Featuring the work of
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Unfurlings
Explorations in art, activism, and archiving

A Never The Same project

in the form of
1 panel,
1 exhibition,
2 seminars,
2 symposia,
2 summits,
10 show-and-tells
Never The Same is a curatorial and educational project organized around three thematic inquiries: Grassroots Archiving, Local Art History, and Social Movement Culture.

A project of the Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago.

Edited by Daniel Tucker and Rebecca Zorach

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Prologue
Lisa Yun Lee

Unfurling, the exhilarating project documented in these images and texts, is the visual reminder to us that history does not privilege one discourse over another, nor does it prefer intellection and analysis to affect, performative outburst, or ritual action. Hair-braiding, song, mapping, printmaking, and storytelling hold as much sway and influence in building a movement for social change as any other forms of protest and resistance.

The most recent census statistically affirmed the sad reality that Chicago remains the most racially segregated city in the country. Mess Hall, the now-defunct and legendary experimental cultural center that was located in Rogers Park at 6932 N. Glenwood Ave., and the Washington Park Arts Incubator, the recently opened space located at 301 E. Garfield Blvd., have different styles and complexions. The photographs presented in this book foreground rather than erase their differences. There is no effort to hide either homogeneity or heterogeneity where it exists. This honesty allows us to recognize the profound solidarity between people and histories connected and united through creative efforts to build a collective future.

As an archival project, Never The Same, the organizer of the year-long series of projects that constitute Unfurling, goes against the grain. Archives are mostly understood as a means of conserving and making sense of the past. At times, the act of organizing, categorizing and cataloguing material objects, documents, and the ephemera of history can make what was dynamic and volatile more linear and safe. It is no accident that archives have been consistently controlled by the state, and are used so often as a nation and empire’s arm of power and control.

However, in this project of local, alternative, and subcultural archiving efforts, one senses an irrepressible utopian desire, an impulse towards the future, and an allowance for the personal, messy, and precarious nature of making history and making art. The philosopher and cultural critic Boris Groys makes a valuable distinction between the relationship that politics and art have to temporality in the illuminating essay “Art Workers: Between Utopia and the Archive.” Politics understands the future as a result of actions that take place now. Political action as a practice shapes the future, but it disappears through the future. In this way, the goal of politics is to make its own actions obsolete. Art, in contrast, desires to remain ever-present; always gesturing to the future, which is precisely what guarantees its influence. Groys concisely sums up the tension in this way: “Politics shapes the future by its own disappearance. Art shapes the future by its own prolonged presence. This creates a gap between art and politics.” The aspiration of Never The Same to expand the archive of ephemera, documenting the past five decades of socially and politically engaged art in Chicago disrupts both the notion of political obsolescence and artistic resistance to containment. It is within this gap that the possibility rests for the archive to serve as a critical instrument for emancipatory, experimental artistic and intellectual work.

This book documents politically engaged art events, providing us with a connection to—and an experience of—gatherings, happenings, and convenings that exceed the boundaries of their temporal and spatial occurrences. The work of these unfurlings propels us into the future even as they document the past. In this way, the images fulfill the literal and metaphorical promise of the utopian. Unlike the instrumentalization of “utopia” in common parlance, where the word refers to idealistic wished fantasies, the utopian that one encounters in Unfurling resonates more with the literal and etymological roots from the Greek: οὐ (“not”) and τόπος (“place”)—or “no place.” This represents the promise of a future not yet realized and the aspirations of a constantly unfolding, unfurling, social struggle, or what might most concisely be summed up in the civil rights activist Ella Baker’s famous quote: “The struggle is eternal. The tribe increases. Somebody else carries on.”
The goal of this project is to document Chicago’s rich art history and develop a language for discussing the impact of socially and politically engaged art practices that integrates consideration of external with internal transformation and effects.

In the fall of 2010, we began discussing the project as part of a roundtable discussion about archiving Chicago activist art held at the Experimental Station in Woodlawn. One year later, Never The Same had posted its first ten interviews online at never-the-same.org. The first round of interviews included Kelan Phil Cohran, Jorge Felix, Emily Forman and Josh MacPhee, Dara Greenwald, Aaron Hughes, Jae and Wadsworth Jarrell, Mary Jane Jacob, Ladyfest Midwest, Patric McCoy, and Christina Obregón and Jose David (Calles Y Sueños).

In the fall of 2012, we posted interviews with 10 more Chicago artists and organizers, along with the city-wide interview project 5 Questions About Socially Engaged Art in Chicago and updated resource listings. The second round of interviews included Barbara Jones Hogu, Estelle Carol, Joanna Brown, and Mark Freitas (Homocore Chicago), Laura Shaeffer, Nicole Garneau, Fémon Rami, Penelope Rosemont, Salome Chasnoff, Terri Kapsalis, and Turtel Onli.

From early 2013 until early 2014 Never The Same expanded beyond its original archiving and oral history work through a series of public programs that established a curatorial and pedagogical dimension for the project. This expansion of programs was developed with the support of a Mellon Fellowship from the Gray Center at the University of Chicago. Areas of focus included public programs (a series of show-and-tell events called Unfurlings, panel, symposia and summits); curriculum (a spring course at UIC utilizing the NTS interviews as readings, a summer seminar at the University of Chicago in the month of July, and a winter seminar at the Newberry Library in February); and an exhibition of commissioned art works developed by local artists in response to materials in the NTS archive, interviews, and programs.
Throughout the year NTS made a concerted effort to connect with teachers who could experiment with integrating our materials into their courses. In the spring, Abigail Satinsky and Faheem Majeed co-taught a course called “Introduction to Socially Engaged Art: Social Practice” at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), the first of its kind offered at the largest public art school in the city. In the summer, Additionally, Marta Equi Pierazzini’s traveling course from the ASK center (Art, Science, Knowledge) at Bocconi University in Milan visited with NTS, and in the fall Nancy Bothne’s Peace Studies course from DePaul University, and several of Maria Gaspar’s courses from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago came to the exhibition.

Rebecca Zorach (RZ): Maybe just start with some basics—which interviews did you teach, what did you find pedagogically useful about them, how did the students respond?

Abigail Satinsky (AS): We asked the students to pick a name without having any previous knowledge of the person and come up with a 5-10 minute powerpoint, explaining the work of the person interviewed, to present to the class. We explained to them that there might not be a lot on this person online, seeing as how the spirit of Never the Same is to represent what has gone underrepresented in the past and to capture history that is often not publicly recorded. We also talked about the fact that a lot of socially engaged art is about storytelling for those that were not part of the original event or group and that they were re-interpreting the story told by the interviewee again for our class and to try to get as best they could at the core of what happened and what kinds of people engaged with or participated in the projects. The students responded really enthusiastically in their presentations. None of them (save one) were art students, so they really understood that most of the interviewees were connected to all sorts of communities/histories and that it wasn't only about art per se.

The interviews chosen were Christina Obregon + Jose David, Aaron Hughes, Estelle Carol, Joanna Brown/Mark Freitas, Jorge Felix,
Kelan Phil Cohran, Mary Jane Jacob, Nicole Garneau, Pemon Rami, Ladyfest Midwest, Turtel Onli, and Salome Chasnoff.

RZ: So out of curiosity—if they weren’t art students, what was their background? I’m wondering in terms of what (in general) they were seeking from your class, and getting out of it, and how the interviews intersected with that.

Faheem Majeed (FM): The course counted as a required general education course. We had a mix of different majors: Industrial Design, Art History, Women and Gender Studies. Many of them expressed an interest in moving around the city and hands on activity.

Here is the course description:

The Introduction to Socially Engaged Art: Social Practice course engages students in the burgeoning field of socially engaged art practices that makes artistic and creative expression more accessible and open to students across campus. The course introduces the concept of socially engaged art, a practice that blurs the line between art and life, emphasizing participation, dialogue, and action. Includes field visits and dialogue with artists. Students design and realize a public art project. Field trips required at a nominal fee. No previous art and studio experience is necessary for this class. Field trips to Hull House, Dorchester Projects and Rebuild Foundation, Threewalls, Hyde Park Art Center, Experimental Station, and South Side Community Art Center, are all site-specific resources for this course. Students will visit at least two of these sites as part of their analysis and exploration of socially engaged art practices. http://sociallyengagedart.tumblr.com/

I also recently had my “Clutter to Collections” Museum Studies course do their own unfurlings after a visit to the exhibition.

Daniel Tucker (DT): When doing Unfurlings, what did you provide as the prompt for them to respond to? Was there a framework of what could be shared or not shared within the Unfurling? How did the format work? Is it any different than doing a show-and-tell in grade school?

FM: I was pretty flexible in my framework. We have only had half the class do their presentations so far. Many of them brought in items that mapped their personal history. One student brought in objects that spoke to her thesis on jewelry made from hair. One of my students thought it was also therapeutic. Here is the description of the unfurling assignment:

Unfurling un•furl—to spread or open (something) out or become spread or opened out.

Never The Same uses the definition of “Unfurl” as its base for presenting their archive materials and making them more accessible and participatory to various audiences. Unfurlings often involve laying objects out on a blanket and talking about the historic, grounded, or random connections among them. Audiences are invited to be participants by touching and handling the objects and asking questions.

Using Never The Same’s model of the “unfurling” you will arrange a small collection/archive that you will present to the class. Your unfurling should consist of 10–20 items that you should be able to explain and connect to a common thread/story/history. Presentations should be and discussion will be 15 minutes.

DT: One question that occurs to me in thinking about the premise of teaching these interviews and going on the field trips you selected for the students, is about your experience in teaching local art histories, and how those resonate with students. I believe you also shared non-local examples of socially engaged art with them. Did they simply complement one another, or did you notice a different engagement with the local vs non-local examples? I am really trying to understand what is the value of teaching the “stories” as you described it, of local arts that might be different than more geographically distant narratives?

RZ: I think it would be great to reflect on this, especially since in my experience working with Art History graduate students, the local histories are almost invariably considered somehow “lesser” compared with New York, Europe, China, etc. Few of these students are from Chicago, which would probably be a bit different from the population of your class. But with undergrads in general I find there’s often a lot more openness about learning about the history of the place where they live (even if they’re not from here) and I wonder how to bridge that gap.

AS: For our students, the fact that this was local made it a lot more accessible to them. Since most were relatively unfamiliar with contemporary art and art history, and all expressed in the beginning of the class that they really just wanted to learn more about what was going on in Chicago, the fact this was all unknown local history was particularly exciting. I think
that they also would be a little skeptical (rightly so sometimes) of some contemporary art/socially engaged projects and a lot of time they were looking more for projects that enacted some kind of recognizable social good. While I don’t think that all the projects in the NTS archive fill that criteria, the local-ness of it made them look at it more closely, by which I think I mean it was less abstract to them.

And as you said, Rebecca, and maybe it did have to do with their age/undergraduate status, but they didn’t seem interested in looking elsewhere for validation (other major centers for culture). I don’t know how to bridge that gap either. It may be just that ambitious graduate students often are looking to plug into the mainframe whereas undergrads see their career paths as much less clear and are therefore exploring all the options.
5.

6/2: Unfurling #2
Jayne Hileman and Sarah Jane Rhee

Sunday, June 2, 2PM
at Art In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave.
in conjunction with the Ocupados and Occupations exhibition
Making Usable Archives
Rebecca Zorach

In our June symposium we invited a few speakers to help us think through the question of the grassroots, “usable” archive. This text is a version of my introduction to the symposium events, revised in light of conversations with our invited speakers, in particular Chaitra Powell of the Mayme A. Clayton Library and Museum in Culver City, California, a collection of African-American historical materials originally spearheaded by a single individual; Karen Stanworth of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA) in Toronto, Canada, which is the largest community-based queer archives in the world; and Josh MacPhee, co-founder of the Interference Archive, in Brooklyn, New York, a public collection of cultural materials produced by social movements.

Why grassroots archives? Or independent or community-based archives? Along with its series of interviews, Never The Same gathers, organizes, and makes available a collection of ephemera relating to socially and politically engaged art practices in Chicago over the past fifty years. These include flyers, posters, postcards, letters, booklets, zines, newsletters, “giveaway” art multiples, CDs, DVDs, related reference books, magazines, and catalogues. Originally these came from our personal collections, but the collection has expanded through donations from interviewees and friends of the project. This year of residency at the Gray Center has given us many opportunities to discuss the shared assumptions (and divergences) within NTS and in the broader contexts in which it operates.

The items in our collection have much in common with types of materials also held by institutional archives. So why should holders of such materials not just take advantage of the formalized practices of preservation and access that exist in major institutions? Or, if we do constitute Never The Same as an independent archive, should we one day donate it to a larger institution? If not, what kind of assurances of stability can we give donors? Does that matter? If we’re forced to dissolve the physical collection someday, what happens to it?

