



PROJECT ROW HOUSES

ROUND 43

SMALL BUSINESS/ BIG CHANGE: ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES FROM ARTISTS AND ARTREPRENEURS

OCT 24, 2015 - FEB 28, 2016



As I think about the current landscape of the Third Ward, I am constantly reminded that this culturally, historically rich African American neighborhood was a place where Black businesses provided products and services that contributed to the economic well-being of the neighborhood and city. As the Third Ward undergoes a new phase of major economic development, razed lots and corporate signs announcing building projects and grand openings sprinkle the scene. However, enduring storefronts from years past remind me of the ways the neighborhood once functioned, and inspires us to think critically about the economic values that give life to, or deplete, a neighborhood of its resources. Round 43: *Small Business/Big Change: Economic Perspectives from Artists and Artrepreneurs* started with a conversation with our Founding Director, Rick Lowe, and has

evolved into an opportunity for us all to reflect upon this state of affairs and engage with creative entrepreneurs, as well as contemporary visual artists who address issues of economy within their practice.

“Black Capitalism,” a concept that constantly resurfaced for me while organizing this Round, was first introduced as a method to uplift in the early 20th century and then again in the late 1960’s, spurred important debates within the Black community. The most famous of these was between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. Washington believed that Blacks would be accepted as equals by whites only when “they acquired sufficient business acumen,” whereas Du Bois saw higher education and black cooperation as the most effective way to achieve economic success and independence. After integration many of these debates subsided. Small businesses in Black communities suffered heavily, unable to compete in a climate where larger mainstream establishments grew more plentiful and middle class black flight from the urban core increased. The lack of economic contributions from these new businesses, along with the departure of highly educated and trained residents, fueled the decline of Black urban communities.

It is my hope that *Small Business/Big Change* generates a dialogue among people about some of these ideas, and considers about how we can become more useful in stabilizing our communities. Additionally, *Small Business/Big Change* ruminates on these debates and their current relevance in Third Ward by posing the following: *How are strategies for economic sustainability played out from the individual to the collective? How, within a neighborhood being gentrified, do we push against the big-business models that so easily find their way into small neighborhoods without supplying any forms of support to small businesses? Historically, what successful economic models and values (throughout the diaspora) have been used that might lay the foundations for future development?*

Investigating these questions and ideas with artists and small business owners is key and creating spaces for such conversation is important. While the answers may not fall in our laps, the process allows us to explore these ideas and question the current economic models within a neighborhood context. At this moment Project Row Houses is working to preserve a neighborhood that is under threat. To this end PRH has taken an active role in supporting the formation of the Emancipation Economic Development Council, which aims to halt gentrification, create housing choices, and stimulate a healthy local economy. This initiative, coupled with the Round, allows us to investigate and actively participate in a much-needed conversation. Throughout the viewing period of the Round, creative entrepreneurs will be given the tools needed to grow their businesses through collaboration with the Houston Area Urban League, and public programs centered on the Rounds' theme will take place. We at PRH hope you stay connected, and get involved!

- Ryan N. Dennis
Public Art Director



The background features a cluster of overlapping, semi-transparent brown squares of various sizes and orientations, creating a layered, geometric effect. The text is centered within this graphic.

**ARTISTS'
PERSPECTIVES
ON THE
INSTALLATIONS**

2505 Holman Street

ELLA RUSSELL IN COLLABORATION WITH ANTHONY SUBER

Crumbville Texas General Store

Crumbville Texas General Store (CTGS) is an anthropological look at the past, present, and future of the concept of the general store within African American communities. Traditionally, African American businesses were born out of a need that sprang from the constant marginalization of our communities, and the lack of opportunities and resources. The general store itself was a cornerstone of the community that was birthed from that same necessity. Exploring the ancestral roots of trade and commerce, dating back before the Reconstruction Era, the Crumbville Texas General Store is a reliquary of the past and vehicle for future innovation and community connection. Through our collaborative vision, CTGS is an open portal through which the notions of family, ancestral building, necessity, and innovation are communicated and explored. Focusing specifically on the idea of family, CTGS highlights both our connections to East Texas and the concept of communal development that arose from families interacting with one another through commerce.

