Making a Case for Skid Row Culture

Animatong 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 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 celebrate their contributions.

About LAPD

Los Angeles Poverty Department, founded in 1985, is made up of people who make art and live in Skid Row, Los Angeles. LAPD’s mission: Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) creates performances and multidisciplinary artworks that connect the experience of people living in poverty to the social forces that shape their lives and communities. LAPD’s works express the realities, hopes, dreams and rights of people who live and work in L.A.’s Skid Row.

The Festival for All Skid Row Artists was produced by LA Poverty Department with support from the California Arts Council’s Creative Public Value program and The James Irvine Foundation. CAC’s CPV program is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Get Ready for the Next Festival!

The 4th Festival for All Skid Row Artists is already planned: October (Sat & Sun) 19 & 20, 2013

Register as a Skid Row artist!

Put your name in the Skid Row Artists Box at LAPD. 800 East 6th street.

Telephone: 213.413.1077

Email: info@lapovertydept.org

You can also register and find more information at: www.lapovertydept.org

Thank you!

Los Angeles Poverty Department would like to give a big THANK YOU to: Hayk Makhmuryan, Xavier Catucha and his Orchestra, Skullie Shepper, X Ray, UCEPP, LAMP’s Fine Arts Project, SRO Housing, Alex Market, the Skid Row Playa, OG man, the Waterman, Katie Loughmiller, Matt Mayes, Laura Cherry, Gary John, Gary Lott, A2, the LAPD production team and all Skid Row artists who made the Festival a huge success.

Rain was forecasted: for Saturday Oct. 20 and the 21st, so we quickly went about our preparations for Los Angeles Poverty Department’s 3rd Annual Festival for All Skid Row Artists. X-man, Walt, Sean and X-Ray were already there and soon they had the sound system and stage in good shape. We weren’t going to let anything dampen our enthusiasm. Gary, the Gladys Park worker who has seen everything, came in a little early so that we could get started right on time. As the park decorations and creativity stations began taking shape, anticipation was building. Some of the residents wanted to volunteer but we had it covered. They were talking about how much fun they had at our last event. It was a good feeling, watching everybody chipping in to make another LAPD kind of happening in our community. This year’s Festival really filled the park and the community with a contagious spirit of cooperation.

Our Skid Row artists really showed up and showed out. They have come to recognize the importance of having this Festival in Skid Row, not only as a way for them to display their talents, but also as a means to find inspiration and to get to know new people or deepen their relationships. Again this year the Skid Row Playa formed our amazing “house band” supporting many artists on stage. Crushed up the Last Dragon and G-NUT improvised an amazing rap that got everybody on their feet during the open mike section. Jeffrey Jackson literally walked his whole drum set to the park and had us all dancing and stamping the ground with him. OG-man exhibited the whole series of paintings he made for the “Peace in the Hood” coloring book. Yarn Bombing Los Angeles brought their “Wishing Trees” and “Urban Letters” project, where people could spell out short phrases with knit letters on the fence. Many people used the creativity stations to make art right on the spot and there were many children who had a great time doing that too! Twin Skid Row - who performed another amazing text by the way! - brought his son Ali to the stage and was happy being a father and watch his son paint. We saw Black Onyx have an impromptu audition right there in the park. Artists and friends recorded their performances and Skid Row Photography Club members, TeleMundo and students from Biola University and USC came to report about the festival. This year, with the help of Alex Market, we were able to give lunch bags and T-shirts to all the performers. Linda and Celestine signed up new 65 artists for our Skid Row Artist registry, which now counts more than 450 artists living in Skid Row. We filmed and photographed all artworks and performances and will make a DVD with highlights. Jennifer and Solrah interviewed most artists and you can read some of those interviews in the following pages.

Skid Row’s artists and talents carried the ball and UCEPP - LAMP’s Fine Arts Program - SRO Housing - Orchestra Audio - AMITY Foundation - The Weingart - Alex Market - OS’s Service - DLANC - the Office of Jose Huizar - Central City Community Church of The Nanazene - Esther Taylor and artists from outside Skid Row, like, Paul McCarthy and the Wicked Saints’ and Mark Phillips, found ways to contribute to make this Festival unforgettable. The Festival even attracted some people from other parts of DownTown who were happy to have discovered the talents of Skid Row. The home team hit a home run. And, oh yeah, it never rained that whole weekend.

3rd Annual Festival for Skid Row Artists

October 20th & 21st, 2012

Charles Porter and Derrick Cooney perform at the 3rd Annual Festival for Skid Row Artists.
**MEET THE ARTISTS**

**Big Rob & the Skid Row Playaz**

LAPD: Can you tell us a bit about the Obama song you just performed?

BR: Well we used to get together in the evenings to play drums and we were talking about the brother becoming the president and feeling proud about it and just started singing about it and the lyrics just came together like a puzzle.

**Charles Porter & the UCEPP Youth**

LAPD: Can you introduce the band that you just performed with? Is this part of the Teens Program at UCEPP?

CP: Yes, I work at United Coalition East Prevention Project, and we have a youth leadership development program and so some of our young leaders came out today. Not everybody performs music or dance, some write poetry and make visual art and they also came out today to support the program. Every year we try to participate in the Festival, today we did some hip-hop pieces and I encouraged them to use their creativity to send a message. The work we did today has messages about different themes, such as community, responsibility and accountability. I want to let them know that as a leader, you develop your own unique strengths and talents and you use them to impact the community and try to change what you don't like in our community. But also everyone has their unique talents and ability and you need to do what you're supposed to be doing and that helps other people.

**Patti Berman - Singer**

LAPD: Patti, how long have you been singing?

PB: 53 years.

LAPD: Patti thanks so much for coming out and for that beautiful song, "Cabaret"!

PB: Isn't that a great song?! Even though the story is so sad, it makes you feel so good. I was on the road for 17 years with my own band. My first band was The Closer Ties, and then it was Patti and Frank and then Girlfriends. Musicians are very fickle. Unfortunately Franck had a problem with alcohol and we didn't last all that long because of it, but I've been doing this since I was twelve.

**RS: I have been homeless all my life. I was raised in the foster care system, and I came down here when I was 16. Been coming back and forth. I'm 43 now, and turn 44 in February. I write gospel songs. My first book is coming out, it not by the end of this year, early next year.**

**Unkal Bean - Hip Hop Artist**

**What did you think of the festival?**

“I love this. This is my second time. It gives you something to do to occupy your mind. To show that even though people are homeless there still is a lot of talent down here. That they are not people who just came out of nowhere. I’ve been on the streets since I was 12 years old, and I’m still alive. I think I did pretty good, I put myself in high school.” — Carol Shelly

“Ts nice, nice rappers and I’m like, WOW, you know what I’m saying? I got to compete with them! I really enjoyed how the whole festival is going.” — Derrick Cosney

“It’s a very positive thing for the neighborhood, it’s an outlet here...you get to come and socialize and express yourself. For this to be here, it gives a chance to come out here and do something other than the things they do everyday.” — Reggie Wilson

“This is my second year and I think its fantastic, it’s fabulous, the works that come down here. It’s permitted. You’re on display, it’s absolutely wonderful!” — Mark Philips

**Frazes’ Belting Pot & Gospel Choir**

**What tribulations and jail, prisons, probation, parole, have a chance.**

**It’s over with, do not give up because you still matter how bad it gets, even when it seems like you lost everything on the way here. But luckily the**

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**Twin Skid Row & his son Ali - Poet**

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**UB: We all make decisions, and based on our decisions we have to live with the consequences behind them. So make more conscious decisions. So us as a collective need to make more responsible decisions and the individuals also need to make more responsible decisions.**