At some point in the past, the kinds of materials we’ve been archiving might not have been of interest to large institutional archives or they might not have been well treated in them. Increasingly, though, this isn’t an issue. We find librarians and archivists who are themselves politically progressive and welcome such materials. But even when institutional
archives have policies that emphasize access, this fact is not always apparent to outsiders. And sometimes ease of access, and interest in these types of materials, depends on personal connections with particular staff members who might leave, or whose positions might be eliminated. We hesitate to rely on those personal connections when there are larger institutional logics at work.

One reason to maintain independence is that it allows us to articulate a set of political assumptions and, potentially, political goals for our collection. Archives evolved originally as the storage place for government documents—and later the files of other kinds of institutions—once they were no longer in active use. National and institutional archives came to accept other materials considered to be of importance and relevance. This wasn't unpolitical, of course, but was (and is) presented with a veneer of objective comprehensiveness.

Community-based, independent, and grassroots archives, on the other hand, have no need or desire for this traditionally maintained sense of neutrality. Some are political by virtue of constituting a body of material based on the shared experience of oppression, or documentation of groups, individuals, and movements rendered invisible by standard histories. Some have very explicit political goals.

This raises a kind of existential question about what an archive is. Generally, materials that get archived teeter on the edge of usefulness and uselessness. They get archived when they outlive their usefulness—when they're OK to put away, or give away, but not to throw out. We tend to think of the resulting body of items preserved in archives as being useful for the writing of history—which isn't to say that's not important—but not much else. In the case of grassroots archives they could form the groundwork for writing corrective or activist or autonomous histories. But what of activist archives with specific political goals in mind? Or artist archives—not necessarily art project as archive, but archives as material of art?

Over the course of many discussions it became clear to us that it was important for Never The Same that this project be useful as an archive to present and future artists and activists doing the kinds of work our project documents. It needed to be a living archive. The community, independent, grassroots archives we admire most are living archives with an expansive sense of the ongoing usability of their materials—their artistic and political generativity. But how do you keep that generativity going? How do you make materials available in usable ways while still preserving them—or do you just not preserve them, thereby violating (to the potential dismay of professional archivists) standard archival practices? And if usefulness is a criterion, is there some point at which you might decide they are not useful anymore?

Independent archives also have some particular challenges. There are practical organizational issues that have to do with scale: a smaller archive can make connections among related materials that a bigger archive might not be able to make as easily. (Our cataloging process has emphasized this, using categories that have the potential to hyperlink materials.) For artists and activists, under what circumstances do you decide that your time is better spent archiving than making art or organizing? With funds tight, you always have to keep deciding to keep going—how do you make those decisions? How often do you revise your scope, rethink what you are willing to accept and what to go after? How do you not spend all your time fundraising?

NTS has loosely defined an area in which we collect, but we haven't made very specific determinations yet about the gray areas at the edges of our “scope.” We don't yet have a “What We Don't Collect” list, but at some point we may need one. How close does the connection have to be to Chicago—if, for example, a document relates to an event that happened somewhere else or to a person or people based somewhere else, or simply to projects of movements connected loosely to parallel projects or movements in Chicago? This has the potential to throw open the floodgates. And what to do with the occasional random item given to us by an interviewee that just doesn't seem to fit—but it seems it ought to be kept with the person's other donations to the archive? How do we define political?

We were once casually asked why we included an item whose political relevance had to do with proliferating radical possibilities for ways of “doing one's gender,” as Judith Butler put it. I was a bit startled by the question. The piece was aesthetically challenging, allegorical, and indirect. It wasn't a piece of propaganda or a document of activist work; many items in the collection do fall on the more literal or “direct-action” end of the spectrum. To me, it seemed obvious that it should be included, but this exchange made clear that the definition of “socially/politically engaged art” is far from simple or straightforward. With all this in mind, I hope our project (with its gaps as well as its strengths) can generate discussions that will shape the changing contours of these definitions into the future.
6/7: Unfurling #3

Skyla S. Hearn

Friday, June 7, 3PM
at Logan Center for the Arts, 915 E. 60th St.
in conjunction with the Grassroots Archiving Symposium

“Perspectives of an Archivist/Perspectives of an Artistic Native Chicagoan Who is Also an Archivist”

Initially I thought to tell a story from the perspective of a teenage B-girl who came of age during the late 1980s into the early 1990s in Chicago. As I selected the materials, the story developed into one that highlighted my experiences and explorations from attending eye-opening events to meeting some of the most colorful characters.
Solidifying Connections
Skyla S. Hearn

Solidifying Connections Through Shared Experiences:
From Katherine Dunham to
Autonomous Territories of Chicago
Skyla S. Hearn

For several years I have worked with various forms of “non-traditional” materials in academic, public and private repositories. One of my colleagues jokingly refers to these types of assets, those of the non-traditional nature, as nefarious. Non-traditional materials can consist of 3D (sculptures, quilts), A/V (record albums, VHS, CDs), ephemera (posters, buttons, various types of artworks), etc. Over the last three years, I have found myself immersed in projects in professional environments where I was compelled to agree with her assessment because of my sheer frustration in attempting to solve the perplexity of ascribing intellectual arrangement and description to these forms of materials. Since my first project digitizing Katherine Dunham’s photo collection to the most recent creating a records management system for the Never The Same Chicago Ephemera Archives (which includes Autonomous Territories of Chicago materials) it has been most exciting and rewarding to discover the “marks” made on society by revolutionaries, visionaries, and progressive and thought-provoking individuals and groups.

Unlike traditional materials (non-born digital, paper-based, static, seemingly mundane materials that are supported by archival standards and guidelines) these invite an alternative approach to processing, that is, arranging and describing. When I joined the Never The Same crew I did not realize how big of a piece of apple I’d actually bitten off. The archive was massive and unorganized, and contained just about every form of non-traditional material I’ve ever seen in one archive. In addition, NTS_CEA is an artificial archive, which means that it was purposefully collected with the intention to become an archive unlike most other archives that are organized after the donor/creator has exited this life.

Developing the Never The Same Chicago Ephemera Archives was challenging yet extremely rewarding, as I sought to reflect the collective ideas of an archivist, an artist, and an art history professor as well as the collection’s creators and donors. This form of collaboration is as rare as it is underestimated. The result we produced is an archival ephemeral collection that is both static and live—the assets are regularly used in exhibitions, classroom learning environments, and for research. The archive is equipped for research with a fully accessible archival collection and reference materials section.
Kristoffer Ardeña, Axe Street Arena, Museum of Contemporary Art, Mike Wolf and Network of Casual Art, Smart Museum of Art, Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Insight Arts, Free Write Jail Arts and Literacy Program, Institute of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, Brian Ashby, Wendy City Bike Messenger Association, Young Chicago Authors, Zolo Agona Azania, Bboy B, Printers’ Ball, John Greenfield, Samuel Barnett, Brit Barton, Ricardo Basbaum, Nick Bastis, Bruner & Bay, Zanny Begg, Anna Benavides, Steve Bennett, Jeremy Stainthorpe Berggren, Matt Bergstrom, Noah Berlatsky, Hakim Bey, Friends of William Blake, Hate for Blayne, Brett Bloom, Doro Boehme, That Word Which Means Smuggling Across Borders, Empty Bottle, Harry Bowers, The Propaganda Box, White Box, Martha Boyd, Lisa Bralts-Kelly, Curious Theatre Branch, Michael Brenson, Neil Brideau, Lisa Brock, Amanda Browder, Cheryl Lynn Bruce, Slim Brundage, Susy Buchanan, Dave Buchen, Stephanie Burke, Members of BURundi, Pam C. Nogales C., Don’t Just Vote Campaign, Robert L. Campbell, Karsten Lund and Dana Carter, South Side Community Art Center, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago Cultural Center, Pablo Neruda Cultural Center, Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Sixty Inches From Center, University of Chicago Cultural Policy Center, Juan Angel Chávez, Women In the Director’s Chair, Paul Chan, Sarah Charlesworth, Al-Awda Chicago, AREA

NTS Chicago Ephemera Archive includes:

Pages 18–24: Materials from the Chicago Ephemera Archive selected for Unfurling #7.

Day 2 of the symposium consisted of a smaller, in-depth discussion by conference speakers and a few other participants, focused on how to derive lessons for Never The Same’s archival project from the experiences of other archives. The following is a brief edited excerpt from the discussion.

Daniel Tucker (DT): Something we were hoping this morning is that people would be able to engage in the pragmatic as well as philosophical questions that emerged for them yesterday, but also just generally reflect on the theme of grassroots archiving. With this symposium we wanted to kind of draw a line around grassroots archives, not because we’re not interested in institutional archives or partnering with institutions, obviously we’re here at the University of Chicago right now because of a partnership with the Gray Center, but because there are some shared concerns and challenges, but also shared ethical inspirations too, that are going to be navigated differently by all of our projects.

Josh MacPhee (JM): I’m really interested in how people support themselves, because Interference is doing a lot of things that I’m really excited and proud of, and we keep growing and expanding, but at the same time, we are getting stressed and pulled to extremes. Our capacity is really pushed to the brink, the projects themselves are getting bigger and better and more exciting, and that creates enough momentum to keep building, but it’s starting to feel tenuous. At what scale can you build an all-volunteer organization that has no funding outside of the individuals that support you because they think what you do is important? In that context, how do you ask for help, how do you get the help you need without having to spend most of your time managing volunteers or doing accounting, which is not what anyone wants to do because we’re busy just trying to keep the doors open.

Rebecca Zorach (RZ): And then there’s the way that grants can distort the mission of nonprofits...

Sara Chapman (SC): I don’t think any of our grants have distorted our mission. I mean, I would say that becoming a nonprofit enables you to become something that is bigger than yourself. Right now probably what you’re doing is very tied to your interests and your collaborators’ interests, but if you were to become an organization, and you may not want to, but it could be something that then can continue without you later, develop a mission of its own that’s outside of you. I would say that I don’t think that any grants we’ve gotten have distorted our mission, I think the only problem has been the lack of enough grants, but in general, we’ve never done a project we didn’t want to do because we got a grant for it. It’s simply that there aren’t enough! But I think they’ve all supported what we do. Sometimes it’s a matter of language, a way of rephrasing something, but I wouldn’t say there’s any corrupting influence of grants in my experience.

Karen Stanworth (KS): Is your organization—it’s not all volunteer run, though? People are paid to do the work.
SC: Right, I mean, I’m paid, I’m full time, and then we have rotating interns who are also paid, but that’s it. Sometimes we work with consultants. I think it’s very important to pay all the interns that do the digitizing simply because it’s fair to them and because they’re a lot more committed, you know, like they’re going to work very hard if it’s their job as opposed to a favor they’re doing me. So we always pay them and I think that the great thing about being a nonprofit is you can work with the work-study programs at universities, like we get interns from U of C and a few other universities, and the work-study program pays us back for 75% of their wages. And our overhead is small. No one ever comes to our office to watch a tape! They may come to our office to meet with us or something, but there’s no reason for them to watch a tape in our office as opposed to online.

KS: I think everybody else here does have physical archives. A physical archive has a whole other set of stresses and issues and challenges. Do you digitize, how does it become available, does materiality matter, and when it matters, how do you get the square footage to support it. Prices per square foot are really skyrocketing, so it’s a constant trauma for us. Square footage, how you pay for it, and how much you need, and then how much your mandate for what to collect changes by how much you can afford. I was thinking of that video [of Mayme Clayton’s collection] with the books all piled up high and there’s pieces of our archives that look like that, still, even though they’re accessioned, they’re still in perilous stackage mode. So there are lots of things that happen in a material archive that really change what you can do, although I think there are lessons in the Mediaburn project.

SC: No, I totally agree. We’re very lucky that with video, there’s no difference. The whole point is that you can reproduce it infinitely, you can play it on this monitor, that monitor, it doesn’t matter if you watch it online, it’s not a worse experience.

KS: So the challenges, you know, of how many volunteers do you need, how many volunteers can come with the passion you have. A lot of idiosyncratic collections come out of people’s particular needs or desires to bring archives together, but it’s personal, there’s some point when you decide, if I’m backing off of this, will I be replaceable? I think it’s a really important thing to consider to how you move forward. Looking at the history of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives where we’re there for 40 years, but certainly the first 8 to 10 years there was a real sense of, it’s like our specific people’s archive, and that shifted over time as people got exhausted, you know? ‘Cause there’s this massive energy that comes from being involved and then something happens and then it ebbs back down so that the organizational structure came, recognizing after two or three ebbs and flows, that there had to be some more formal structure, if the collection’s going to survive and not be driven by individual collectors. I think the answers to these questions branch out from your attitude around that.

