



Lise Gokool and KevinMichael Key

### **Agents & Assets**

New York, NY

January 30, 31, February 1

### **Red Beard/Red Beard**

Gennevilliers, France

April 1-20

### **Round Trip**

Skid Row, LA, CA

May 19

### **Cruel, Unusual Outrages...**

downtown, LA, CA

June 13

### **La Llorona: Weeping Women of Echo Park**

Echo Park, LA, CA

June 21, 22

### **Skid Row History Museum**

Chinatown, LA, CA

June 28- August 2



LOS ANGELES POVERTY DEPARTMENT

# 2008

*Greetings,*

*Here's LA Poverty Department's newsletter to share this past year's activities and upcoming year's ambitions. We're proud to report on Red Beard/Red Beard, a challenging and rewarding residency project that took us to a Paris suburb this past summer, which looks at how to end the cycle of hurt and victimization. We're looking forward to provocative projects abroad in the future.*

*In the meantime, we're continuing our work here in Los Angeles with the creation of The Skid Row History Museum, which celebrates the rich past and present rarely-seen achievements of this community.*

*Current local projects include workshops with LAMP Community, which provides housing and lifelong supportive services for homeless men and women living with severe mental illness; and OPCC, a network of shelters and services for low-income and homeless youth, adults and families, battered women and their children and people living with mental illness.*

*Your support of LAPD is vastly appreciated as we pursue our mission to create performance work that connects lived experience to the social forces that shape the lives and communities of people living in poverty.*

*Contributions can be made by mail or on our website.*

*Again, thank you for your support.*

*Very best,  
John Malpede*



Red Beard/Red Beard cast of 40

**Red Beard/Red Beard**

In 1999 Pascal Rambert directed his play Race with Los Angeles Poverty Department in LA. As the new director of Theatre2Gennevilliers he invited John Malpede and LAPD to create a new performance for the opening year of the theatre.

From February 25 through April 20, LAPD was in residence in the Paris suburb of Gennevilliers at THEATRE 2 GENNEVILLIERS, Centre Dramatique National de Creation Contemporaine.

Directed by John Malpede, the production was a duet for the Akira Kurosawa film, Read Beard, and live performers. Along with 35 residents of Gennevilliers, five members of LAPD comprised the four casts (three French-speaking; one in English), who performed simultaneously for intimate audiences.

The film's harsh depiction of the dynamics of extreme poverty resonates today in urban America as it does in the Paris suburbs. The title character, Red Beard, is a doctor and passionate advocate for the poor people he serves. In the narrative, Red Beard teaches an arrogant young intern the true meaning of being a doctor, and to confront suffering and death. He spells out the link between physical suffering, mental anguish and privation. Red Beard says, "We try to help, but that's about all. We can only fight poverty and ignorance. And cover up what we don't know. Poverty's a political problem, they say. What has politics ever done for the poor? Has a law been passed to get rid of poverty and ignorance?"

The production explores the question: How to reverse the cycle of hurt and victimization. "The film makes me think of Simone Weil," says Malpede, "who wrote a one-line history of the world when she said something like, 'when my headaches were raging, I wanted to punch someone else in the head -just to let them know how I was feeling.' In Red Beard Kurosawa envisions a dynamic in which degradation is transformed into something positive, rather than becoming frozen as bitterness."

Performances took place from April 1 to 20, to critical acclaim, including being nominated for the the Prix du Souffleur award, given for the Best Ensemble production of the 2007-2008 season in Paris Theatre.

**a beautiful mix of cinema and theater, of life and acting, "Red Beard, Red Beard" is an artistic experience and a profound human adventure; as when on an actor's face, we fleetingly perceive the echo of Kurosawa's story." - Odile Quirot, le Nouvel Observateur**



Fabienne Mésenge as The Mantis



Ourda Essahli, Anais Boiteau-Nony, Anne Pepin, Lise Gokool and KevinMichael Key



Kamel Akli as Red Beard



Charles Porter, spoken word artist



Sunshine Mills, poet



Becky Dennison & Pete White, LACAN



Ted Hayes, Dome Village founder

## Skid Row History Museum

As the physical dimensions of Skid Row continue to shrink, as the community staves off threat of being disappeared by encroaching development, it's vital to document, preserve and honor the rich and varied history, and the real story, of this community: Poets, musicians, artists, activists and social visionaries. That's the vision behind the Skid Row History Museum.

An eventual goal of the project is to create a museum without walls, a series of public artworks (commemorative plaques installed throughout the streets of downtown) Skid Row's alternative to the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

As part of the planning process for the "Museum," an exhibition was installed at The Box Gallery on Chung King Road in Chinatown. Open from June 28 through August 2, the exhibition was co-curated by LAPD's Malpede and The Box's director Mara McCarthy. A room-sized map documented the shrinking dimensions of the neighborhood and some bankrupt public policy surrogates: (2007's: "41.18d," 1997's "sleeping zones" and 1987's "Camp Bradley"). Photos, video and text celebrated some of the amazing human and collective achievements of the neighborhood.

