



ROUND

The Act of Doing

PRESERVING,
REVITALIZING,
AND
PROTECTING
THIRD WARD

Participating Artists

- 2505** Adelle Main — *Collaboration Timeline House*
- 2507** Marc Newsome — *I Love 3W*
- 2509** Nikita Hodge — *Tre Chic*
- 2511** Sofia Mekonnen — *For the People, By the People*
- 2513** Danielle Fanfair, Marlon Hall, Anthony Suber, and Harrison Guy —
The Poetry of Resistance: A Journey to the Middle of Gentrification's Story
- 2515** Zeinab Bakhiet, Olutomi Subulade, and Melanie Meleekah Villegas —
Right to Stay, Right to Say
- 2517** Brian Ellison — *We are Enough (Still)*

THE SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL



Gentrification is reshaping the social and physical landscape of Third Ward, threatening the future of this historic African American community. In the face of uncertainty, an unprecedented coalition of churches, nonprofits, community development corporations, business owners, artists, and residents formed the Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC). Since its founding in 2015, the EEDC has developed a rigorous set of strategies for revitalizing and protecting this historic neighborhood while preserving its rich African American culture.

The Act of Doing amplifies the questions posed by the EEDC — questions of place, displacement, ownership, and creative community organizing — while documenting its formation and early impact on the community through a timeline installation and an interactive space capturing the stories ignored in the gentrification process. While these houses are dedicated to the EEDC's journey, several installations will house a poetic exchange between local artists and the vision of the Council.

Throughout the duration of Round 47, artists, residents, and community organizers will collaborate to host a series of workshops, events, and direct actions. These events will support the EEDC in achieving its vision for Third Ward, as "a resilient, dynamic, and economically prosperous community where people live, work and thrive in a historically and culturally rich African-American neighborhood."

In conjunction with the opening of the Round, Free Market Square will organize a family friendly market with vendors and performers from the Third Ward and communities across Houston. Participating artists include Right to Stay, Right to Say (Zeinab Bakhiet, Olutomi Subulade, & Melanie Meleekah Villegas); Brian Ellison; Danielle Fanfair, Harrison Guy, Marlon Hall, & Anthony Suber; Nikita Hodge; Sofia Mekonnen; and Marc Newsome. Round 47 also features Collaboration Timeline House, designed by Adelle Main.

LANDSCAPE OF THIRD WARD

2505 🏠 Timeline House

This house provides the greatest context to the work of the Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC) by displaying a timeline of the formation of the EEDC. It highlights important moments in this uniquely positioned community-led effort to halt gentrification and preserve the history and culture of an African American neighborhood. The significant role of collaboration with universities — Texas Southern University, MIT and University of Houston; researchers — Sankofa Research Institute & Kinder Institute; and funders — Surdna Foundation, Kinder Foundation & Houston Endowment will be showcased through maps, published reports and presentations.

- Adelle Main has called Houston home for 3 years. Originally from Australia, Main currently works at the University of Houston, Community Design Resource Center alongside its dynamic director Susan Rogers. During her time in Houston, she has volunteered alongside the passionate community of Third Ward with the Emancipation Economic Development Council.

Main is passionate about sustainable community development and collaborating to create places everyone wants to live in. She has a professional background in Landscape Architecture and Urban Design with a Bachelors of Environmental Design from the University of a Western Australia and a Masters of International Urban Environmental Management from RMIT.

2507 🏠 I Love 3W

I Love 3W is an ode to the Historic Third Ward. Third Ward, a longtime epicenter of African American life, culture, commerce, and existence, has been rapidly changing due to the economic, geographical and racial population change brought on by gentrification. The installation will highlight characteristic landscapes with a photography exhibit. The ongoing show will display locations unique to the area – many of which are no longer here or have changed in appearance due to updates to the area.

In addition Newsome will be screening his 2008 award winning film 'Here Comes the Neighborhood — A Gentrification Comedy', a five minute short film which won 3rd place in a national competition sponsored by HBO. The film satirically discusses the different aspects of gentrification via taxes, real estate developers, overvalued properties and how all this affects residents of an historically African American neighborhood.

- Marc Newsome (artist name Marc Furi) is a Houston-based visual communicator with emphasis on storytelling through documentary filmmaking, photography, and satirical comedies. He is a recent recipient of the Houston Arts Alliance 2015 Individual Artist Grant for his short form documentary, "BY HAND — the Vintage Hand Painted Sign Artists of 3rd Ward". As an independent filmmaker Newsome has worked on and produced independent video projects for over fifteen years.