Chaithra Powell (CP): Well, one thing I wanted to say when we were talking about an all-volunteer staff and how people get burned out is that I think you definitely need strong leadership. I think it’s important to have some people that are paid on your staff that are fully committed to the project. Volunteers don’t have to come in, they don’t have to do everything that you need, and I know for us it’s always a challenge because we need someone to answer the phone and nobody who volunteers wants to do that. It’s like herding cats sometimes because they’re like, “Well I’m here and I want to do this today.” So it gets to be really challenging, but having an executive director who can set the priorities and then we can move in the same direction helps us a lot. As far as points of entry, we do kind of bank on this idea that we want people to come in as researchers, so we work a lot with universities trying to get students and researchers in the building, but at the same time we do public programming, and we’re trying to use social media to let people know that we’re there. We really want people to come into the building and experience our exhibits and see the collection, so getting that foot traffic is something that we spend a lot of time trying to work on.

JM: Part of the reason why this is so tricky for us is that one of our core organizers, Blithe Riley, is really involved in Arts and Labor, which started as a working group of Occupy Wall Street. Out of that developed a very heavy critique of interns, and of the economy of internships. I think that the political analysis is correct, the question is how that practically plays out, because then, in order for interns to be acceptable they have to be paid, and well paid, but then what does it mean when you’re an organization where no one else is paid?

Jacqueline Stewart (JS): I don’t know if you guys talked about this yesterday, but this is raising really fascinating questions about the term “grassroots archive,” because on the one hand, that seems to imply that there would be a grassroots approach to archiving that’s not just about the content but also about the methods of collecting and maintaining the material. So there could be really interesting framework for kind of archival education and the larger social missions of archiving. But then thinking about
I perceive to be the situation at Mayme Clayton and the CLGA, where with a certain kind of intentionality and then have it unfold versus what coming up in the organization's history. It's different to start something fascinating is at what juncture those kind of questions and challenges are there are also differences across all these projects. One of the things that's DT:
of the trust problem.

affiliated with some institution or, you know, 501c3. That's another layer Northwestern University, which may not be the same thing if this was not at universities, so then it means something that their home movies are at 
lection where people care. So my projects have been affiliated with my jobs like you think that my life matters, like it's getting into some kind of col -
it's historically significant and so forth, and people are flattered, you know, like you think that my life matters, like it's getting into some kind of collection where people care. So my projects have been affiliated with my jobs at universities, so then it means something that their home movies are at Northwestern University, which may not be the same thing if this was not affiliated with some institution or, you know, 501c3. That's another layer of the trust problem.

DT: Something that I was struck by is, as much as there's common ground there are also differences across all these projects. One of the things that's fascinating is at what juncture those kind of questions and challenges are coming up in the organization's history. It's different to start something with a certain kind of intentionality and then have it unfold versus what I perceive to be the situation at Mayme Clayton and the CLGA, where

you're taking what's essentially a private collection that is broad enough in scope to be impressive but is also idiosyncratic in its own ways too.

CP: One thing I want to say about “grassroots”—“community archives” is what we consider ourselves, because even though Mayme's collection is the core of it, we've been accessioning things from other people, and I've done presentations where I've let people know, you know, your stuff is im -
portant, it can go to different places. We are an option; so is the California African American Museum. And you can feel empowered so that your stuff is important in perpetuity. Just in general about this conference, as a trained archivist, it turns everything on its head, because this “preservation is use” thing, I mean that's just completely atypical to what we learn. Where it's all about aggregates, you need to call it something, and put it in these hierarchical descriptive categories. The technology is helping a lot, I mean with metadata and everything you can label things a hundred times and it'll pop up in all the different ways that it's important. So, you know with that being explored, I guess you don't really have to worry about some of the old traditions as much anymore. It's kind of exciting.

Skyla Hearn (SH): I think just as working as the archival consultant for this project, I have to take into account what that means for the physical objects, because while you do have metadata, which increases a person's ability to search by these terms and whatnot, I'm still grappling with the physical items, and what that means for me, helping to develop a system which allows like a loaning process to occur, like in my mind I'm saying, “no, there's no circulation in archives!” But in our meetings, we're saying, 'yes, we're a rolling archive," and we want to share, we want people to come and take things out. In my mind I'm like, "no but you can't take them away!" so I'm trying to understand that there's really no clearcut way to do this. Trying to develop a system which supports that is challenging, you know? I personally feel people should be able to use the archives, like working within the institution at the Harsh research collection, I like to be able to pull things out and I had the opportunity to work with the youth with the Chicago Metro History Fair, and so I was able to pull out pieces in the reading room with them, and it's not so strict as to where they can't actually touch these things, and it brought me such satisfaction that these are high school students who are able to engage with these materials. But this is in a controlled environment, and I don't so much mind their oily fingers touching them in this controlled environment as I would an artist taking them away into their own envi -
ronment where I can't control what's happening! I'm struggling with this control issue. It doesn't belong to me, this is a community archives. But
what does community archives mean when you’re trying to increase the level of engagement with the materials?

RZ: Doing the first unfurling when Cauleen Smith came and took out materials, and I met her at the office and showed her where things were and pulled out things I thought she’d be interested in and then I had to leave, and I said, “OK, so stay here and, you know, take the things you need,” and I was like, “Oh my god.” It all worked out fine. Thinking about it in terms of the unfurlings, which are being done by people we asked to do them and have some kind of relationship with the archive, that’s something that I feel pretty comfortable with. But thinking about it in a broader sense, I still don’t know what I think about that, about letting things go out just to someone who happens to have an interest who comes in and says I want to check these materials out and do something with them and bring them back.

JM: But I think it’s an important thing to struggle around, because—and this feels very weird coming out of my mouth—I think that the materials themselves have a certain spiritual component to them that has to do with their physicality and their experiences as objects. So there’s something very different looking at a low-resolution jpeg of a Cuban poster on a monitor than actually being able to handle an 8-color screen-printed poster on fragile paper that has insect holes in it. That’s part of why these things had resonance in the first place, it’s part of why they were meaningful initially and why we’ve even kept them, and to exclude people from having even a secondary relationship to that sense of objectness seems like it goes against the imperative of the archive, if it’s not just about the stuff, but it’s about what the stuff means.

So that is one of those core struggles about what an archive can or should be, how to open people to the experience of the materiality of the objects. That also raises a whole series of cataloguing problems and issues. I’m not at all concerned that Interference wouldn’t exist without me, but the thing that does concern me is that in donating my collections, I’ve brought a set of very quirky concerns and organizing principles that are not necessarily going to get carried through on.

So right now we have a group of librarians and archivists and tech people who are hacking out CollectiveAccess—which is an open source cataloguing system—for us, and we’re going use it as our back end. But the default subject organizing mechanism is modeled after Library of Congress search terminology, and the Library of Congress has none of the same interests that I do or that movements do. With publications for instance, in the 1960s and ’70s you have the development of print shops as a way to create propaganda and information to spread within and outside the movement, so it’s really important to record how things were printed and who printed them, because those tell you a lot about the evolution, organization, and distribution of ideas in the movement. It’s never just another copy of a Frederick Douglass pamphlet—we need to ask why was it reproduced at that time and by those people? For the Library of Congress it’s just Frederick Douglass, who goes into that pile. But that might be the least important part of why that object matters, and so we have an entirely different set of cataloguing concerns. People have to have some experience in movements to understand why that’s meaningful, and then bring that knowledge to cataloging.

DT: I’m curious, both Estelle and Sara, who are engaged in the much more developed digital archive projects, how you all are relating to some of this stuff that is about physical archives.

Estelle Carol (EC): Use, as Josh said, is more important to me than preservation, ok? But since I’m in the digital and online world that plays out in a completely different way than it does with Josh. What I will do is figure out which of my images, which of my documents are going to give people the most benefit, which will be used the most? Which will be most needed for research, will be most needed for posters for various, you know, large photos? Whatever I find that is going to further the movement, which for me is socialist feminism—that is digitized and distributed in various ways that will have the most impact. So some documents will be put on the website because they’re text documents, so that everybody in the world can access them for free anytime, and then image documents like posters or flyers, some of those will be put on the website as PDFs or JPEGs and large images and then you can just access
them for free. And then other really highly emotionally valued documents like some of the posters that people get very excited about and they want to copy and they want to touch it, those I reprint, so I have the printer in my office that has archival paper and archival ink, and I print a copy and there’s a minimal fee and they order it online and I send them a copy. So everybody can get their image in whatever form they need it, so it’s maximum use. I offer them in various sizes depending upon budget and so forth. So the advantage of that is that everybody can get involved and everybody can get their copy and the whole system runs on the money that that generates so that I don’t have to be beholden to foundations, I don’t have to waste my time running after grants, which I totally abhor. I’d rather spend my time reprinting posters and t-shirts—I sell them too, twenty bucks—so it’s easier for me to make money selling my stuff and at the same time be educating people and inspiring people, and not have any of these aggravations about touching originals—it’s just gone. And then the other aspect is the rent aspect and the storage aspect. The way I deal with that is to partner with an institution, major museums, major universities who were set up to be archives, so they hold the boxes of the larger body of material from the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union and our associated sister groups. It’s housed in their institution, they take care of it, they have a catalogue online of what their holding are, and for the academics who need that sort of stuff, more detailed primary source, historical documents—I don’t have to deal with those people, and they go, you know, they go to the Chicago History Museum and they go to the Northwestern archive. So for me, the biggest problem for the grassroots archiving movement in general is how do you deal with getting a reliable, secure, non stressful partnership with an institution that holds your physical archives so that you don’t have to do it and you’re not worried that they’re going to shut it down and throw it out. That to me is the only big issue because all the other problems are solvable. You can make a website to distribute your stuff digitally, you can buy an Epson archival printer, you can print your stuff digitally, you can print your silkscreen posters yourself or hire somebody to do it. All those things are very solvable and extremely low budget. It’s the storage of the physical archive that’s the problem that has to be worked out in an institutional relationship like with a contract or something. You can give your stuff to an institution and in the contract you still have access to it or you get it back from them if they decide they don’t want to continue the project anymore.
11.
7/4-30: Summer Seminar

In July of 2013, Never The Same led a free adult education seminar dealing with the themes of grassroots archiving and local art history. Over the course of the month, participants developed their own research projects while attending guest lectures, taking field trips, doing archival research and discussing the methodologies used in Never The Same’s online oral history and ephemera archiving practices.

Activities for the seminar included visits to Chicago Artists’ Archive (Chicago Public Library) with Bob Sloane and Tempestt Hazel (Sixty Inches From Center), the Joan Flasch Artists’ Book Collection with Kayla Anderson, the Spontaneous Interventions exhibit at the Chicago Cultural Center with Samantha Topol, the AFRICOBRA: Philosophy exhibition at Logan Center with Rebecca Zorach, and the Printers Ball at Hubbard Street Lofts; a Chicago stories workshop with Audrey Petty and Paul Durica; personal archive unfurlings by Daniel Tucker and Dan Wang; and an NTS archive workshop with Skyla Hearn.

The seminar included readings on archiving (East Art Map, Speak Memory symposium, Ben Alexander, Amelia Jones, Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd); localism (Lucy Lippard, Gwendolyn Brooks, Nato Thompson); interviewing (Jaber F. Gubrium & James A. Holstein); Chicago art history (Department of Space and Land Reclamation, Dan S. Wang, Barbara Jones-Hogu, and Jean Dubuffet).

Participants: Liliana Angulo Cortés, Lesley Brown, Sharmyn Cruz Rivera, Joshua Kent, Haley Martin, Sarah Mendelsohn, William Anthony Ruggiero, Laura Sabransky, Emma Saperstein, Sydney Stoudmire, Alda Akhsar Tchochiev, and Victoria Leigh Thurmond.
12.
200 Keywords

The list below is a compilation of keywords generated in the seminar in response to the participant presentations and Never The Same's work more generally.