During the exhibition, we held a series five live events with musicians, spoken word artists, a gospel choir, and LAPD performers. Those nights also included public conversations with people who have made significant contributions to the neighborhood, and who have deep relationships with many, many community residents. The Hippie Kitchen's Jeff Dietrich and Catherine Morris, LACAN's Pete White and Becky Dennison, LAMP founder Mollie Lowery, and Dome Village founder Ted Hayes shared stories that celebrated the lives and contributions of others they hold dear. Gallery visitors were invited to contribute their knowledge and ideas for inspiring people and designs in sketch books and interviews.

This year, LA Poverty Department with the continued support of the Community Redevelopment Agency, is working to take the project to the streets of downtown, but don't look for stars in the sidewalks because while the people we'll honor are stellar, their concern for the well-being of their community means that they are exactly not about setting themselves apart from everybody else, but rather about raising everybody up together.



Church of the Nazarene Gospel Choir

**was like "Brotha, why are you sitting on the sidewalk because your talent could truly take you anywhere you wanted to be." And Sarge said "Because I was called to be here and my calling is really to document the struggles of not only the past but right now."**

**- Pete White, LA CAN**



Riccarlo Porter, LAPD



Mollie Lowery, LAMP founder



Sarah Cruse, Code Zero

# Skid Row History Museum



Clockwise: crowd at Skid Row History Museum event at The Box gallery, Catholic Worker donated shopping cart, map of Skid Row, workshop participant, Lucky Dragon performance, 4118d sign, another workshop participant, commemorative plaque prototype

“Nosotros los desheredados sentamos calladamente en el olor musgoso del gran bosque. Como yo, estas mujeres son esclavas.” Estas son las primeras palabras de la presentación, habladas por la Malinche, la princesa indígena, que había sido regalada como esclava al pueblo de Tabasco en México. Ella fue la traductora y querida de Hernan Cortés, y con él, la madre del primer Mestizo. Su dolor y la consecuencia del colonialismo todavía se sienten a lo largo de las Americas y aquí en los EE.UU. hasta hoy día.

En “La Llorona, Weeping Women of Echo Park”, obra teatral dirigida por Henriëtte Brouwers el pasado Junio y actuada en la iglesia United Methodist, las mujeres Latinas de Echo Park contaron sus historias, las historias de mujeres que tuvieron que dejar a sus hijos e hijas cuando vinieron a este país.

Algunas se convirtieron en esclavas modernas, y al igual que La Llorona, ellas vagan por el mundo buscando a sus hijos perdidos. La reciente ola de redadas por parte de las autoridades de inmigración, esta provocando otra vez la ruptura de estas familias. Los padres y madres se enfrentan a la posibilidad de ser deportados, teniendo que dejar detrás a sus hijos, nacidos en los EE.UU.

“We the disinherited sit quietly in the mossy smell of the great forest. Like me, these women are slaves.” These are the first words of the performance, spoken by the Malinche the indigenous princess, who was given away as a slave to the people of Tabasco in Mexico. She became Cortes’ translator, mistress and with him the mother of the first Mestizo. Her pain and the consequences of colonialism are still felt throughout the Americas and here in the US to this day.

In “La Llorona, Weeping Women of Echo Park”, directed by Henriëtte Brouwers and performed June 21st and 22nd, in the basement of the United Methodist Church, Latinas of Echo Park told their stories, the stories of women who have had to leave their children behind when they came to this country. Some became modern slaves and like La Llorona, the weeping woman, they wander the earth in search of their lost children. With the recent wave of immigration raids, families are again being broken up as parents are faced with the prospect of being deported and of having to leave their American born children here.

# La Llorona: Weeping Women of Echo Park



Soledad y Violeta



John Malpede



Tony Parker, Nick Gerber, John Malpede, Chas Jackson

## Round Trip

Over the spring, MOCA and the City of LA Department of Cultural Affairs asked 29 groups to participate in its retrospective of the work of performance artist Allan Kaprow by recreating several of his Happenings –Don't, Drag, Wink, Work, Pose, Fluids, Graft, to name a few—around Los Angeles. “A Happening, unlike a stage play, may occur at a supermarket, driving along a highway, under a pile of rags, and in a friend’s kitchen, either at once or sequentially... The Happening is performed according to plan but without rehearsal, audience, or repetition.”

LA Poverty Department chose to recreate Round Trip: “with a small ball made out of found material—such as paper, cardboard, or string—and begin to roll it around a city. After several blocks, the ball grows with the addition of more material and then continues rolling and accumulating material until it is too large to continue rolling. The process, then, reverses, by removing material, rolling several blocks, and removing more material until the ball no longer exists.”

LAPD’s Round Trip began with a confab over the construction of the core. In the midst of much debate, a participant named Nick Gerber came to the rescue with an ingenious, sun-like design, first traced, then cut out of cardboard and secured into roundness.

