

Skid Row History Museum

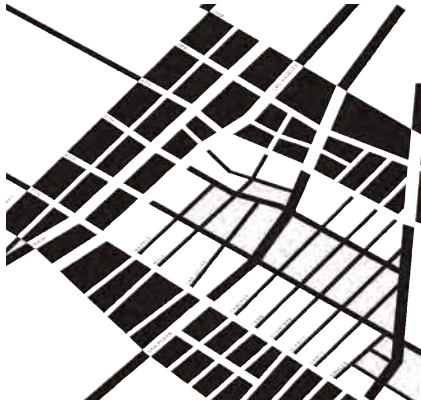
@ The Box Gallery

June 28 - August 2, 2008

This “museum” is temporary and is a planning phase for a permanent “museum” in the form of a series of public artworks that would acknowledge the cultural contribution to the city of people who have lived and worked in Skid Row LA, and recognize the history and shifting contours of the area.

non-profit efforts. Largely underappreciated is the extent to which the visionary efforts have been the work of community members. Without the civic engagement of citizens of Skid Row, the housing stock would not have been preserved, the people and social services would have been dispersed and the Safe Haven recovery community would not exist.

Recognizing that the contours of the Skid Row and downtown Los Angeles have always been dynamic, the museum will include history and events outside the recognizable boundaries of Skid Row today—and illuminate the social dynamics and public policies that have and continue to shape the area and public perception of the area.



Skid Row is an amazing place with amazing community assets. Skid Row LA has the largest concentration of the most affordable housing in Los Angeles County. Skid Row has the largest concentration and most comprehensive set of services for homeless people in the county. Skid Row is the biggest recovery culture anywhere. Skid Row’s highly developed drug recovery consciousness includes free recovery programs and numerous AA, NA and CA groups. In short, the community has long been a generative site for visionary answers to social problems.

This show “Skid Row History Museum” is meant to highlight the cultural, civic and political initiatives and the community people who made them. This “museum show” is a dynamic process. During the course of the show we want to hear of additional people and initiatives. During events connected with the show and in the gallery there is space for you, the public, to contribute your knowledge of special people and initiatives.

Eventually the “museum” will be housed out of doors as a series of public artworks and plaques commemorating people in the places where they lived and worked. We invite you to suggest people and designs for these plaques. At the moment we are thinking of something like an alternative to a “walk of fame” because while these people are stars, 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. Enjoy the show and help us figure all this out.

These visionary initiatives have come about through individual and collective concern by community members and moments of enlightened public policy and visionary

-John Malpede
Director, LAPD

LAPD’s “Skid Row History Museum” will be installed at The Box Gallery, 977 Chung King Road, (one block west of Hill) in Chinatown, from June 28 to August 2, 2008, open Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 6 pm. The show is open and FREE to all.



FRONT ROOM MAP

The floor map reflects the changing contours of Skid Row. Concrete and black blocks together represent Skid Row in 1980. Concrete blocks constitute today's Skid Row neighborhood, with black blocks appropriated or claimed by recently invented or expanding neighborhoods.

Follow lines from map to other places in the gallery for more information about displaced and still intact community assets. Striped lines represent community assets relocated to the consolidated area.

4118 D SIGNS

This law, enacted in 1968 to disappear Hippies from Hollywood Boulevard, has been periodically dusted off and utilized to harass, displace, arrest and or separate homeless people from their belongings. Every time it's been dusted off, it's gotten itself in trouble with the law: the Courts and the Constitution of the United States.

In September 2006, Judge Kim Wardlaw of the 9th District Court of Appeals wrote that the LAPD cannot arrest people for sitting, lying or sleeping on public sidewalks in Skid Row as such enforcement would amount to cruel and unusual punishment because there are not enough shelter beds, and Judge Wardlaw concluded that prohibiting homeless people from sleeping on the streets was a violation of the 8th Amendment which bars cruel and unusual punishment. The judge told LAPD and the City to reach a settlement with the ACLU. LA City Council put off settlement for a full year, reasoning they could continue to enforce 41.18d until a settlement was reached.

Nevertheless its proponents have trotted it out again and again, each time tweaking it, in hopes of making it constitutional. It hasn't happened yet. A number of these failed attempts are documented in this show. They stand in counterpoint to the rest of the show which celebrates effective policies and individual and group initiatives.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

A big wall including only some of the many, many people and initiatives creating community on Skid Row and Skid Row adjacent real estate. In April 2007 Los Angeles Poverty Department initiated its UTOPIA/dystopia project, seeking to find out how flesh and blood people living and working downtown envision the future of downtown and what kind of downtown they would like to be a part of.

This instead of being told what people want by newspapers, political leaders and developers.