A-Zone
A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum
Accessible
Activation of Public
Activism
ACT-UP
Afro-Deco
Afrocentric
Alinskyite Community-Organization Model
American Gothic
Animal Charm
Anti-Gang Loitering Laws
Antibody Dance
Antiwar, Archive
Art & Life
Art Therapy
Ash Kyrie
Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM)
Audio Recorded Tours
Axe Street Arena
Beauty
Beauty Industry
Belonging
Berserk
Black Age Movement
Black Age of Comics
Black Arts Guild
Black on Black Arts Center
Blaxploitation Films
Bridging Gaps
Bright Moments (Caton and Calvin Jones)
Ceasefire
Center for Urban Pedagogy
Charrette
Chicago
Chicago Defender
Chicago Mural Group
Chicago Public Art Group
Chicago Urban Ecology Action Group
Clinic Defense
Coalition for the Homeless
Collaborate
Collection
Collectives
Commitment Statement
Community Concern
Contemporary
Continental Drift (Through the Midwest Radical Cultural Corridor)
Costs and Benefits
Counter-Globalization Movement
Counter Productive Industries
Creative Resistance
Cubism
Cultural Buildings
Cultural Poverty
Culture in Action
Daley Dynasty
Democracy Now!
Design
Desire
Dialogue
Disillusioned in 90s
Displacement
Distributors
DIY (Infoshops, Riot Grrrl, Punk)
Don't Feel Safe
Dues to Be Paid
Dynasty
Eastern Europe
Economic Transition
Engagement
Environmental Justice
Egyptian Cobras
FALN
FBI
Festac
Fifth Column
Foreclosure
Form
Foto Encontrada
Freedom
Friends of the Parks
Future Primitive (and Other Essays)
Gentrification
Geographies
Global Medical Relief Fund
Going Natural
Goldenrod
Haha
Hair
Historic North Pullman Organization
History
Holistic Health
Human Perception
Identity
Images Representing Truth
Immediate Needs
Immigration Forums
Impact
Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)
Indymedia
Information Dissemination
Informed and Passionate Art Collectors
Infrastructure
International Interventions
Interviews
Iraq Veterans Against the War
Kartemquin
Kitsch
Landscape
Leisure
Liberation of Guinea-Bissau
Library
Lives
Living Documentation
Local
Mapping
Marwen Foundation
Mass Incarceration
Materials
Meatpacking
Memories
Mineral Extraction Sites in the U.S.
Minority Communities
National Boricua Human Rights Network
National Museum of Mexican Art
National Veterans Art Museum (NVAM)
NEA
Neoliberalism/Gentrification
New Arts Space
No Empathy
NOG: “Nubian of Greatness” Comic Book
Occident
Operation PUSH
Oral Histories
Overlaps of Information
Painting
7/23: Unfurling #5
Faheem Majeed

Tuesday, July 23, 6PM
at Logan Center Exhibitions, 915 E. 60th St.
in conjunction with the AFRICOBRA: Philosophy exhibition
14.  
7/24: Unfurling #6  
Dan S. Wang

Wednesday, July 24, 6PM  
at the Logan Center, Room 801, 915 E. 60th Street  
in conjunction with the NTS Summer Seminar

15.  
8/20: Unfurling #7  
Daniel Tucker and Rebecca Zorach

Tuesday, August 20th, 10AM  
at Columbia College, 623 S. Wabash Ave.,  
The Efrosyn Resource Room  
in conjunction with Art and Design faculty retreat

Columbia faculty discuss questions that emerged while looking at materials from Chicago Ephemera Archive (photos by Emma Saperstein).
In January of 2013 we sent an email to four artists and one group of curators asking that they “make work that is derived from and/or activates parts of our archive and oral history interview series … That said, we are not placing constraints on the kind of work you make for the exhibition in any way, and are excited to see what you come up with.”

Our hope, as we later explained and processed in three subsequent meetings, was that the exhibition participants would help us to figure out what we were doing right and what we were doing wrong, joining us in charting a path for the future of NTS. As our conversations continued we clarified that the parts of NTS the participants could engage were not limited to the sum total of our past efforts (archiving and oral history), but could also include the larger themes running through our work that would extend into the future. Those themes included Grassroots Archiving, Local Art History, and Social Movement Culture. This expanded conception of what “the work” of NTS was supported artists developing new projects that could simultaneously draw from our invitational prompt as well as from their own background, experiences, and ongoing projects.
After all, we had intentionally invited people who would complicate the identity of who a “Chicago artist” was. We had invited people from Chicago and people who were passing through, people with deep commitments in the city, relative newcomers, and former residents. This intentionality worked against many claims of authenticity that arise when dealing with a project so oriented around locality. Our hope was that this would expand the frame of reference and audiences for the work overall and allow for us to learn from and connect with different traditions and subcultures operating within the diverse field of art in Chicago.

Similarly, we wanted to invite people with a broad range of formal and aesthetic approaches to making art. We did not want to organize a show where everything was an archive, as so often happens with work that is research-based. We wanted the explorations to operate on different registers and therefore draw different audiences into contact with work that they might typically avoid or be confused by. For NTS, our concern with documenting “socially and politically engaged art” comes with a commitment to challenging the stereotypes of what that work looks like, driving us to interview and collect ephemera from individuals and collectives involved in music, theater, murals, interventionism, documentary video, political graphics, youth media, participatory events, and gallery installations.

Ultimately the exhibition became known as “Unfurling: Five Explorations in Art, Activism, and Archiving.” The name was derived from the form we had developed for informal show-and-tell events with our materials from our archive and which a number of the participating artists ended up organizing. But the concept also referred to the process of gradual becoming, realization, and revelation that became a feature of the work in the exhibition. Early on in our process we asked that artists “plug in or connect with some other aspect of the year of programs we have planned, on at least one occasion. That can mean many things: contributing to the symposium about grassroots archives in June, the seminar in July (you can even be a full participant if you desire), or developing an event where you curate a presentation of some part of our archive for a targeted public audience (this can happen anytime). We ask this because we want the participating artists to contribute something to the larger dialogue throughout the year, and for the work you develop to come from some deeper engagement than most exhibitions typically afford.”

This ambition, to involve the participants in some way beyond the exhibition itself, positioned them as co-conspirators in our own curatorial unfurling. Dan, Jayne, and Faheem all developed their own Unfurlings in specific relation to classroom and exhibition contexts, while Liliana and Extinct Entities initiated public events during the course of the exhibition. Additionally, Liliana’s participation in the Summer Seminar led to her meeting and collaboration with Sydney, one of the other seminar participants. This web of relations and contacts invested the final exhibited work with a depth beyond any prompting thematic framework offered up in our initial invitation.

The participants showed a great deal of generosity with their time and work, pushing themselves as well as NTS in our conception of what might constitute an appropriate or expected response to the material and themes we were working with. Jayne’s map offered up the dynamic of unfolding events related to school closings in the city that necessitated her ongoing work throughout and beyond the exhibition. Dan’s posters took on the frequent nostalgia of the archival impulse in art and directed his work towards future events by making ephemera of events that could be but have yet to be. Faheem explored intertwining history—requiring the viewer to decipher how material related to an organization, a community, and his own life as an artist in Chicago were interrelated. Extinct Entities grappled with the concept of legacy that extends beyond any recorded or objective history of an event. And Liliana’s work further challenged the
First meeting in the Future Gray Center Lab in the old Midway Studios building at the University of Chicago (photo by Daniel Tucker); Pages 46 and 47: Documentation of the March 19th meeting at the Logan Center (photos by Michael Schuh).
image of what a socially or politically engaged art looks like by bringing in the traditional practices of hairbraiders who had organized themselves to advance their political rights.

Each of the contributions to the exhibition (and their supplemental events) posed questions for NTS to consider about our present practice and future possibilities. Beyond the simple act of framing that curatorial work typically confers to a disparate range of artworks, this experience also brought the artists into conflict with the framing as it was taking place. Unlike invitations to respond to an established institutional archive or context, the somewhat unusual invitation to respond to the work of a young organization without a clearly defined mission required the artists to remain outside of NTS while also implicating themselves as peers and participants in the evolving practice.

Footnotes:
1. Invitational email sent in January 2013 to participating artists
2. The 3/19/13 meeting was attended by the invited artists as well as some of our programming partners: Mary Jane Jacob, Kate Zeller, Laura Shaeffer, Skyla Hearn, Leslie Buxbaum Danzig, Michael Schuh, Bill Michel, Monika Szewczyk, and Stephanie Smith. The other two artist meetings were held on 6/24/13 and 7/24/13.
3. Invitational email sent in January 2013 to participating artists.
¡Quieto Pelo! (Mappy Hair!)
Liliana Angulo Cortés (with the special collaboration of Sydney Stoudmire, The Illinois Association of Hair Braiders, Fatimata Traore, Sherry Williams and the United African Organization)

¡Quieto Pelo! (Mappy Hair!): Mapping hair traditions and practices in communities of African descent in the United States, the Chicago area and the Midwest region
Multi-media installation, video, and performance

¡Quieto Pelo!, as a collective creation and research project, aims to document and disseminate the oral traditions and creative practices associated with Black people’s hair (braiding, styling, cuts and health care). It also presents the ways in which physical appearance is utilized as a resilient component of political resistance and activism of African-descent groups. For instance it approaches the ways in which the body has been viewed as a pragmatic medium in the struggles of Black women from diverse regions of the African Diaspora.

Video interviewees:
Sydney Stoudmire, Independent Natural Hair Stylist
Ms. Fatimata Traore, Illinois Association of Hair Braiders, President
Ms. Sherry Williams, Illinois Association of Hair Braiders, Treasurer

Installation elements:
Table and ephemera, IAHB Banner and archive documents, Special License for Braiders and Natural Stylists information, Madam C. J. Walker advertisement, Hairbraid, Braiding Hair, hair braiding shop chairs, video monitors.

Hairdo
Braid resulting from the performance by Liliana Angulo Cortés with the collaboration of Sydney Stoudmire on Sunday, August 18th, 2013, at the shack located in Bronzeville at the Sacred Keepers Youth Garden at 48th and King Drive. Included in the Shacks and Shanties project organized by Faheem Majeed.
19.
Big Map
Jayne Hileman

Big Map of Closed and Reconfigured Chicago Public Schools, F’13
Map of Chicago’s recently closed and transitioned schools mounted on 4’x8’ plywood with wheels, colored pencil, and icons relating to education and social justice sites.

Maps of Safe Passage routes, provided by CPS in August 2013, have been joined to form connected areas on the south and west side of Chicago, which can be considered “sacrifice zones.”

The connected Safe Passage routes map has been placed over a larger map of Chicago, with Humboldt Park as a northern border. The Big Map is seasoned with points of interest, culled from the Never the Same archive, showing sites of past cultural life, unrealized propositions (e.g. the proposed DuSable Park) and contemporary signs of living cultures. School namesakes for recently closed Chicago Public Schools, erased from the CPS August Safe Passage Maps, are remembered on the borders, and added back to the map. Hileman continued adding to the map throughout the exhibition in regularly scheduled work sessions on Tuesday afternoons.

20.
Planting and Maintaining a Perennial Garden
Faheem Majeed

Planting and Maintaining a Perennial Garden IV: Majeed
2003–2013
Cedar, bricks, and various ephemera

This installation is part of an ongoing series of work that utilizes cedar wood panels to host a variety of interventions. Based on the 1930s New Bauhaus-designed wood paneling of the South Side Community Art Center’s Margaret Burroughs Gallery, these wood panels, installed as walls, tables, or floors, will also serve as a didactic tool that will physically record the artists and community members who use them. Every intervention will inevitably leave marks that create a patina of usage.

Based on the concept of Never The Same’s unfurling, this version of Perennial Garden includes shelves hosting a series of objects that act as a self portrait and reflection of Majeed’s experiences and influences within Chicago.
21.
Propositions Press
Dan S. Wang

RE-ELECT KKK IN 2039
letterpress on gummed paper, 15”x12”

MASSIVE PAY-OFF IN 2047
letterpress on salvaged paper, 17”x11”

ALREADY SPIKED IN 2036
letterpress on gummed paper, 17”x14”

POST-SNOW
letterpress on salvaged paper, 14”x9”

MOSTLY POINTLESS IN 2063
letterpress on gummed paper, 16”x12”

These five new prints are an exercise in speculative networking, doing advance battle for future memory, naming our desired and yet-to-be-realized radical formations in the emerging world, and inserting confusion into the political event stream in an age when ever more knowledge is instantly fixed by its digital trace. In these prints it all starts with the political cultures of Chicago and the greater region, what's been done and what's been left unfinished. The materials used—the wood and metal type, the paper, the press, the inks—are themselves an archive of Chicago and the midwest, having mostly been salvaged fifteen years ago from the area’s dying small print shops of the time.
Proposition Press prints and installation (photos by Sarah Jane Rhee).

“GATHER IN GRANT PARK, TUESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2003
AFTER ONE HUNDRED YEARS of MARCHING, mostly pointless—

It was a bad check then, it’s a bad check now!
WE AIN’T MARCHING NO MORE
SEE YOU IN.............CHICAGO.......

“PROPHECY IN THE TRASH: NINE BELOW ZERO
AFTER ONE HUNDRED YEARS of MARCHING, mostly pointless—

It was a bad check then, it’s a bad check now!
WE AIN’T MARCHING NO MORE
SEE YOU IN.............CHICAGO.......