Newsome was the Houston finalist in the Chase Legacy Film Challenge sponsored by HBO (2008). His five-minute short comedy about the effects of gentrification on an African-American neighborhood was screened in New York at the HBO Theatre. The title of the film is "Here Comes the Neighborhood".

His photography style can be described as documental cinematic in that each of his shots appear as a scene from a movie yet they are in fact not staged and true to actual form. He enjoys taking images of structures characteristic of an area but without people around and on rainy nights so that the structure has its own personality and resonated spotlight from the reflective pavement below.

2509 🏠 Tre Chic

Tre Chic connects the vibrant creative community of Third Ward and beyond through expressions of music, art, wellness and creative commerce. With the influx of new residents and rapid expansion of the city, we must continue to support and nourish their growth and vitality. The community is now tasked with preserving the history of a place newcomers are eager to refer to as “the area formerly known as.”

In this time of change and uncertainty, it is important to have a space that showcases fearless Black visionaries who dare to follow their dreams, share their voice and create their own path. Over the past two years Tre Chic has operated as a pop-up shop that honored this mission. By embracing the beauty and character of Third Ward, Tre Chic hopes to establish itself as a shopping and entertainment destination that celebrates how far the community has come while respecting and preserving its past.

■ Nikita Hodge is an entrepreneur and the lead designer of her Houston-based jewelry line Sirod Alfre. Sirod Alfre is a collaborative effort between Nikita and her husband, visual artist Robert Hodge, consisting of hand crafted one-of-a kind and limited edition pieces. Pulling from vintage and modern influences the line pays homage to Nikita's late mother Doris (Sirod) and her husband's mother Alfredia (Alfre) while embracing Nikita and Robert's vision and creative expression. Their work has attracted a strong customer base and adorned activists, artists and entertainers across the country.

While showcasing Sirod Alfre in vendor markets, Nikita noticed a lack of representation of black creatives. In response to that void, Nikita launched Tre Chic pop up shops in 2015. Named after Houston's Historic Third Ward, Tre Chic's mission is to influence the level of engagement for black owned businesses and the Third Ward community. Through an opportunity presented by the Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC), Nikita attended University of Houston's SURE program, where she was equipped with the tools necessary to build a sustainable business that serves the needs of the community. Following graduation Nikita worked with the EEDC in successfully creating Free Market Square, a temporary entertainment and vendor market activated in Third Ward to coincide with the grand opening of the newly renovated Emancipation Park and to stimulate economic activity along the Emancipation Avenue Corridor. Taking part in this community effort further entrenched Nikita's dedication to Third Ward and establishing Tre Chic as an incubator for black businesses and a hub for creative influence.

2511 For the People, By the People

For the People, By the People is a playground of figures strategically organized to represent the individuals of the community and the members of the EEDC that come together to unify, preserve and cultivate the Third Ward. Through symbolic imagery, the work features images of model hands to express emotion, capture moments in time and give a visual narrative of a journey or the present state. Drawing on personal, political and historical references, it is created to evoke thought, foster dialog and reflect the complexity of communities. These elements present a compelling visual metaphor with a tactile approach to the layers of personal memory and cultural history that inform and heighten the experience of the audience. The concept first emerged through the artist's involvement with the EEDC's art and culture group and the creation of the Ujima House. Through that experience, the artist began to explore social evolution, moments in history and social conditioning, focusing on stereotypes and issues that affect or help communities internationally.

■ Sofia Mekonnen is an Eritrean born collage artist currently living and working in Houston, Texas. Mekonnen explores themes related to the African diaspora and the complex fusion of cultures with an emphasis on communities. She has demonstrated this through various works that she has created including "Coming to America" (2015), a collage exhibited at the Houston Museum of African American Culture (HMAAC). In it, she incorporates adornment techniques with collage media and drew inspiration from detailed aesthetics of various tribal cultures. She has also participated in projects such as Ujima House, for which she curated the interiors for and created the "One Source Many Manifestation" 32 × 48 mural collage work, currently on exhibit at the Ujima House. The mural expresses how small components of ordinary matter come together to create a structure, from which parts of the universe then come to life. This is represented by an interactive map that ties the community together through creation and growth. Mekonnen uses geometric shapes and collage to convey aesthetically a dense atmospheric look to engage with the audience.