Ella Russell

After participating in Awakenings Movement's Outliers Leadership Lab, The Eat Gallery (a culinary art gallery featuring the work of 7 food artist) and being encouraged by her friends and family, she worked to become proficient at baking. One of her most innovative creations came as a result of responding authentically to the cupcake craze of contemporary culture in 2010. Russell invented the "Stuffedcup"--a moist, fluffy gourmet cupcake with one of her signature cookies baked into the middle. Since 2004, she has pioneered nearly fifty original recipes and successfully turned her passion for baking into a profession. Observing her baking process, she obsessively and deliberately honors her recipes, practices and measurements. Out her discipline comes the ambrosial magic of her treats. In September of 2012, she took a leap of faith and ended her 15-year stint at AT&T to bake full-time.

Anthony Suber

Texas native Anthony Suber is a multimedia artist working and living in the South. Utilizing his love for history and art historical reference, Suber works primarily with emblematic connections, chronological references and narrative "stills". His work is also derived from his own personal experiences of religion, relationships, and stories he heard as a child. In doing so, Suber seeks to record and present a segment of the human experience that allows the viewer to participate in the compositional construct. Suber is an alumnus of The High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Houston and received his BFA in studio art from The University of Houston.



2507 Holman Street



SHANI PETERS

The Crown

The Crown is an interdisciplinary public engagement project which utilizes reference to crowns and head dresses of various African, Indigenous American, and Western cultures as a method of celebrating and exploring the concept of self-determination. The project considers the historical reconstruction overlaps of the Black American designed, Swahili influenced holiday Kwanzaa and the commonly referenced conception that Black American's African ancestors were all Kings and Queens. With a particular focus on self-determination, the work questions these useful yet flawed instances of cultural self-actualization, while pulling on their capacity motivate audiences towards purpose driven thinking and self-love in the face of hostile anti-Black Western environments.

For *The Crown's* Round 43 iteration, the project will target its focus more precisely on economic self-determination. In partnership with two small, women-owned bookstore businesses in my home communities of Harlem, NY (Blacknuss: books & other relics, Sharifa Rhodes Pitts) and Detroit, MI (DittoDitto Books, Maia Asshaq), this iteration of *The Crown* will feature the sale of merchandise from both stores and hand-printed tote bags designed especially for the Round with its conceptual intersection of economy and self-empowerment in mind.

Shani Peters

Shani Peters is a multi-disciplinary New York-based artist (b. Lansing, MI). Her practice reflects interests in community building, activism histories, new models of record keeping and popular media subversion. She completed her B.A. at Michigan State University and her M.F.A. at The City College of NY. She has exhibited/ presented work in the US and abroad, at the Schomburg Center for Black Culture and Research, The University of Michigan, at Seoul Art Space Geumcheon, and The National Gallery of Zimbabwe. She has completed residencies with LMCC Workspace, MoCADetroit, The Laundromat Project, Project Row Houses, apexart to Seoul S. Korea, LES Printshop, The Center for Book Arts and the Bronx Museum AIM Program. Peters is a 2015 Rauschenberg Foundation grant recipient.



2509 Holman Street

KAMEELAH JANAN RASHEED

Manifestos & Manuals: A Reading/Publishing/Thinking Lab

Manifestos & Manuals: A Reading/Publishing/Thinking Lab explores my interest in language systems, experimental poetry, and narratives of progress through a hybrid visual and literary art practice. *Manifestos & Manuals* sutures together a wide range of text and images from Black Enterprise magazines, EBONY magazine, The Review of Black Political Economy, the writings of both Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois, excerpts of the Freedmen Bureau's rhetoric and textbooks, Richard Nixon's Black Capitalism campaign rhetoric, academic texts such as Earl Ofari Hutchinson's *The Myth of Black Capitalism* and Marable Manning's *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* and the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System's *The Economic Potential of Black Capitalism*, signage from Black businesses and self-help literature. In juxtaposing, repurposing, and layering these texts, I am exploring both the historical and contemporary vocabularies and grammars of Black capitalisms which blend the recuperation of Black power language, elements of religious salvation ethos, and the syntactic structure of self-help messaging. Presented as an intimate, contemplative reading space, visitors are invited to patiently engage in the space. This installation will include a digital and evolving annotated bibliography of all sources included in the installation. Readers will also be able to pick up Black Capitalism workbooks and prepaid envelopes which includes prompts and activities that ask for them to be data collectors in their neighborhoods around economic markers.