(Lois Jean O’Dowd in position: Hannah Wright, photo credit: Sarah Jane Rhee)
22. Theater of Revolt
Extinct Entities (presenting Brandon Alvendia)

Brandon Alvendia at the invitation of Extinct Entities

Theater of Revolt

Multi-media installation with video loop (18:21 minutes) and poster edition


Extinct Entities invited Alvendia to make a new work inspired by the Affro-Arts Theater—a South Side art space initiated by Kelan Phil Cohran in 1967. The same theme was explored in their October 12, 2013 presentation of three newly commissioned performances by Alexandria Eregbu, Tomeka Reid, and Baraka de Soleil.
23.
9/29: Unfurling #9
NTS contribution to the 4th Athens Biennale

September 29th–December 1, 2013
at 4th Athens Biennale: Agora

See more at: http://athensbiennale.org/en/agora_en/

NTS was selected to participate in the 4th Athens Biennale and for this event we contributed a selection from our Chicago Ephemera Archive, including:

24. 10/5: Culture in Action Symposium

Culture in Action: Public Art in Chicago Twenty Years Later
A Public Symposium
Saturday, October 5, 2013 1–4:30PM
at University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration
969 East 60th St.

On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Culture in Action, the seminal public art exhibition curated by Mary Jane Jacob as part of Sculpture Chicago in 1993, the symposium brought together past participants and artists working today to discuss its impact on the current field of community-based public art, particularly in Chicago. Culture in Action facilitated challenging frameworks for artists working within communities to create public art and today’s artists face similar issues in a radically changed artistic, political, and economic climate. Together participants and attendees discussed what we have learned and what we have yet to learn.

Schedule:
1–2:30PM: A conversation on “Twenty years later” between artist Daniel Joseph Martinez and arts writer Michael Brenson

3–4:30PM: “Where To Now?” with Chicago artists and organizers Sarah Ross, Nicole Marroquin, Andres Hernandez, and Carla Mayer moderated by Abigail Satinsky, Associate Director, threewalls. The event closed with thoughts by artist A. Laurie Palmer, followed by a reception at the Never the Same exhibition in The Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at Midway Studios 929 E. 60th St.

Organized by threewalls and co-sponsored by Never the Same, Afterall, Open Practice Committee, Smart Museum of Art, Department of Visual Arts at the University of Chicago, and SAIC’s Department of Exhibitions and Exhibition Studies.
25.
10/12: Extinct Entities
Performances by Alexandria Eregbu, Tomeka Reid, and Baraka de Soleil

In conjunction with the exhibition Unfurling: Five Explorations in Art, Activism, and Archiving, Never the Same invited Extinct Entities, an artistic/curatorial collaborative, to present three commissioned performances by Alexandria Eregbu, Tomeka Reid, and Baraka de Soleil. Each artist was asked to create a new work inspired by the Affro-Arts Theater—a South Side art space initiated by Kelan Phil Cohran in 1967. Extinct Entities is a collaborative project by Erin Nixon, Anthony Romero, and Anthony Stepter that investigates possibilities for reengaging with art spaces that no longer exist. A free publication produced in collaboration with Brandon Alvendia was available throughout the run of the exhibition.

26.
E-Discussion
Extinct Entities with Never The Same

E-Discussion with Extinct Entities

Rebecca Zorach: Thanks so much for your participation (in this dialogue as well as the show). I wonder if you could talk about some of your guiding principles. I was struck by the fact that you didn’t, for example, involve Phil Cohran directly in your process. The artists you invited to participate were asked to produce work inspired by the Affro-Arts Theater, but your project was not about uncovering the “actual” history of the space itself. I can see this as a kind of modesty (not wanting to claim to recover something that can’t be recovered), or a commitment to a forward-looking practice (inspiration from the past to guide the present rather than ruminate over what’s been lost), but I can also see it as an unwillingness to risk the admittedly difficult challenge of grappling more directly with the history and with its living “representatives.” Given the very selective ways in which history is told, could it be a form of erasure to not grapple with that history?

Erin Nixon (EN): In the spirit of radicality, eschewing the authoritative is a way to open up the possibilities for experimentation. If one were to hold up a heroic, singular figure in the history of a former space, that would leave out the kind of dynamic activities that occurred within and without its doors. Our project continues to be a misnomer. The history of spaces like the Affro-Arts Theater never cease to exert their influence and that is how we look forward to new projects. Inspiration is crucial, but literal representation is not the goal.

Anthony Romero (AR): Our project is not concerned with historical narratives but is instead an inquiry into the materiality of history, a question as to what ephemera and material culture might offer artists whose work is already bound up in questions of the archive and the body or who have an image-based approach to making and vice versa. I recently had a meeting with Brandon Alvendia, the artist who produced the gallery installation for the exhibition. We were talking about archives and reflecting on this exhibition. Over the course of our meeting I began to think about our involvement in the exhibition in this way. In academia it had long been accepted that the scholar enters the archive and emerges with something
(essay, book, case study, etc.), an expression or response to the material that they encountered in the archive. We can think of this as a way of activating archival materials. The question we are posing to those we have invited, one that anyone working from a research-based practice is likely to ask themselves is, how is an archive activated? And, can be it activated in new and surprising ways?

RZ: It seems as if in some of your work you have had speakers from the past spaces participate with you; why not in this case? Could you reflect on this? Not to make it a negative question—I am curious about the kinds of aesthetic or conceptual dialogue you were hoping to generate with the performances, and what worked well in your view.

EN: As curators of artist-commissioned projects, we begin the process with contextualizing. At our symposium at SAIC this past April, we invited speakers from former and current art spaces to have a dialogue that would act as a public form of research for us; the dialogue was generative and became an oral history for us to draw from. When we invited Tomeka, Baraka, and Alexandria to perform an expression of the history of the Affro-Arts Theater, the work came from a psychic history rather than a literal one. These artists’ projects are expressions of a history that draw from the real and the fictional to create a narrative, emotions were evoked to tell a story, beyond one that could be told by objects and ephemera. The performances are a way to work through the process of cultural memory and reveal the traces of memory on the body. Instead of presenting facts, it projected a consciousness, enacted the dynamics of collectivity, and offered a new vision for the legacy of the Affro-Arts Theater.

AR: While working on this exhibition we learned a great deal about how this kind of practice might find an expression. Extinct Entities as a project has always been a kind of experiment, one that was contingent upon how the artists chosen might direct the materials that they chose to work with. We expected for the method to be tangential. This is true of how we arrived at the decision to use the Affro-Arts Theater in the first place. We happened to see a lecture given by Dr. Soyini Madison on Kuumba Workshop, a radical black theater company founded in Chicago in 1968. Researching the theater company led us to the Affro-Arts Theater, which in turn led us back to the Never The Same Archive and your interview with Phil Cohran. It was while traveling this winding path of research that we decided to use what was for us a kind of end point—the Affro Arts Theater—as a starting point for the artists. What we have taken from this project is a working knowledge of how a project like ours comes into being and of course part of that will have to include negotiating the lived experiences of those who made the history we are mining. We never meant any disrespect to Phil or anyone else. We were simply following our line of inquiry through.

Part of the difficulty of this project has to do with the ways in which it was framed. We, a curatorial collective, were invited by Never the Same to participate in an exhibition. Individually we are writers, performers, administrators, and organizers but together we are not makers. So we decided to respond to the invitation with a curatorial process—commissioning artists to create new works out the archives of Chicago-based artist collective or space. To this we added some specificity, that of the Affro-Arts Theater. So this is how the artists access the exhibition invitation, through our reframing, a curatorial interruption into the Never the Same process. Already you can see how confusing this is becoming. I think it is this confusion that caused some controversy, because it isn’t a project whose parts are immediately visible and in some ways it is much more about an approach to history than narrating any one particular history. The artists, Tomekia Reid, Alexandria Eregbu, Baraka de Soleil, and Brandon Alvendia, responded by producing performances, an installation in the gallery, and two multiples (posters).

RZ: Were there any moments in the process that you found especially powerful?

AR: Seeing the work was the most powerful for me. The evening of performance for example, asks a three artists, from different generations, whose practices are linked to the legacy and experience of black cultural producers
This kind of experimental project to represent a marginal history is not just about the forgotten, but also about fighting against. These artists’ projects not only rescue us for a moment from forgetting, but provide a realm of imagining a different future. It is art about remembering and forgetting. Spaces, collectives, events, activities that do not belong to a monolithic history perhaps have more sediment covering their meaning, something more to be revealed.

The aftermath of a marginal history, something not widely documented, is revealed in traces. Often one has to imagine the social dimension of these projects, beyond a purely art historical synthesis. Lost moments can’t always be reanimated, they have to be appropriated in fragments and incorporated into a project that attempts to articulate fleeting subjectivities. In amplifying fragments of actions, words, and feelings, you can unmoor these elements from the specific histories they represent. In this way we can reflect on reenactment and the experiences of others that are inhabited for a moment to represent something intangible and fleeting.

Erin’s comment about remembering and forgetting speaks to why I think this project is worth pursuing. If these histories are, as Daniel mentioned, likely to be forgotten, we have to acknowledge a gap in memory as a space to imagine possibilities. Otherwise, if we look at gaps in history and biography as just negative space, then the we have less and less to engage with after something (a movement, a space, an individual, etc...) has
had its moment. The artists in this exhibition who responded to archival material related to the Affro-Arts Theater had plenty of gaps to contend with—the theater building no longer exists, some of the photographic documentation is in a private collection with guarded access, and so on, but that didn't impede the creation of thoughtful work.

I would resist declaring any history marginal and I think the entire notion of a “monolithic history” is a tautological fallacy, but I believe our experiment is about engaging the spirit of a place whether it has been well documented or not. The idea that a history is marginal and therefore requires special stewardship seems to be about declaring a kind of ownership. Extinct Entities is hopefully about inviting access.

**AR:** I can’t help but think about it in terms of scale. True, some of these histories are more marginal than others, most noticeably histories related to culture produced by people of color, especially where that culture is alternative or counter to mainstream efforts is certainly marginalized, and I would emphasize here that marginality is something that one thing does to another. One is relocated to the margins more often than one willfully arrives at the edges themselves. Production of any kind of culture centralizes experience and focuses attention around a shared commonality. I do not think of alternative culture as marginal culture, as I think that ignores the affective weight of these histories and also discounts the purposefulness of creating something else, something different. I don’t think that experiments with lesser known histories differs from experiments with more well known histories.

**RZ:** Maybe this is a question that can’t really be answered, but I’m still not quite satisfied with the answers to the first part of my question. And please do understand that I’m pretty sympathetic to the critique of the “you had to be there to talk about it” rhetoric that sometimes gets used as a trumping mechanism (I’m thinking of Amelia Jones’s article “Presence in Absentia” about writing about performance art without having been there, or Kristin Ross in

**EN:** The practical matter of how the performances would be conceived was the reason not to directly involve the major players. The performers acted as observers, the impression of this history was left on each of them with its own unique traces, and that personal reflection was performed for the audience. In some ways, to have a more sympathetic relationship to the work they were representing, creating a relationship with the individuals involved was not emphasized for them because of the potential to bog the expressive content down. A direct personal relationship could also cause more logistical difficulties, more concern for “getting it right” when our focus wasn’t on a faithful interpretation.

**AR:** I am happy to go deeper into this but feel it necessary to point out that the work we commissioned for the exhibition is being lost under the weight of this controversy. The fact is that, despite being the catalyst for the artists, what we did was not included in the exhibition but was simply a starting point for the artists involved. The work in the exhibition was made by Brandon Alvendia, Baraka de Soleil, Tomeka Reid, and Alexandria Eregbu. While I understand why this point about including or not including primary experiences in our planning is being placed front and center, and I certainly do not mean to devalue your question, it should be recognized that a good deal of time and care was put into the projects executed by the artists involved and their work should find a home in our conversation. To speak to my earlier point, this is exactly the problem of reframing. Nevertheless I think we can all agree that there is more happening here than what the three of us did or did not do. For those who were able to sit through Alexandria’s conversation, Tomeka’s sound composition, and Baraka’s politically charged performance, the evening captured so much more than history. It breathed with the spirit of radical cultural production and is as perfect an answer to questions concerning the power of embodied action to awaken the past as we could ever hope for. It was

**May ‘68 and its Afterlives** about choosing not to interview the people who’ve set themselves up as spokespersons for the student movement. But in this particular case—where there’s not that much to go on, the Affro-Arts Theater is not something that historians or the media have cared to study very much, so pretty much all we have is people’s memories and very brief registers in news reports—I’m wondering if there was really a risk of damage to the project’s principles to involve Phil. I think my question is this: was it a practical matter or a principled one, and if it’s principled, what is the principle? I think the traces of history on the body/awareness of “people who were there” are also part of the materiality of history, even if we don’t want to accord those traces an all-powerful authority.