The rolling began at Gladys Park with a beachball sized “ball” which grew and grew and grew as participants took turns rolling, while others helped pull a makeshift sled carrying a supply of materials. We attracted curious and supportive audiences along the route, which went to Main Street and ended back on Sixth Street with a celebratory game of catch.



Nick Gerber

**It is art but seems closer to life.**

**-Allan Kaprow**

## Cruel, Unusual Outrages Upon Personal Dignity, Punishment and Humiliating, Degrading Treatment

LAPD Director John Malpede was one of the COLA (City of L.A.) artist fellowship awardees for 2008, and on June 13 on the Grand Performances stage John presented a solo performance for the COLA Show. “Cruel, Unusual Outrages upon Personal Dignity, Punishment and Humiliating Degrading Treatment,” was created by Malpede from excerpts of a 2006 speech by President Bush, text from a CIA interrogation training manual and a dream narrative.



John Malpede

**Agents & Assets**

in January, LAPD returned to New York City to stage this National Residency Project, which has now been performed in Los Angeles, Detroit, Cleveland, Utrecht (the Netherlands), Compton, Philadelphia, Baltimore and three boroughs of New York. The text of Agents & Assets is a March 18, 1998, transcript from the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence hearing about allegations of CIA involvement in crack cocaine trafficking into the Los Angeles area, made by journalist Gary Webb in a 1996 series of articles in the *San Jose Mercury News*. Six LAPD members were joined in the cast by eight New Yorkers -- survivors of the drug epidemic in a city where communities, families, individuals, have been decimated for decades by drug policy that has exponentially expanded the damage caused by addiction. Some of the New York cast members are clients of Housing Works, the largest grassroots AIDS service organization in the U.S. Others are in recovery in Queens and Manhattan, two of whom are now staff members of homeless and drug recovery programs. The month-long residency concluded with well-attended performances at Housing Works Bookstore Cafe on Crosby Street in Soho, a Housing Works residential complex in East New York, and St. Mary's Episcopal Church, on 126th Street in Harlem. After each show, vigorous public conversations picked up where the performance left off, inviting cast, audience and panelists to connect the dots - between cause and effect, international government actions and the day to day life of a human being. Panelists included Deborah Small, Executive Director and founder of Break the Chains, a national movement within communities of color to replace punitive drug policies with policies that treat drug use and addiction as public health issues; and Divine Pryor, Deputy Executive Director of the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions, at the Medgar Evers College of The City University of New York, where the study of the convergence of mass incarceration, mass unemployment and mass disenfranchisement of Black men and women can be conducted from the perspective of urban communities.

Cast members were empowered by the project. Cesar Figueroa, who played the role of John Lewis, is a Housing Works client and AIDS survivor. He said:

**It gave value to my point of view. I was a voice, not a statistic."**



Tony Parker, Melina Bielefeldt, Lynette Key



Cesar Figueroa



Rickey Mantley & Deborah Small



Ron Allen

LAPD visited Miguel Reynaga and the youth performance group COMPA/Teatro Trono, while planning our upcoming residency in Cochabamba, Bolivia

**What's next**

**CURRENTLY & ONGOING**

LAPD is conducting workshops with LAMP Community on Skid Row. A ground-breaking exemplary organization, LAMP provides immediate housing and life-long supportive services for homeless men and women living with severe mental illness. Through an improvisational process, we are creating performance work that will be shown on Skid Row.

**DECEMBER 20, 27, 28, 2008**

LAPD is producing an original work directed by Ron Allen: "My Eyes are the Cage in My Head." Saturday Dec. 20 at 7 p.m. at The Box Gallery, 977 Chung King Road in Chinatown; Saturday Dec. 27 at 7 p.m. at the Church of the Nazarene, Skid Row, entrance at the corner of San Pedro and 6th Street; and Sunday Dec. 28, at 6:30 p.m. at Industry Cafe & Jazz, 6039 Washington Blvd, Culver City. All performances are free.

**MAY 2, 2009**

LAPD workshops begin in January at Ocean Park Community Center, the visionary provider of housing and services for men and women in Santa Monica and on L.A.'s westside. The project will culminate in a performance presented on the outdoor stage at the 18th Street Arts Center during its May 2 Art Night event.

**SUMMER 2009**

LAPD will travel to Bolivia and mount a Spanish language production of Agents & Assets, with a combined cast of LAPDers and Boliviano community members from Teatro Libre and Abra Cadabara and Escuela de Arte y Talentos.

**YOUR SUPPORT OF LAPD IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.**

LAPD is a 501(c)3 non-profit and your donation is tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law. Mail contributions to LAPD POBox 29190, LA CA 90026. Or donate via Pay Pal at [lapovertydept.org](http://lapovertydept.org).

**THANK YOU.**



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
City of Los Angeles