We initiated a community conversation strategy conceived by UTOPIA/dystopia collaborating artist Harrell Fletcher. LAPD'ers and others were asked to identify and invite someone they knew who was doing something laudable, and important, something that represents the best of the current and future downtown. This meant we had a bunch of people each selecting people whose spirit they valued. It was a democratizing and randomizing strategy. It worked so well, that we ended up doing 5 such events, which eventually included 37 people. People invited to speak at one event often ended up selecting someone for the next event. So, the collective vision spiraled outward. In the back room we have dvds of these "37 Glimpses of Utopia" events.

The photos on the wall include those 37 people—and a few others—who were invited and couldn't make it, or should've, would've been invited if we'd had one more such event. This is in keeping with the spirit of this show which is to keep finding and highlighting more community people and their work.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Audio of General Dogon of LA Community Action Network (LA CAN), informing community members of their civil rights. Dogon wrote and performed this text in Los Angeles Poverty Department's "Utopia/ dystopia performance at REDCAT Theater, December 2007.

SIDEWALK OUTSIDE DESIGNATED SLEEPING ZONE

Another example of the resurgence of the 41.18d mentality. In 1997, in an effort to make 41.18d legal, certain areas were designated as "sleeping zones." If you slept there—and disappeared by 6 am—the promise was that you would avoid police harassment and possible arrest.

Jim Hahn was LA City Attorney from 1985 to 2001 and he consistently refused to prosecute the homeless for sleeping outside unless the City provided them with an alternative. Hahn's principled and reasonable stand had a number of unintended consequences that included not only 1997's "designated sleeping zones," but also the infamous "Urban Campground" opened by Mayor Tom Bradley in 1987, on a dusty lot at 4th and Santa Fe, by the LA River. More on the Urban Campground, in the timeline and resource table located in the back room of the gallery.

BACK ROOM TIMELINE

The timeline references significant events in the history of the Skid Row neighborhood, and a few written artifacts accompany the timeline. More artifacts and extensive written materials on the events in the timeline are to be found in the notebooks on the resource table.

COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES

Here are 3 possible designs for commemorative plaques honoring people and initiatives in Skid Row. The 3 represented in these mock-ups are all worthy honorees – but at this point they are only possible honorees. Each, in his or her own way, contributed to important advances in the neighborhood: decent housing, recovery and community empowerment. We don't know how many initiatives and people will be honored or who they will be. We don't know what the design will be either. We want your ideas on people and initiatives and on the design.

IT'S LATER THAN YOU THINK

This is a recreation of the television at Another Planet, an outdoor community arts center started at a former gas station by Clyde Casey, (pictured, at right) at the southeast corner of Wall and Boyd Streets on April 15, 1988. Another Planet burnt down a little over a year later, in the summer of 1989. Also recreated from Another Planet, is the suspended planet being watched over by a cupped hand. Much more on Another Planet is in the notebooks on the resource table. In keeping with the futuristic spirit of Another Planet, the "It's later than you think." monitor features images and text on many more possible commemorative plaque honorees.

A second video monitor features the people whose faces are in the front room: talking about their work on Skid Row during LA Poverty Department's "37 Glimpses of Utopia" events of last fall.

The third monitor screens videos of community and social initiatives, including the work of Alexander the Poet a member of the Homeless Writer's Coalition and LA Poverty Department, Becky Dennison talking about the Downtown Women's Action Coalition, Scott Chamberlin and Tim Peters of Church of the Nazarene and Central City Community Outreach, O.G. Man talking about his initiatives Father's Day in the Park and his children's coloring book "Peace 'N the Hood," historical murals from inside Gravy Joe's; Geoffrey Gilbert-Hammerling, former Associate Director of SRO Housing Inc, talking about the history of Skid Row and Gary Glaser's documentary on Justiceville and its founder Ted Hayes.

PULL UP A CHAIR

The resource table is there for two reasons: to give you more information and to activate you to throw in your own two cents (and gazillion bucks) worth of ideas for plaque designs and worthy recipients. The resource table includes in-depth written material on the history of Skid Row and on initiatives featured in the show and other equally worthy Skid Row initiatives. There are artifacts in the form of fliers, notes, etc. Other books on the resource table include a book of shapes and examples of other commemorative plaques from other places. The large book is for you to write and draw your



BASEMENT

Objects refer to 3 significant political actions (that also qualify as ingenious art actions) by activists on Skid Row.

FREE SHOPPING CARTS

Periodically the LA Police Department has made life difficult for people by claiming that their shopping carts were "stolen property." The Catholic Worker bought shopping carts and gives them away to people who want them.

On video, Jeff Dietrich from The Catholic Worker describes this action and the Catholic Worker's work on Skid Row.

FREE SPEECH TENT

David Busch, long-time homeless activist and sometime writer for "Making Change," the homeless newspaper based in Santa Monica, put up a tent on Towne Street that had a sign affixed to it protesting the police sweep of people living on the street. When he was told to move his tent or face arrest, he refused on the grounds that removing it would violate his 1st Amendment right to free speech. (The resource table upstairs includes Rickey C. Mantley's "Towne Street Incident," a fictionalized account of David's tent action. Rickey Mantley is a former editor of "Making Change" and a long-time LA Poverty Department member).