**AR:** I can’t help but think about it in terms of scale. True, some of these histories are more marginal than others, most noticeably histories related to culture produced by people of color, especially where that culture is alternative or counter to mainstream efforts is certainly marginalized, and I would emphasize here that marginality is something that one thing does to another. One is relocated to the margins more often than one willfully arrives at the edges themselves. Production of any kind of culture centralizes experience and focuses attention around a shared commonality. I do not think of alternative culture as marginal culture, as I think that ignores the affective weight of these histories and also discounts the purposefulness of creating something else, something different. I don’t think that experiments with lesser known histories differs from experiments with more well known histories.
not an evening not about the AAT but in the spirit of.

We spent a good deal of time thinking about how to structure the performance event. Would we invite a speaker—someone who was there or had ties to that place, someone who could give a bit of context to the performances? In the end we decided against this route. I cannot begin to speculate on how things might have differed if we had chosen to do things differently but what I can say is that by not having the context interact with the performance works being presented there was more leeway on the part of the audience to assign other kinds of meanings to what was happening. There was an allowance given to the performers that might not have been given under different circumstances. Now the trouble is that we had already begun to circulate the AAT as an anchor for the works in the announcements, press releases, etc. This created an expectation, one that I believe you and others are struggling with, partly because this expectation has gone unfulfilled. I say that because the works presented spoke more to the spirit of radical black culture than they spoke to the specific history of the AAT.

To speak directly to your question: No. I don’t believe that any of us thought that Phil Cohran’s involvement would be a “danger” to the project. I think that some of the language being used to talk through this controversy creates an antagonistic air around the project when in actuality what we wanted to do was not to discourage or “erase” but to create openness. Room for the performers to bring their own practices to the project and room for the audience to access the works being presented. I personally do not believe that our decision was either principled or practical but was instead an artistic one.

DT: One of the experiences I had in giving tours of the exhibition, was trying to offer a gist or insight into the installation you commissioned by Brandon Alvendia, for a large group of people who could not stand and watch the entirety of the video or who may never have looked at your posters or attended the performances you organized. One of the thoughts I offered up to viewers was that the two framed artifacts Alvendia created and the looping video clip could be seen as stand-ins for archival material that simply does not exist from the AAT. Many people took a brief look and assumed, also informed by the context of the larger exhibition, that they were in fact “real” artifacts. The discussion that ensued with these visitors was often about the role of mythology in constructing narratives about art history that really inspire people but are predicated on the transmitted and manipulated stories of a relatively few actual attendees. A punk rock analogy to Rebecca’s “you had to be there” comment is the documentary You Weren’t There: A History of Chicago Punk, 1977–1984 (by Joe Losurdo and Christina Tillman). But for anyone who has ever cared deeply about subcultural production, chances are you have spent time swooning for those events that you just weren’t there for. Alvendia’s installation started from that spirit in my assessment. What do you think? Does the act of starting this curatorial project about dead art spaces relate to your own swooning for art histories you wanted to be a part of? Certainly it could be argued that there is no space presently operating in Chicago that has the political commitments of something like AAT, especially with an emphasis on Black artists or artists of color. And so much of the political art that is happening is taking place within institutions that do not share the politics of the artists.

AS: My thought is that artists working in Chicago may not have a space like AAT to go perform in, but they are still very much influenced by the work that took place there. The “you weren’t there” idea/argument becomes less compelling when you consider the fact that even though none of us were “there” we are still influenced and enabled by the work that took place “there.” In his NTS interview, Phil Cohran talks about the concerts at 63rd Street Beach. I think you can trace a line from those concerts, to the Affro-Arts Theater to AACM to artists like Tomeka Reid who was in the Unfurling exhibition as part of the Extinct Entities performances. Tomeka...
and all of us in Extinct Entities are much too young to have been at any of those performances on the beach, but our place as members of an artistic community in Chicago is deeply and necessarily impacted by our relationship with this work that came before us. Inviting people who “weren’t there” to take inspiration from these spaces, is for me, a way of acknowledging that relationship, of demonstrating that the spirits of these spaces endure.

EN: The Affro-Arts Theater, and many other artistic projects I’ve been interested in researching and working with, have only existed as documentation for me, through which I’ve had to imagine what it would’ve been like to be present. I’ve had to grapple with the facts and fictions I might be working with and the supposedly objective histories that remain. But the study and appreciation of this documentation has been incredibly inspiring and generative for my own curatorial work. I think this project has given us a space to pay homage to these projects that have served as a source of dialogue for us and we recognize the importance of the networks and subsequent projects they have created. Like Anthony said, this is really about these histories serving as inspiration for the work we do now. I don't think without the immediacy of being there that these projects haven't taken root and provided us with deep reflection about the artistic community we are a part of and the work we hope to do to keep the spirit of spaces like the Affro-Arts Theater alive.

AR: For me, it’s hard not to romanticize or even idealize the past. Swoon is a good way to say it. Our present moment is one in which alternative culture, normalized long ago, has begun to clean up its act. It is undergoing a kind of rapid professionalization or at the least is but a stepping stone for artists, writers, curators, organizers, etc. who are more interested in joining the mainstream art world. So, for me, it’s hard not to look back at radical cultural production with longing but also as a way of identifying strategies that may be useful moving forward. And if we are to speak about the spirit of that kind of thing, then Brandon is a great example. He is an artist whose work includes an artists’ press, an artists-run space called The Storefront, and countless interventions into public and private spaces that not only push the boundaries of authorship and authenticity but also the limits of the art experience.
ACT I: What It Did & Didn’t Want to Be

Material residue is positioned on chairs facing the audience. Past keyholders are positioned at a table, facing the materials and with their backs to the audience. After each recitation, keyholder selects an item from the collection and pins to a wall or rope. Keyholders shuffle chairs.

1. As you know, we’ve asked you here today in order to consider you for the position of Mess Hall Archive. We have a number of questions we’d like to ask you, and we hope you’ll provide the clearest, most precise responses you can. Do you have anything to say before we begin the interview? . . . No? Very well, then. Let’s begin.

The difference between an archive and a pile of junk is that the former has potential value for future artists, activists, historians and critics, while the latter does not. With this distinction in mind, what kinds of value do you have and for whom? Or to put it another way, were the people who made you thinking of the values you might have for the future? What do you say? What should we see in you?

2. Let’s see . . . how to put this question . . . delicately. I guess we all know that the name “Mess Hall” suggests a certain . . . casualness. And it would be fair to say that . . . your reputation precedes you. More often than not, people who visited the space could not produce a coherent account of what Mess Hall actually was. Do you contain a sufficient range of primary sources documenting responses to this tendency? In other words, will the diligent mining of your materials lead us to a definition of Mess Hall, or alternately to a coherent analysis of the effects of this withdrawal from self-definition? In short, what was “Mess Hall”?

3. Most archives are indexed by the names of authors or artists. More particularly, collaborative practices such as yours raise the need to identify exactly who contributed what—it is important to account for these contributions specifically, to differentiate the contributions of specific individuals. Do you distinguish and identify by name the individuals who participated in your creation? Do you document each individual’s specific contributions? To put it another way, will your materials serve the purpose of identifying, parsing out and/or evaluating the nature, extent and quality of individual contributions?

4. I want to ask a follow-up question. You should know that we consider this topic very important. So let me put it to you like this. Is there any way for present or future trained professionals, like those in attendance here today, to differentiate between those materials or cultural products that were authored or produced by Mess Hall keyholders, and those which were authored or produced by others, such as visiting artists or even the audience members themselves? In other words, can you ensure an appropriate differentiation between the so-called “producers” and the so-called “consumers” of the art event/product?

5. Your status as an archive means that your content will no longer be updated. You will be entering a period of stasis, in which your material will be available to the public for research and historical information purposes only. Given that historical research is a remarkably exacting profession, can you demonstrate, either expressly or impliedly, the accuracy and completeness of your material? Can we count on you to provide a precise chronology of the events in which you participated? Do you assume full responsibility for the story that you tell?

6. I have a hard time with disappearance. How do you feel about that?

7. I must say—and forgive me if this seems a little rude—but you don’t seem to have any clear organization at all! Exactly how did you...
prepare yourself for becoming an archive? Have you been in contact with industry professionals? Did you consult with any librarians? To what extent did you prepare yourself for possible publication? Are you aware of the most recent archival theories and practices? Also, do you have a Dewey Decimal number, or would you rather go with a Library of Congress designation? Or something a bit more digital, perhaps?

8.

I know that all of Mess Hall’s events were free, and that you considered “surfing on surplus” to be an ideal, but I think that an analogy to contemporary business practices will be useful for this next question. In the contemporary sales context, with its emphasis on customer service and e-commerce, interactions between customers and customer service agents via a web or phone connection are important indicators of customer satisfaction. It is often desirable to be able to access these interactions, ideally in a manner that is transparent to the user. This type of procedure is analogous to reviewing and analyzing the script of a movie. As an archive, will you include these kinds of mediated interactions? If so, does your system for storing and retrieving information about these interactions provide a clear, tangible picture of the “special effects”: the atmosphere, the chemistry between the user and the server, etc.?

9.

In today’s society, archives are increasingly important—perhaps because in the digital age the collection of data is increasingly recognized as an aesthetic practice in its own right. Many contemporary artists prefer to assemble exhibitions, publications, and other programs that organize the work of others. In many ways, it seems that Mess Hall was always doing this. You were, after all, a kind of gallery and meeting space. But now you have the potential to become an exhibit in your own right, or a page or footnote in some report. Do you feel up to the task?

10.

Almost by definition, an archive requires restricted access. At the University of Chicago, for example, residents of the neighborhood can’t just walk in and take a look. Passes are required, not to mention proper behavior when accessing the files. Technically, you’ll be available to the public, but it won’t be the kind of public you were used to, when people would walk in off the street, just because they were passing by, or because they were looking for a winter coat or a new pair of shoes. Are you OK with this kind of public?

11.

Finally, as you know, the interest in creating archives tends to lower their market value. To put it bluntly, we’re asking you to work for free. It’s a sort of internship, if you will. Do you agree to these terms and conditions?

ACT II: What It Never Was (or Will Be)

Keyholders move chairs, relocate directly in front of or alongside collection. Selections from the items below are read fully.

1.

Subject: Turmeric Mess
Turmeric <turmericsound@gmail.com>
Sat, Oct 31, 2009 at 4:07 PM
3. subject: nickelback to the future tour help
dad intentions <afamilyarrow@gmail.com> 4/14/10 to me

hello mess hall! my name is john and i’m in a CT based band
called family arrow (myspace.com/familyarrow). we’re an energetic two
piece that a dissonant stand of punk with drums that trigger effect pedals
and noizy guitrr. currently we’re booing a summer tour and looking for a
show in chicago 6/19. your space looks really rad, and it seems like you
have an awesome scene going! we’d greatly appreciate any help you could
offer us! thanks,
john/family arrow

Mess Hall <info@messhall.org> 4/20/10 to dad

Thanks for contacting us. We are a commerce free site and we
do not even allow non-profit fund-raising activities here. You could have
a free show without selling CDs as a way to promote your other shows in
town. Otherwise, there are plenty of venues in Chicago that would cer-
tainly welcome you. Justin a mess hall keyholder
dad intentions <afamilyarrow@gmail.com> 4/27/10 to Mess Hall

yea we’d be down to play a free show. we’re just wondering if
other bands would be playing, and what the likelihood of us finding a place
to crash for the night would be. thanks alot, john

4. subject: Art in the Time of Plagiarism proposals
Ian Miller <thoughtpolice@mac.com> 3/4/09 to me

Hello, I’m Ian with The Plagiarists. We are a chicago theatre
company looking to raise money for our theatre company by hosting an
art show. Last year our fundraiser Art in the Time of Plagiarism in an

Hey Mess Hall Folks,

I am putting together a tour for a my music project Turmeric
which consists mostly of balafon, classical guitar and cello work. We are
hoping to play in Chicago on Friday December 11th and I was wonder-
ing if the Mess Hall would be interested in hosting us? We enjoy the
multidisciplinary nature of the space, and prefer to perform in locales that
courage such a dialogue.

