toward *being*. And just as Frank’s outward gaze reverses inward in reflection, his window transformed into a mirror, Bachelard’s view is similarly charged with “invertible dynamisms” on his metaphysical path. Each presents an ontology that is fluctuating; in a sense, each follows a winding route between inside and outside, a wandering path of *being* that is “circuitous, roundabout, and recurrent”.[xvi]

Bachelard’s philosophical exercise, which explores how poetic *expression* serves language as an *opening*

force, by contrast to mere delivery of a literal *meaning,* which he describes as an *enclosing* force,[xvii] could serve as a useful interpretive exercise in the context of photography. The act of making a visual representation poses similar questions and parallel dynamics to the poetic written act. The desire to wrest expressive ideas from fragments of observation that, on their surface appear to indicate particular meanings (identifiable shape, form or context) invariably complicates the photographic document's purported objectivity. Accumulations of such complexities and the ubiquitous presence of cameras throughout our culture, has positioned the medium of photography in a unique cultural place; it is a kind of optical fulcrum through which a multitude of discourses around art, representation, politics, identity, and the environment are refracted. The depth and nuances of these discourses arise as a dialectics around the frame.

Projected Memories

The role of photo albums and home movies as keepers of memory, and as crucial tools in stabilizing our

personal histories and narratives, reflects a durability of our collective cultural faith in photographs as emblems of truth. They act as fixed, observable moments conferring “agency” to the memory, which seems to want to fluctuate. Collected in envelopes, boxes, and between pages, snapshots rescued from chaos, fixed to the album’s page, provide an oasis of coherence in a desert of scattered, often uncertain stories. The flickering kinetics of home movies, present luminescent contours of familiar faces and places and open grainy, dreamlike portals to memory. Still frames, multiplied, lined up seamlessly, or cut, reordered, and bound together then finally projected, become fluid; a silently flowing description of unfolding gestures and fleeting exchanges whose meanings fluctuate with the stories that accompany them.

Images have the power to bind our stories together. They can provide missing links or evidence, protecting against a threat of erasure, flowing from a steady simulacrum of “reality” television – cops shows, talk shows, cable news - endlessly delivering narratives of power and consumption, cloaked in fragmented assertions of unmediated reality. Yet, homemade fragments -

snapshots, super 8 films, and home videos retain the power to affirm origins, located in delicate frames where generations might mingle.

We recognize these images, as our own or someone else's. In the absence of narratives, images offer, as art historian Russell Ferguson suggests, "a fragment taken from a life that continues outside our temporary relationship with it as a viewer, a life that cannot be separated from the context in which it is lived, and that will always spill over any boundaries we might try to draw around it…"[xviii] Since meanings are generally supplied for us, an image without a narrative proves either impenetrable, or it is imbued with projected meaning. In fact, potential narratives with flexible meanings always survive the objects - the fugitive snapshot or film – around which meaning may evolve.

> The late artist Robert Filliou once said that the purpose of art is to reveal how much more interesting life is. The task for contemporary experimental artists may well be to probe that paradox, day by day, again and again.
>
> -Allan Kaprow[xix]

YOU ARE HERE evolved and was carried out over a period of several months as a multifaceted community

engagement project. I had originally set out to create a visual document of North Park making portraits of fellow residents and candid observations of the neighborhood's daily rituals. I hoped to capture a sense of its fleeting rhythms, of the mundane and unmomentous, and to present that vision as a series of glimpses of a vibrant and authentically diverse Southern California neighborhood. While I initiated the project in an organic, yet familiar observational mode, that of a documentarian, roaming North Park to make images with my still camera, the encounters I experienced throughout the neighborhood suggested a slightly different path. I began to think of *YOU ARE HERE* as an effort to hold up a mirror to a place, as a potentially more real-time reflection of intersections and encounters in the street. I considered how I might privilege direct, spontaneous experiences over the creation of objects (photographs or otherwise), and how I might return to and present images within the environments where they were created. I wondered how a different approach might blur or break down often perceived boundaries between everyday life and what is typically thought of as art.

To that end, I determined to execute the representational aspect of the project through motion picture in addition to stills, in an effort to more fluidly depict a sense of the neighborhood's rhythms, and to build in an opportunity to move the images from gallery walls to the neighborhood's walls. I intuitively knew that much of my traditional approach to making photographs would inevitably inform this first experiment with filmmaking, but could not assume or pretend an authoritative grasp of the medium. This uncharted quality created an opening in my approach that complemented my desire to collaborate with the subjects in front of the lens.

When it came to collaboration, rather than actively engaging an established community center or "legitimate" institution, with an organizational structure and a built-in or captive audience in place, I explored the notion that a community of collaborators might be found through encounters in the street. Like the pivot from photography to film, I began to consider ways I might open up the Ray Street storefront not just to present images I had made, but to invite and present a broader cross-section of neighborhood reflections on its walls.