On video David Busch speaks with LA Poverty Department in 2002 about another of his 1st Amendment actions, this one at the Getty Museum.

RESIDENTIAL HOTEL

Veronica Doleman of LA Community Action Network (LA CAN) made a model of an affordable hotel and its happy tenants. The hotel made a statement about the need for an ordinance to preserve affordable residential hotel stock, in a time of "adaptive re-use." Veronica's hotel model was one of LA CAN's contributions to the monthly Downtown Art Walk. Largely through LA CAN's ability to bring together hotel tenants to advocate for their own interests, the LA City Council recently enacted legislation to permanently preserve the affordable hotel stock.

On video Veronica, Steve Diaz and other LA CAN members talk of their efforts to prevent the displacement of the long time resident community of downtown.

BEANS

Beans slowly, super slowly cooking at the Catholic Worker's Hippie Kitchen.



OPENING RECEPTION

JUNE 28, Saturday, 6 – 9pm | @ The Box Gallery

Live From Skid Row: Jeff Dietrich and Catherine Morris of the Catholic Worker and the Hippie Kitchen remember remarkable people and initiatives. Music from S.S. Jones, Oscar Harvey. Performances by Ibrahim Saba and Kevin Michael Key. Food & drinks.

PERFORMANCE & PUBLIC CONVERSATION

JULY 18, Friday, 6 – 9pm | @ Lamp Community Art Project Gallery

452 S. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013

Live From Skid Row: Pete White and Becky Dennison of LA Community Action Network (LACAN) remember remarkable people and initiatives. Music from Weba Garretson and Ralph Gorodetsky. Performance by Dr. Mongo, Michelle Autry and Sunshine Mills. Food & drinks.

WORKSHOP

JULY 25, Friday, 2 – 6pm | @ The Box Gallery

Live From Skid Row: Workshop for Skid Row residents from Lamp Community and the Downtown Women’s Center. Food & drinks.

PERFORMANCE & PUBLIC CONVERSATION

JULY 26, Saturday, 6 – 9pm | @ The Box Gallery

Live From Skid Row: Mollie Lowery, founder and first executive director of Lamp Community remembers remarkable people and initiatives. Music from Code Zero. Performance by Tony Parker and Charles Porter. Food & drinks.

CLOSING RECEPTION

AUGUST 2, Saturday, 6 – 9pm | @ The Box Gallery

Live From Skid Row: Ted Hayes, founder of Dome Village remembers remarkable people and initiatives. Music from Ron Taylor, Lucky Dragon, Church of the Nazarene Gospel Choir. Performance by Riccarlo Porter. Food & drinks.

EVENTS

are
FREE
and
OPEN
to
the
PUBLIC

This exhibition has been co-curated by John Malpede and Mara McCarthy, with help from the curatorial team of Henriette Brouwers, Pamela Miller-Macias, Roman Jaster, Kevin Michael Key. Head of installation, Hilary Graves. Graphic design, Roman Jaster. With contributions from Harrell Fletcher, Marina Peterson and Susan Gray. Newspaper by Pamela Miller-Macias.

Special thanks to Nicolas Gerber; Charles Jackson; Veronica Doleman and LA CAN; Jeff Dietrich, Catherine Morris and LA Catholic Worker; Alice Callahan; Clyde Casey; S.S. Jones; Moira LaMountain and Making Change Newspaper; Rickey Mantley; Steve Diaz; Ted Hayes and Justiceville/Homeless USA; Leslie Mejia, Monica Martinez and The Downtown Women’s Center.

**about
Los Angeles
Poverty Department**

LAPD’s mission is to create performance work that connects lived experience to the social forces that shape the lives and communities of people living in poverty. Founded in 1985 by artistic director John Malpede, LAPD is committed to creating high-quality, challenging performance works that express the realities, hopes and dreams of people who live and work on Los Angeles’ Skid Row.

**about
The Box Gallery**

The Box gallery opened on June 9, 2007 with an inaugural installation by Spandau Parks. The Box is an alternative gallery, incorporating the voice of the artist and the public. The Box aims to push the concept of an art gallery, viewing it as a place of thought and education.

**about
Community Redevelopment Agency**

CRA/LA (www.crala.org), a public agency, is regulated by the State of California and operates within the City of Los Angeles. It attracts private investment into economically depressed communities to eliminate blight, revitalize older neighborhoods, build housing for all income levels and create and retain employment opportunities. CRA/LA manages 32 redevelopment projects areas and three revitalization areas in seven regions: East Valley, West Valley, Hollywood & Central, Downtown, Eastside, South Los Angeles and the Harbor.