Here is some info about us:
Turmeric is a music project that started in Cincinnati, Ohio and
consists of Ethan Philbrick mostly playing cello and Isaac Hand, playing
mostly classical guitar. Philbrick studied music and dance at Brown
University before coming to Cincinnati. Hand is mostly self-taught and
has played in a variety of metal and experimental bands before collaborat-
ing with Philbrick. Although coming from different backgrounds, Ethan
and Isaac share an interest in crossing genres and traditions. They share
a love of West African music (Philbrick having studied music in Mali
and Senegal) as well as composers like Hildegard Von Bingen, Henryk
Mikołaj Górecki, and Arvo Pärt. While most of their songs are composed
for classical guitar and cello, Turmeric also incorporates found sound, syn-
thesizers, and other instruments on occasion. Turmeric has recorded two
albums: a musical response to a Tara Donovan art installation and an al-
bum of collected works. Philbrick maintains a video blog of public dance
and music work here: http://ethandancesinpublic.blogspot.com. Hand
operates an art and music space in Cincinnati called CS13: http://www.
myspace.com/contemporaryspace13

Thank you much!
Isaac Hand
513-515-6579
more information about turmeric as well as songs and videos can
be experienced here:http://www.myspace.com/turmericsound

2. subject: my cousin’s new album ROCKS!
Lucia Sommer <sommerlucia@gmail.com>
5/14/09

I might be biased as she’s my dear cousin, but it’s really amaz-
ing, like Sonic Youth playing crazy Sufi music, really dark sublime stuff ... http://hudost.com/ and here are some links to the music, which you can
also download as individual songs on iTunes ... http://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=0PSdQIWOZ5I&feature=channel_page
Community Garden. We are interested in whether we can use their space for a Holiday Party in December. I checked the calendar and there seems to be a lot of availability. Please let us know if that would be possible. Thanks. Christine

6. Subject - Exhibition Proposals for 2012?
   Cassie Hamrick <cassie.hamrick@gmail.com> 12/20/11 to me
   Hi Mess Hall! My name is Cassie - I am a new-to-Chicago artist and I just learned about this wonderful sounding place called Mess Hall that lives right down the street from me, how exciting! Unfortunately it seems like I didn't catch you in time to see your last events of 2011, but my friends at the White Rose Catholic Worker said they'd have a cool exhibit up after the New Year, which I'll certainly be down to check out. I wonder if you are still accepting proposals for 2012 exhibits. I am currently working on a plush sculpture series that I would like like show in the late spring (photos attached). The series will include a variety of large scale animal-based forms that are designed for human interaction. I would also love to learn more about/be involved in your upcoming workshop series for the new year! Thanks so much, Happy Holidays! Best, Cassie Hamrick

7. Subject - Space
   Nancy Sell <nancy.sell@sbcglobal.net> 10/22/11 to me, cally-scurls, CJ, a_creative1, SharonHyson, mnatrakul
   Dear Ms. or Sir: Please allow me the opportunity to use the Mess Hall Facility. I simply want to bring attention to the fact that November is Lung Cancer Month. Many of the disturbing discrepancies that exist around lung cancer will be made known & discussed. For example and a very shocking fact is that lung cancer kills more women than breast, cervical and ovarian cancers combined. I want all who come to the Mess Hall to know, consider and possibly act to prevent this fact from continuing. Please watch: www.shinealightonlungcancer.org. I request and only if permitted 2 Evenings out of a week and at the same time. I am thinking now of every Tuesday and Thursday, between 4-8PM -I hope to maintain the open space so that people can walk in, talk and leave with some free, informative literature. Also and in the near future I would like to talk to you about allowing Here Comes the Sun to hold a once a month cancer support group meeting at the Mess Hall. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you. Sincerely, Nancy J. Sell
   Executive Director, Co-Founder Here Comes the Sun, Inc.
8. Subject - Rehearsal Space Blunt
Objects Theatre <bluntobjectstheatre@gmail.com> 8/13/11 to me
Hello, We are performing in Chicago with an original show for Halloween, but we are looking for a rehearsal space to work in through September and a bit into October in the evenings. October 13-14 we might also look to do a preview in your space, if you are open to that idea. But mostly, we are looking to rehearse 3 nights a week, from 8-10pm on whatever nights you have available. Blunt Objects Theatre has performed in your space before, and we really would like to come back. Please let me know if you have questions. Cheers, Bohrs Hoff

9. Subject - King Mary Booking
King Mary <kingmarymusic@gmail.com> 6/29/11 to bstephenson, 
bcc: me
Hello, King Mary is a combination of harp, guitar, voice, and electronics. We perform original music accompanied with visual and performance art (sometimes puppetry, sometimes dance, sometimes nonsense). www.kingmary.com. King Mary is currently booking shows for July, August, and September. Right now, we are pretty open as far as dates go. If you feel like this would be a good fit for your space, please, let us know what dates you have available. Thanks! Bailey Stephenson (405)203-3675

10. Subject - Music at mess hall
indie_star@comcast.net 4/30/11 to me
My name's bear, and I'd really like to make music for anyone willing to listen. I don't expect money, in fact I'd come bearing gifts - most likely free cd's. I don't really have a fan base in chicago, seeing as I don't know too many people in the area. I'm staying in waukegan right now, but I'd head to the city in a heart beat to play music for some cool folks. If you've got any shows, or events that you could use a solo musician for, let me know. You can hear some of my music here: http://www.reverbnation.com/roamingbear let me know if you could use me for anything. -roaming bear indie_star@comcast.net 224-730-5825

ACT III: Who It (Doesn’t) Belong(s) To
(participatory. Items from the archive are handed out in a formal ceremony, participants sign and receive intellectual property rights agreement.)

29. 10/20: Hair Braiding Summit

Sunday, October 20th 10AM-4PM
Hair Braiders’ Summit
at Gray Center Lab, 929 E. 60th St.
in conjunction with Unfurling exhibition
E-Discussion with Liliana Angulo Cortés

Daniel Tucker (DT): When you were conceiving of the project, you went through a process of trying to determine what was a meaningful way to engage Never The Same as a project that dealt with Chicago politically and socially engaged art in both material and interviews. While hair culture is something you have addressed in your work before, I feel like your decision to adapt that work to Chicago was intended as a challenge to Never The Same. As if you were saying, “here is an example of cultural work that is happening in Chicago and very literally engaged in politics through legislative efforts—what would it take for Never The Same to expand your definition of political art to incorporate these practices?” This was very generous of you, to both consider our prompt but also to challenge it in a constructive way, rather than ignoring it. Is that an accurate read of your intentions and process? Can you describe your process?

Liliana Angulo Cortés (LAC): It is interesting that you feel my decision to propose ¡Quieto Pelo! to the Never The Same exhibit as a challenge. Maybe you are right, but it was not just a challenge to NTS but to me also.

It was a challenge in the sense of asking about what we understand as art. We all carry very Eurocentric ideas of what art is. Those ideas are shaped by thoughts that still affirm high and low cultures are real. Many of the practices of African-descent groups around the world have been understood as part of the low cultures, indeed as crafts or folklore. In the USA the practices of hair have been also understood as a kind of public health issue and as labor that needs to be regulated by the State.

My choice to propose the Chicago version of “¡Quieto Pelo” as my contribution to the exhibit was in a way attempting to recognize these African Descent traditions and practices as art, as political art and as resistance traditions. However, as you know it might sound kind of simplistic and tricky to say that the project is about art in the sense of understanding these practices as sculpture or performance. It is a lot more complex than that because the issue is not about validating these practices in the terms of what could be art within white supremacist logic.

From my position as a person with a formal academic education in arts and as somebody who recognizes herself as a person of African-descent heritage, I consider that it is also a political decision to use an art exhibition to try to focus on these practices and to concentrate on the process of establishing a dialogue with people—specifically with Black women—who are doing activism in other contexts in order to also connect them with a bigger movement of resistance actions in the Diaspora.

As you know I tried to respond to the NTS invitation by producing a new work based specifically on the archive. That wasn’t really a requirement from NTS but I was trying to find something to which I could engage deeply and at the same time I was trying to understand how the socially engaged art and activism in Chicago was reflected in the content of the archive.

I was feeling the pressure of having to leave Chicago soon and I felt wouldn’t have enough time to try to discover everything from the beginning, in order to really say something new or meaningful on those projects. I was trying to get a glance at every record, looking to get a sense of what was part of the history that the archive holds. In the hours that I spent in the archive with the documents and considering my specific situation I recognized that it was tough for me to get a comprehensive understanding of the political art in Chicago but it opened the realm and wide variety of approaches. From the materials that I found I got the feeling that I would need a lot more time to really establish a connection with some of the specific cases that got my attention. With everything I looked at in the archive, my worry was that probably everything had been already said.

However the visits to the archive and having participated in the symposium and the seminar were very important to me in order to frame and understand the invitation to the exhibit. It helped me to question the extension to which my work and specifically the project on Hair practices in African descent communities related with ideas of art practice, activism, collaboration and participation of communities that I see circulating in Chicago and reflected in NTS.

The unfurling events were very important for me in order to activate the archive. Skyla’s and Cauleen’s unfurlings specifically were relevant for me to see the richness of the experience of the archive in terms of African American history in the City.

It was very meaningful for me to be invited to the exhibit considering my role as a person that was passing through the city. NTS became in some way my “closure” with Chicago. The idea of me being somebody that was going through Chicago as part of a longer journey I guess was what stuck the most on my mind as the time was going by. Then I realized that whatever I would produce would reflect that condition of...
being in some sense a temporary visitor. Somebody with a baggage and a route, that wandered and that maybe was leaving something behind.

Something that we talked about during the seminar and that you addressed was how much of what we know as political art is reacting to something that is circumstantial … Reacting to a very local or specific circumstance that is in some way urgent to attend and that is, maybe, related to some policy or temporary situation. Part of my intention, when I proposed ¡Quieto Pelo! as my contribution to the exhibit, was to relate to an oppressive situation that is transnational and to which there are many local responses in the Diaspora.

From the moment I knew I was coming from Bogotá to Chicago I always thought I would do ¡Quieto Pelo! in the USA. However, the NTS invitation, as I said became the conclusion of the time in Chicago because it gave the institutional platform and support to make the process possible. When I finally decided that ¡Quieto Pelo! would be probably the most meaningful contribution to the exhibit everything was already moving.

Among the many coincidences in the process, in the NTS seminar I met Sydney Stoudmire, who happened to be the same person that I had read about in a magazine and that I had wanted to contact because she had created a student organization at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign called Supernatural. We decided to collaborate.

I was also working with Faheem Majeed on his project Shacks and Shanties and I had proposed initially ¡Quieto Pelo! to activate one of the spaces of his project but at the end for different reasons it wasn’t viable. I invited Sydney to collaborate in a performance piece and the physical results of the performance collaboration became part of the NTS exhibit.

The organizations (United African Organization, the Illinois association of Hair Braiders and the Supernatural) and the case of legislative struggle for the Special License for Braiders developed during the process to be the focal points of the exhibit. The hair-braiding event became a Hair Braiders’ and Natural Stylists’ Summit which was a very interesting process that addressed the difficulties and achievements of the African and African American braiders and stylists in the process before and now after the bill was passed. It also highlighted the strengths and challenges that these women face as an organized group composed by people that carry with them stigmas of racism and endoracism.

My first idea about relating the project to NTS was, I guess, when I first went to the archive and met Skyla, the archivist. We had a conversation about her hairdo and I told her about my project. She told me she could connect me with her hairbraider who happened to be part of a book on hair culture. Even though I didn’t realize at first how to connect it directly to NTS, because it was the beginning of the process, I thought about interviewing Skyla for ¡Quieto Pelo! but then I felt I had just met her and that was maybe kind of inappropriate, so I didn’t ask her. It was very meaningful that Skyla participated and talked during the Hair Braiders and Natural Stylist Summit.

Rebecca Zorach (RZ): Can you explain the reasons for, and challenges of, not paying braiders for their participation in Chicago (which I think was a different situation, in terms of the pervasiveness of capitalist/neoliberal thinking, than the other locations where you’ve done similar events)? Could you talk about the value to the braiders of the participation?
The conversation about money appeared in the pre-production of the Chicago version of the braiders’ event mainly because I was afraid that people would not participate if we didn’t pay them. Those thoughts came to me because in my view the USA is probably one of the few places in the world in which people have the possibility to pay for and earn a living from these practices. And in my mind, time was money always in the USA.

The main challenge for me was also to believe that people would be interested in participating without me hiring them. It is unproductive to say that I also didn’t have the money to pay what a style would cost in Chicago or even less than the standard, but at the beginning I did not know many people and I was trying to understand the politics of this practice in Chicago.

“Quieto Pelo” was conceived as a space of encounter and collective creation. It has not meant monetary exchange and it is not a contest either so it apparently presented a challenge to motivate people. It was also intended to advocate for different ways to relate outside the monetary economy. It has been a project that has had different versions and I have learned from each one of them that interest in participation varies from one place to another but in the core, the community politics for these practices remains the same.

From the first version of the project in Quibdó–Chocó, the main African-descent majority town in Colombia, with the first group (that became the committee group after they realized that I was not there to teach them to braid), we decided that the project wouldn’t be an art workshop, or a contest, or a business fair. It would be a cultural event on the traditions of hair in Black communities with free participation. We decided that we would offer the logistics, the materials for the hairstyles...
and also the documentation. It was decided also that the braidlers would be invited only to braid voluntarily someone that they choose. Somebody that they knew or that they loved or just wanted to have as models to show their work.