2513 🏠 The Poetry of Resistance: A Journey to the Middle of Gentrification's Story

This installation is a collaboration of sculpture, visual poetry, choreography and mixed-media visual art that explores the essence of story. That we tell our stories is essential, and this installation explores how they are told. The essence of a story is found, not in the beginning or end, but in the middle. The story of gentrification will be told by Third Ward residents, and this installation will create a space for participants to interact with the stories from the middle.

Moving to the rhythm of our deepest truth, when poetry opens space in our stories, is a delicate dance. Where good intentions wane and detailed information is lost, we find ourselves moving and moved by the truest impact of a story.

The visual poetry of resistance is a way to open more space for healing through experiential storytelling. *The Poetry of Resistance* shares stories of how people resist gentrification in ways that move with the poetry of dance, film, and wearable sculpture.

■ Marlon F. Hall is a storyteller who uses photography, anthropology, filmmaking and writing to share stories of love, imagination and passion.

Danielle Fanfair is a writer, producer and educator who uses her expertise to support human transformation, growth and thriving in one's dreams.

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."

Harrison Guy believes that everything dances, and it is his practice to help people discover the dance that already exists within them. He works as a dancer and choreographer, creating inspirational and unique works of passion, beauty and activism that is rooted in African American culture.

2515 🏠 Right to Stay, Right to Say

Right to Stay, Right to Say is an interactive installation that seeks to capture stories, memories and perspectives often lost or ignored in the process of gentrification. The installation acts as a living space, with physical and virtual depictions of the neighborhood and community-led programming. The project begins by questioning the concept of research.

Expanding on the principles of community-based participatory research, the installation will be filled by the perspectives and desires of community residents. The installation will also house the Third Ward Comprehensive Needs Assessment. Many of the solutions to the challenges faced by a rapidly-gentrifying Third Ward are already present and at work in the community. Right to Stay, Right to Say operates with the convictions that "We are our own greatest resource," and "Third Ward is home." Above all, this is an opportunity to look inwards, to recognize and celebrate the neighborhood's inherent strengths and resources, as well as to look outwards, to anticipate and meet one another's needs.

■ Zeinab Bakhiet is a community researcher and arts and culture organizer. She relocated to Houston after too many years of enduring snowstorms and snappy attitudes on the East Coast. She advocates for an expansive and holistic view of health and wellness and is particularly passionate about working in urban communities around the country.

Olutomi Subulade is the research and administrative assistant at Sankofa Research Institute. She is a writer working on her first fiction book as well as writing fashion-based articles on her website, travisandmilam.com.

Melanie Meleekah Villegas is a community researcher at Sankofa Research Institute. She works continuously to integrate her different identities and to connect her indigenous traditions to Islam, a faith she embraced almost two decades ago. She is in recovery from Post-Gentrification Trauma (PGT). Nurtured by service, mentors and motivators, she develops her passion for transformation and renewal through the use of creative methods. She enjoys creating space for communal conversations in collaboration with organizations across Houston's Historic Third Ward.


2517 🏠 We are Enough (Still)

The people and experiences encountered on a daily basis are what mean the most. It is because of those encounters that Brian Ellison found it necessary to provide the perspective from which he experiences Third Ward: the beauty that hides in plain sight. The photographs in this installation highlight the people, buildings and lifestyles as well as the shift that takes place from day to night. The discarded, reassembled furniture found in the community embodies its strength and resilience, echoing memories of abandoned spaces.

Conversations and sounds from community members affected by gentrification will play through the room. The film included in the installation shows a young kid and his day through Third Ward watching gentrification happen in front of his eyes, all while being able to experience the richness that the community still offers.

- Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Brian “Plutolenz” Ellison moved to Houston to pursue his Masters in Counseling at Prairie View A&M University. He earned his BA in Sociology at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland in 2007.

Ellison is a photographer, philanthropist and conceptual visual artist. He believes there is no limit when it comes to self-expression and describes his brand as authentic and thought-provoking. Currently spearheading the “You are Enough Experience,” his focus is on reflection of self, rejuvenation, and bringing mental health awareness to the black community. Through his lens he strives to begin the healing process necessary to bring to light issues that are unravelling in front of our eyes.



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Round 47 is organized by Ryan N. Dennis, Curator and Programs Director, in collaboration with Dr. Assata Richards of Sankofa Research Institute.

Front: Brian Ellison, *Perseverance*, 2016

Model: Ashley Tretsven of Ms. Ashley's Dance Academy



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