The Los Angeles Poverty Department produced a festival for all Skid Row artists on Saturday December 4th, from 12 – 4 PM in Gladys Park. The ‘Festival for All Skid Row Artists’ was an afternoon of activities that identified artists in all genres who live and work on Skid Row. Neighborhood artists performed or showed their art work. LAPD collected information about the artists, to create an artists’ registry and an archive of their work. We want the world to see that Skid Row is a neighborhood that’s home to many creative people.

This festival encouraged known neighborhood artists to continue their work. It also identified and brought together arts makers who where unknown even in their own Skid Row neighborhood. All participating artists received a pair of yellow shades, with the inscription “Skid Row Artist: menacing cool” imprinted on the left temple. The ‘Festival for All Skid Row Artists’ gave a menacing-cool face to the creative community of Skid Row.

We want to raise up all creative people on Skid Row. Fill out the coupon on the back of the newspaper, turn it in at UCEPP, and get your own pair of menacing cool shades that identify you as a Skid Row artist.

Los Angeles Poverty Department would like to give a big THANK YOU! to our wonderful interns Vera, Sara, Zooey and Anne Maike and to Hayk Malhunuryan from LAMP arts project; Kevin Higa and Sign*A*Rama, Santa Monica; Xavier Estrada and his Orchestrada Audio; OG man; UCEPP; SRO Housing; LaCAN; and All Skid Row Artists who made the Festival a huge success.

We couldn’t have done this festival without these two men: Left: Xavier Estrada a.k.a X - Man, our sound engineer angel. He brought his amazing music production skills and equipment so that every artist would sound the best possible! Thank you X-Man! Right: Kevin Michael Key as the MC of the day!

Founder of the LA Poverty Department: John Malpede and his partner Henriette Brouwers hard at work to catch all artists on camera!

Thank you Joyce Lightbody for making a real pretty chalk Mandela.

Jennifer Campell is a LA Poverty Department performer and poet and she made amazing cookies for this festival.

Gary Brown, from LAMP art is standing in front of his work.

Leilani Sashae, sang. She is a magical soul singer and she gave expression to her multicultural blood using her powerfully jazzy voice.
James Porter ‘I am created to draw’

Drawing since the age of four, James can not do anything else but draw. ‘When I don’t draw, I am not me.’

But reality comes pushing through the door, and James explains it as living between two worlds; ‘The creative world, where I am happy. And the reality, the world of the conscious mind, where I have to deal with people and the daily problems.’

This is also the reason why he never uses models or draws from the image of the real landscapes. Because then you will have to use the conscious mind, and he just wants to use his creative mind. And take his art to the next level.

Standing next to his beautiful work he says proudly; ‘There is no one who draws like me, I am the best coloured pencil artist.’

Mariana Valles ‘I want to stimulate the soul’

Standing next to four of her colourful paintings, Mariana explains what she wants to send out with her art.

‘I don’t want people to see my art, I want them to feel it.’

Her goal in life is to touch people, because ‘it might effect them and maybe even make a difference.’

Jeremiah Harrell ‘Interpretation is in the eye of the person looking at it.’

After playing around with art his whole life Jeremiah says it is now time to take it more serious and hopefully eventually make a living out of it. He has already made pieces by assignment, with success. His art ranges from graffiti, to drawing, to painting, to photography. Sometimes he works together with his wife.

His pieces don’t have titles, so no interpretation is enforced upon the viewer.

Walter Welerford ‘I want to put a message into my work.’

Walter picked up art in prison because he didn’t want to waste time; ‘Art helped me practising for patience, it basically helped me doing my time’,

Then people started to tell him he had a talent and should do something with that. And so he did. Doing his time, he met some very good artists. ‘I still have to learn a lot before I am as good as those guys.’ He laughs.

Two years ago he also started to make t-shirts, by hand with brushes and fabric markers. He believes there should always be a message in his art, whether its t-shirts or drawings.

‘With a message you can reach people,’ so Walter says.