Kameelah Janan Rasheed

Kameelah Janan Rasheed (b. 1985, East Palo Alto, CA) is a research-based conceptual artist, writer and educator who works in the space between visual arts and literary arts. She has exhibited at the Studio Museum in Harlem, Brooklyn Museum, Bronx Museum, Queens Museum, BRIC Art Gallery, Weeksville Heritage Museum, Smack Mellon Gallery, Vox Populi Gallery, TOPAZ Arts, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, etc. Selected residencies, fellowships and honors include: Artadia: The Fund for Art and Dialogue Grant (2015), A.I.R. Gallery Fellowship (2015), Queens Museum Jerome Emerging Artist Fellowship (2015), Process Space Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Residency (2015), Artist in the Marketplace - Bronx Museum Participant (2015), Art Matters Grantee (2014), Rema Hort Mann Foundation Grantee (2014), New Museum R&D: Choreography Seminar Participant (2014), Vermont Studio Center Residency (2014), Working Classroom Teaching Artist (2014), The Center for Book Arts Residency (2013), The Laundromat Project Fellow (2013), Visual Artist Network Exhibition Residency (2013), Center for Photography at Woodstock Residency Juror (2013), STEP UP Emerging Artist Awardee (2012) and Center for Photography at Woodstock Residency (2012). Her work has been written about in The New York Times, Art 21, Wall Street Journal, ArtSlant and Hyperallergic. Rasheed has spoken on panels and symposiums at New York University, University of Illinois, Brooklyn Museum, Queens Museum, The Museum of the City of New York, Christie's, Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Art, the Center for Book Arts, Residency Unlimited, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the Weeksville Heritage Center. Currently, she is the Arts Editor for SPOOK Magazine and a contributing editor at The New Inquiry. A 2006 Amy Biehl U.S. Fulbright Scholar to South Africa, Rasheed holds an Ed.M (2008) in Secondary Education from Stanford University as well as a BA (2006) in Public Policy and Africana Studies from Pomona College.



2511 Holman Street

NSENGA KNIGHT

Muhammad School of Language and Martial Arts

Muhammad School of Language and Martial Arts highlights bold, independent thinking by African Americans by focusing on the Black Muslim community's system and aesthetics of economic sustainability and entrepreneurship as exemplified through the creation of a temporary schoolhouse modeled after the Sister Clara Muhammad Schools system. The Sister Clara Muhammad Schools is a network of several dozen independent schools founded in the early 1930s by Black Muslims in the Nation of Islam and led by Sister Clara Muhammad, the wife of Elijah Muhammad. At a time when homeschooling was illegal, these schools were early pioneers for the homeschooling movement. Children's attendance at the schools was considered truancy and resulted in prosecutions and violent confrontations between Temple members and police in Detroit, Michigan and Chicago, Illinois. With a current network of over 75 schools around the country, the Muhammad schools are the largest private African American school system. They are attended by students from pre-K to 12th grade of all faiths and are some of the oldest Black run private primary education schools in the nation.

The Muhammad School installation includes a fully furnished and decorated classroom with a continuous looping documentary about Sister Clara Muhammad Schools during school hours and at select times, a quiet "Black Conscious Space" of prayer, meditation, and contemplation, a martial arts dojo, a library, and a workshop space.

Nsenga Knight

Knight was born and raised in the East Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York and currently resides in Durham, North Carolina. She has exhibited work at Berman Museum of Art, Smack Mellon, Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Art, Amistad Gallery at the University of Pennsylvania, the New Museum for Contemporary Art, and PS1 MoMA, among others. Forthcoming exhibitions of her work will be held at Gallery 100 in Durham, North Carolina and the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston, and the Children's Museum of Manhattan. She has held artist residencies at Elsewhere Museum in Greensboro, North Carolina, the Galveston Artist Residency in Galveston, Texas, Brandywine Workshop in Philadelphia, Film/Video Arts Center in New York, and was a BCAT/ Rotunda Gallery Multimedia Artist in Resident in Brooklyn, NY. She was most recently a recipient of the Southern Constellations Fellowship in 2014, and has also been awarded the Leeway Foundation Art and Change Grant, Finishing Funds from the Philadelphia Independent Film and Video Association, and Brooklyn Arts Council grants. Knight earned a Masters of Fine Arts degree at the University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor of Arts in Film Production at Howard University.