I presented my creative practice to collaborators more as a trade than an expertise or “talent”, and offered my skills as a facilitator. At the time I was particularly concerned with avoiding labels or assertions of special knowledge or credentials that might be associated with my relationship to a university or other institution. In retrospect, whether this reluctance was warranted or not, it reflected my desire to erode or blur the distinctions between what is considered art versus everyday life, and ultimately to place an emphasis upon the transformative potential of actions and interactions over that of objects.

To be sure, despite a project more interstitial than conclusive in nature, objects had played a role as *YOU ARE HERE* drifted toward a conclusion. Objects presented by collaborators in the installation, gave life to the project and conversely the project gave new life and meaning to the objects. Objects created by and for the project - the films and photos themselves, had provided the catalyst around which transformative interactions occurred. By formal comparison to my previous work, *YOU ARE HERE* felt unstable on occasion, and unpredictable at all times. The public projections were raw and vulnerable

to the vagaries of the moment, as when a shirtless, buffed and glassy-eyed skater, verbally assaulted an onlooker who was watching the films, then smashed his skateboard to pieces against the wall of the projection, flexed a heavily tattooed torso and shouted “you can’t do this, this is my neighborhood”. Tense exchanges notwithstanding, the strongest outcomes of the work were the interactions themselves, the moments in which my varied roles were submerged into that of a participant engaging with other participants, and when collaborators embraced emergent roles as artists, poets, actors, and curators, in an ongoing project of community.

I had consciously moved away from a framework of measurable results, and lingered on process under the assumption that the results that would be most interesting, were those likely carried away in experiences and glimpses of *YOU ARE HERE*’s neighborhood participants and public audience. Just as I had been encouraged to reconsider, recontextualize, and occasionally set aside, if temporarily, the tools and methods most familiar to my art practice, *YOU ARE HERE* reflected my commitment to the paradoxical task to which Kaprow alludes in his reference to Filliou. The project

underscored the reality that in my work as an artist, anchored in the tradition of documentary photography, plucking moments and glimpses from a fluctuating reality, there exists a potent transformative possibility for the work beyond the production of visual objects. This kernel of possibility may reside in the photograph's representational power, to act as a portal or a mirror, but exponentially expands when such images are returned or presented at their source.

In retrospective consideration of *YOU ARE HERE*'s itinerant nature, I might have attempted to build into the project a structure or ongoing opportunity for participants to sustain more durable or substantive connections among one another (or even perhaps with neighborhood institutions). This might have served to better reveal or stabilize transformative "results" of a project otherwise transitory in its process. I was left to wonder if, and how, participants might greet, acknowledge, or fail to acknowledge one another in passing on the street. Would the mere sight of one another evoke a subtle reminder of a shared creative engagement, or a more connected experience of neighborhood?

In a future iteration, I could imagine reaching out to the proprietors of small businesses like the many along University Avenue and Thirtieth Street to initiate connections between the businesses and adjacent community based social services organizations tucked into the side streets of North Park, whose constituency of clients and patrons often overlap. In such a reworking, the project might be defined by transformative actions and interactions, through which enduring connections are forged.

In retracing my own steps back through the evolution of the project, I return to De Certeau's chorus of idle footsteps. I imagine North Park's concrete grid of sidewalks, streets and alleys, giving like densely packed sand under foot, capturing in relief the rhythmic drifting line of my steps. Just as quickly I imagine a tidal sweep of the neighborhood's myriad comings and goings performing a simple erasure. Any debris left behind, is perhaps whisked up by Gabriel's broom, or reclaimed by Grace, given new life, context and meaning. I peer up at the surfaces of walls, as blank and obdurate as before, but now haunted by my own, and other's gazes

of curiosity, and moments of inspired, if fleeting, testimony.

Endnotes

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[i] De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 112.
[ii] As written by Langston Hughes in: Hughes, Langston and DeCarava, Roy. *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*. (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1984, 1955), pp. 72-74.
[iii] Galassi, Peter*. Roy DeCarava: A Retrospective*. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1996), p.20.
[iv] Ibid.
[v] See images in Hughes and DeCarava, pp.32-47.
[vi] Gomez-Pena, Guillermo. "From Art-Mageddon to Gringostroika: A Manifesto Against Censorship." In *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, edited by Suzanne Lacey. (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), p.96.
[vii] Ibid., p.103.
[viii] Banham, Reyner. *Los Angeles, The Architecture of Four Ecologies*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), p.195.
[ix] DeCerteau, p.93.
[x] Ibid., p.97.
[xi] Ibid., pp.97-99.
[xii] Ibid., p.107.
[xiii] Frank, Robert. "Winter Footage in Mabou, 1977"
[xiv] Bachelard, Gaston. The Poetics of Space. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p.214.
[xv] Ibid.
[xvi] Ibid., pp.213-214.
[xvii] Ibid., p.222.
[xviii] Ferguson, Russell. "The Past Recaptured," Felix Gonzalez-Torres. (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1994), p.28.
[xix] Kaprow, Allan, "Success and Failure When Art Changes." In *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, edited by Suzanne Lacey. (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), p. 158.