Tommy Newman a.k.a ‘cold thing’

Together with guitar player ‘Young Blood’ and bass player ‘Money’ he forms the music group ‘Faith’.

Tommy had the idea of getting a band together, and so they did, in May 2010. They are a new band, and getting better at working together every time, learning each others moves and tricks…to feel each other ‘We want to make the perfect atmosphere’

Tommy has also produced a gospel CD ‘In His Hands’. Writing, producing and singing all the music himself.

Emery Lawbos

This painter is known for painting from photographs of famous people or pictures he finds interesting for various reasons. In school he was the best of his art class, and he was even the teachers assistant. After an incident in school he was labeled as ‘the bad guy’ and went from shelter to shelter. ‘My life was taken away’ he states while painting in Gladys Park.

Now he is totally dedicated to art, as a member of the LAMP art project. Besides painting from photographs he sometimes changes to painting desolate landscapes ‘but only when I need a break from the photographs’.
Lance Walker a.k.a ‘Laugh a Lot’

This truckdriver is called ‘Laugh a Lot’ for his everlasting smile and his strength as a stand – up comedian. ‘I just want to entertain’ he says smiling. He performs everywhere; The Laugh Factory, the streets, parties. For anyone; ‘I performed for the real deal prison audience’

Besides performing as a comedian he also writes songs for others about the ‘spiritual stuff’ as he describes it.

Interesting fact: he had a role as a doorman in the “Nadine in Dateland” movie.

Donald Reece, ‘the flower man’

This fifty-two year - old drummer came from Texas in 1985. He has drummed with the “Witness of the Heart” group for over twenty years. He started making ribbon flowers for sale thirteen years ago; ‘I was tired of being a starving artist, so a friend told me how to make these.’

Donald doesn’t just make flowers, he can do anything: from paintings to leathercraft, from carving wood to making t-shirts.

Gus Komas ‘Everybody should get together and help’

Gus grew up on the streets of Chicago and spent the last twenty years living on the streets of the West Coast. He found his inspiration for his acoustic guitar music in God and his holy spirit. ‘God saved my life.’

He writes about life as he knows it. His song ‘The city of humanity’ is about the American government, ‘One Soul’ is about Skid Row.

Gus wants people to come together and help the ones that need it, because ‘It’s all about the love!’

A special thanks to the Skid Row Players who drummed through the whole festival, supporting others and making the atmosphere.

Thank you: Walter, Billy, Blue, Big Rob, Ray, Larry Doc, Cordelia

About Making a Case for Skid Row Culture

Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts, released “Making a Case for Skid Row Culture: Findings from a Collaborative Inquiry by the Los Angeles Poverty Department and the Urban Institute”. This study by John Malpede (Los Angeles Poverty Department) and Mario Rosario Jackson (Urban Institute) documents the role of arts and culture in Skid Row. The paper is available at www.artsusa.org/animatingdemocracy/pdf/reading_room/LAPD.pdf

This study found that culture comes from the ground up in Skid Row and is often initiated by residents and resident driven initiatives. This festival is undertaken to recognize these people and initiatives and to stimulate a new way of envisioning and talking about this neighborhood.

About LAPD

Los Angeles Poverty Department, founded in 1985, is made up of people who make art and live on Skid Row, Los Angeles. LAPD's mission: create work that connects experience of people living in poverty to the social forces that shape their lives and communities. LAPD makes performance, installation, movement, public art and public conversation events. LAPD makes projects that express the realities, hopes, dreams and rights of people in poverty.

The Skid Row Arts Fest is produced by LA Poverty Department with support from the California Arts Council’s Creating Public Value program. CAC’s CPV program is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.
ADD YOURSELF, SIGN UP AS A SKID ROW ARTIST

LIST OF SKID ROW ARTISTS SO FAR

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Register as a Skid Row artist.
Fill out the coupon and send to:
Los Angeles Poverty Department
PO Box 26190
Los Angeles, CA 90026

or
put the coupon in the Skid Row Artists Box at
UCEPP
800 East 6th street

email: info@lapovertydept.org
facebook: LosAngeles PovertyDept

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