2513 Holman Street

CHARISSE WESTON

*The Red Book of Houston:
A Compendium of
the New Black Metropolis*

The Red Book of Houston, a reference to a book published in 1915 by the same name exploring the advancement of Black business in Houston, is a text-based installation with the intent to make visible the history, ideas, and concepts that have motivated differing yet interrelated systems of value within the Black community, with particular focus on Black American economy. This publication was compiled with use of contemporary and historical scholarship, fiction, and poetry. The impetus of this configuration is set within a contemporary lens, the core of these systems of value which have greatly influenced contemporary Black living, and question whether these systems encourage the pursuit of prosperity, as was their original intent, or power, and what difference, if any, these pursuits really mean for those who prescribe to and are directly influenced by the policies, ideologies, and misconceptions derived from them. Included in the installation are sculptures, which function both as spaces for reading and spaces for reflection on the idea of prosperity. Set within a space that mimics the calm and still atmosphere of an archive, the installation is intended to allow for meditative consumption of the publication in its entirety and also to allow space for contemplation of its contents.

Charisse Pearlina Weston

Charisse Pearlina Weston is a Houston-based, interdisciplinary artist. She holds a masters degree from the University of Edinburgh. She has performed or exhibited her work throughout Houston, including Lawndale Art Center, DiverseWorks, and Project Row Houses. She has completed residencies at Project Row Houses, Alabama Song Art Space, Sunblossom Residency, and will participate in a residency at the Vermont Studio Center in early 2016.



MARTINE SYMS IN COLLABORATION WITH DIAMOND STINGILY

Supply

Inspired by the local beauty supply shops, *Supply* is a site-specific installation that explores the politics and economics of black style. Although black women have been consistently devalued in American culture, our hair is worth billions. The beauty supply is a resource for autonomy. The industry has provided business opportunities for many women whether they are braiding their neighbor's hair or stocking their salon. Drawing a relationship between our work as artists and the creative labor of the other women who frequent these shops, the works in *Supply* are made exclusively from materials found at the beauty supply.

The cornerstone of the installation is an oversized sales flyer with the normal ad copy replaced with a poem of language fragments and found text. We want to mirror a local beauty shop with a door chime and live audio feed of their sales floor. We'd also like to develop a series of sculptures that employ shop staples such as kanekalon, knockers, scarves, and oils.

Martine Syms

Martine Syms is an artist based in Los Angeles. She is the founder of Dominica, a publishing imprint dedicated to exploring blackness in visual culture. From 2007–11, Syms directed Golden Age, a project space focused on printed matter. Her artwork has been exhibited and screened extensively, including presentations at the New Museum, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, MCA Chicago, Green Gallery, Gene Siskel Film Center, and White Flag Projects. She has lectured at Yale University, SXSW, California Institute of the Arts, University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins University, and MoMA PS1, among other venues.

Diamond A. Stingily

Diamond A. Stingily is a writer and artist from Chicago, Illinois. Her work has been exhibited at Chin's Push (Los Angeles), Queer Thoughts (New York), Galerie Hussenot (Paris) Vox Populi (Philadelphia), Egg Gallery (Chicago), and A1 (Chicago). She lives in Brooklyn, New York.



2517 Holman Street

FREDIA MITCHELL

***Gallipot Contemporary
Cooperative Apothecary***

Gallipot Contemporary Cooperative Apothecary is a modern space that carries products specific to our current health needs and interests. Inspired by a New Orleans pharmacy museum, *Gallipot* seeks to be instrumental in distributing community-made health and wellness goods. Our Apothecary is a social hub featuring warm spaces that urge one to linger and explore. *Gallipot's* interior invites conversation and informed discussion on community needs while sharing our personal wellness challenges as well as victories. *Gallipot* will host events throughout the Round that will include an Apothecary Speaker who is currently practicing in Third Ward; a sharing event where viewers are invited to come and hear the stories behind *Gallipot's* products as well as share their own health and beauty rituals; and a hands-on class teaching the application of cosmetics.

Fredia Mitchell

Fredia Mitchell is a Makeup Artist and Hairstylist with two decades of experience in the beauty industry. After completing a degree in Medical Technology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, she began working as a retail artist for MAC cosmetics in Birmingham, Alabama's Riverchase Galleria. When opportunity knocked she chose to help the company open its Houston Galleria freestanding store almost 20 years ago. Realizing, through various company freelance assignments, that she enjoyed the personal service part of the industry, she quit to go back to school to become a licensed cosmetologist in the state of Texas. Mitchell consults, freelances, teaches make-up classes, and works with various artists locally and nationally.

About Project Row Houses

Project Row Houses (PRH) is a community-based arts and culture non-profit organization in Houston's northern Third Ward, one of the city's oldest African American neighborhoods. The mission of PRH is to be the catalyst for transforming community through the celebration of art and African-American history and culture.

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