The other people we invited were activists and people that kept alive the history of these traditions in the region. It was the opportunity to give them recognition and also to unite to preserve and show the immense value of these patrimonial practices. With them we started the interviews.

The format was decided because everybody in the group was conscious of the need to generate a space to talk about the loss of these customs. The group also decided that they wanted it to be a big public event in the Malecón, which is a park by the Atrato River in which the whole town would have free access. The event would give also the space to expend time together to discuss the situation faced by African descent populations with the pressure of corporate beauty stereotypes, historical whitening processes and other forms of racism.

I have tried to keep the original version as a model so it has been always clear to the braidlers and activists that had participated in the subsequent processes that the interest of the project is generating an encounter, in which we all have the opportunity to decide, talk, cherish, and honor the work of talented people who carry on these techniques and history. The first three versions were possible because of the support of Obra Viva, an institutional art program on community based practices that made possible for the project to become a series.

However, what I had always offered to people is what I do as an artist and organizer. I invite people to participate and to bring what they are willing to offer. I commit myself to put together some kind of product at the end that in a way would be a documentation result in which their work and what we have created together will be passed along. It is nevertheless an imperfect model because the responsibility mainly lies on my shoulders, although I normally try to get institutional support.

Besides organizing with the committee group, my role in Quibdó and in the other cities during these events has been mainly as photographer or sometimes videographer. I take pictures of the final hairstyles that after the event I would give to the participants. Depending on the budget I have been able to produce other distribution products like the postcard books of the three first events, multi-channel video installations and a photo exhibition, and last but not least to connect and help strengthen the network of women working in this practice in different regions.

The version of Chicago was different and interesting because I was looking to establish contact with the Illinois Association of Hair Braidlers hoping to be able to generate collaboration with them and learn more about the Special License for Braidlers in the State of Illinois, which is a very unique case. As I said before, in Chicago and the USA this practice is understood as a lucrative business but also struggles with government regulations. The idea of an organization had another complexity different from the ones that I have seen in Colombia that are mostly cultural and/or women empowering activism.

I met Sydney Stoudmire when I was initially looking for people that might be interested. I was working on the NTS exhibition and on the Shacks and Shanties project. I decided to collaborate with Sydney, who has a degree in Art History and wants to be a curator focusing in Black cultural practices. She had created a student organization called SuperNatural that focused in transitioning to Natural Hair, and became a Natural Stylist afterwards. Sydney was already involved in the first open call we tried to do using Craigslist and other websites she knew.

Finally, through the African United Organization I was also able to contact Ms. Fatimata Traore the President of the Illinois Association of Hair Braidlers. The Association was created as a consequence of the struggle for the bill that was pass in order to get the special license. The African braidlers were helped by the United African Organization to get organized and lead the great effort that made the license possible. Through the interviews with Mr. Alie Kabba, Ms. Fatimata Traore, and Ms. Sherry Williams, the treasurer of the Association, I was able to understand better the actual situation for the Association after the license was approved in the State. We were hoping that the members of the IAHB would be interested in participating in the event.

The members of the Association and other women that did the process at the beginning were grandfathered in and got licensed as braid- ing teachers because of their years of experience; others got the license as braidlers, but all licenses are valid just until 2014. They face the challenge now of getting their licenses renewed, but they need to acquire 300 credit hours in topics related to safety, hygiene, business management and braid-ing. They need to create their own school or get a partnership in order to fulfill that requirement. They also recognize a need to overcome their weaknesses as an organization in order to succeed and continue practicing.

Part of the process was to discuss with them all these issues.

The value of the participation in the project to the braidlers also varies in each case. The people who benefit the most are the ones that get involved in the whole process. In this case I would say that the Illinois Association of Hair Braidlers and Sydney Stoudmire. The people that participated only in the Braidlers’ and Natural Stylists’ Summit because they saw the posters or the ads in the Internet benefited from the experience and the situation itself and from the products related to the event.
the main benefit was for the members of the Association that were most of the participants because they got the opportunity to have their achievements recognized and the Summit also offered the neutral space for them to meet and regain a conversation on the future strategies and challenges they face as an organization.

RZ: My other question relates to the connection to NTS, because I kept thinking about the idea an archive of hair braiding practices as I saw the braiders identifying the names of the different hairstyles they were going to practice. Each braider is an archive, in a way. I get what you’re saying about not inserting these practices into white supremacist canons. On the other hand could archiving and the ways it might support discourse around the aesthetics (and culture, history, politics, technique) of braiding be a tool for a more independent kind of political validation?

LAC: Yes, I think ¡Quieto Pelo! is mainly an archival project. The initial idea when I started doing the project was to create a visual archive of an ephemeral practice. It still is a component of the project. During the different events I have collected the visual material on the styles and the way they are called in every region.

Every braider has a collection of styles that not only respond to a name but also to a particular set of body techniques, movements and motor memory that are part of the heritage of these practices in the Diaspora. Every style could be the combination of specific base techniques that serve the creativity of each stylist; those techniques could be understood as tools to trace connections among people who have been taught to consider each other different or are separated. However the project also focus on the history of the social and traditional usages of the styles and the practice itself and in the ways in which people define their political relationship in contemporary life with their body, ethnic heritage and the stigmas of sexism and racism.

Now that the project has been done in very different places—Quibdó, Buenaventura, San Andrew Island, Medellín, La Habana, Brasilia, and Chicago—the complete archive gives a more complex understanding of this practice although it is not conclusive. My plan is to make everything available in the web.

31.
12/5: Supper Summit

Independent Arts Education Supper Summit
Thursday December 5, 2013, 5-8PM
at Gray Center Lab, 929 E. 60th St.

With participation from Miguel Aguilar, Sara Black, Eunyoung Chae, Leslie Buxbaum Danzig, Billy Dee, Faheem Majeed, Ed Marszewski, Carla Mayer, Laurie Palmer, Mary Patten, Claire Pentecost, Anthony Romero, Sarah Ross, Abigail Satinsky, Jillian Soto, and Nicholas Wylie.
Guest presentation by Adam Bush of College Unbound.

See never-the-same.org for an edited transcript.
2/20–3/27: Winter Seminar
Chicago Political Art

A reading and discussion seminar

The Newberry Library, 60 W Walton St.

This six week seminar held in the winter of 2014 was designed as an affordable adult education seminar to activate and historically contextualize the NTS interviews and ephemera.

Participants: Jesus Cerrillo, Billy Dee, Anna Dozor, Teresa Dziewlewicz, Sally Eaves, Jaclyn Jacunski, Adam Kader, David Kodeski, Mikelle Kruger, Jennifer Malloy, Molly Roth-Scranton, Emma Saperstein, Amanda Schriver, Erica Slone, Laura Stempel, and Jessica Weller.

Week 1: Introduction—The 20th Century Emerges: Bohemias and Migrations

Week 2: Post-War to early 1960s
Read: George Lewis (2008), Jean Dubuffet (1951), Franklin Rosemont (2005).
Discuss: Grace Lee Boggs, Margaret Burroughs, Bill V. Mullen, Jean Dubuffet, Leon Golub, Nancy Spero, Monster Roster, The Hairy


Poster for Peace and Freedom Party's Vice Presidential candidate Peggy Terry from Chicago's Uptown neighborhood, running alongside Eldridge Cleaver in 1968. From NTS Chicago Ephemera Archive.
Week 3: The late 60s and 1970s

Week 4: 1980s and early 1990s
Read: Joyce Fernandes with Kate Horsfield, Phyllis Bramson, Sonja Rae, Phyllis Kind, Alene Valkanas, Nancy Forest Brown (1983); Judith Russi Kirshner/Barbara Randolph/David Hemmings (1992); Pablo Helguera (2013); Mary Jane Jacob (2011).

Week 5: Late 1990s and Early 2000s
Discuss: Kerry James Marshall, The Department of Space and Land Reclamation, Community Media Workshop, Insight Arts, Video Machete, Street Level Youth Media, Beyondmedia Education, Chicago Reawakening, University of Hip Hop, Kumbara Lynx, Free Spirit Media, Co-op Image Group, Temporary Services, Polvo, Uncomfortable Spaces, Laurie Palmer, 3 Acres on the Lake, Ladyfest Midwest Chicago, Haymarket Centennial Mail Art Show, Sarah Kanouse, Michael Piazza, Haymarket 8 Hour Action Series, Pocket Guide To Hell, Butcher Shop, Dogmatic Gallery, Pioneer Renewal Trust, Pink Bloque, Pilot TV.

Week 6: The Present (plus final projects)
Discuss: Theaster Gates, Rebuild Foundation, Beate Geissler and Oliver Sann, Wafaa Bilal, Flatfile Gallery, ThreeWalls, Rozalinda Borcilă, Creating Justice Symposium, Artists’ Congress.

Participant Presentations on: Judy Chicago, Mimi Harris, Mark Smith and the Chicago Poetry Slam, Mess Hall, Cheryl Pope, speculation.net, Patrick Jagoda, Shrinking Cities and Pop Ups.

Participant Wikipedia Page Edits: Sheridan Road, Wafaa Bilal, Iraq War, and Haymarket Affair.
33.
3/14: Preserving and Activating Local Art Histories

Preserving and Activating Local Art Histories panel discussion
Friday, March 14
at Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St.
Part of Chicago Creative Expo 2014

Invited participants: Sara Chapman (Media Burn); Tempestt Hazel (Sixty Inches From Center); Skyla Hearn (Never The Same and UIC Resident Archivist for Social Justice and The Social Justice Initiative); Faheem Majeed (Independent Artist/UIC/Former Director of South Side Community Arts Center); Leslie Patterson/Bob Sloane (Chicago Artists’ Archive at Chicago Public Library); Anthony Romero (Independent Artist/Extinct Entities); Jacqueline Stewart (South Side Home Movie Project).

To further make public our insights, activities and dialogues, NTS organized a panel discussion with some of the participants in the year-long Unfurling activities oriented around the question: What do you preserve and to what ends?

See never-the-same.org for an edited transcript.
Miguel Aguilar is an artist, educator and researcher who has been painting graffiti in Chicago since 1989. He holds BFA (2000) and MAT (2011) degrees from SAIC and is a 2012 3Arts Teaching Artist awardee. Miguel currently teaches part-time in the Art History department at SAIC. He also teaches art full-time at Lindblom Math & Science Academy CPS high school. In 2012, Miguel founded Graffiti Institute.

Brandon Alvendia is an artist and founder of a variety of experimental curatorial initiatives. He is the director of The Storefront neighborhood cultural center, the Silver Galleon Press independent publishing project and was co-director of alternative art spaces artLedge (2004-2007) and BEN RUSSELL (2009-2011). His work supports the efforts of local and internationally based artists and producers by creating platforms for experimentation, discussion and collaboration. A graduate of The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (BFA ’03) and University of Illinois at Chicago (MFA ’07), Brandon Alvendia regularly exhibits in North America and Europe. He was also the recipient of a 2010 Propeller Fund Grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation administered by Gallery 400 and threewalls, Chicago.

Liliana Angulo Cortés graduated from the National University, Bogotá, Colombia. In 2010 she received a Fulbright Grant to pursue a Master in Fine Arts at UIC. In her work she explores intersections of African-descent culture with issues of gender, language, power relations, and racial politics. negricolas.blogspot.com

Art In These Times is an occasional exhibition venue hosted by In These Times magazine in their offices in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago. Recent exhibitions include Chicago Torture Justice Memorials and Report To The Public: An Untold Story of the Conservative Vice Lords (with Jane Addams Hull–House Museum and former CVL members). artinthesetimes.wordpress.com

Sara Black has worked broadly as an artist, artist-teacher, organizer, and curator. She was a co-founder of the artist group Material Exchange and co-founder of Backstory Café and Social Center at the Experimental Station. Sara currently teaches sculpture at Antioch College.

Rozalinda Borcilă is an organizer, artist, and writer. She is interested in border regimes, trade corridors, and the ways power is exercised across space and upon bodies. She participates in the collaborative projects AREA Chicago, Compass, and No Name Collective. www.borcila.com

Michael Brenson is a critic, scholar and teacher. He was an art critic for The New York Times from 1982 to 1991 and is a Getty scholar and Guggenheim Fellow, a Visiting Senior Critic in the University of Pennsylvania School of Design’s Department of Fine Arts, and a member of the sculpture faculty in Bard College’s Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts. He is working on a biography of David Smith.

Lesley Brown is a Midwest native whose interest in the visual arts includes documentary film, photography, and portraiture. Prior to this undertaking she worked with a team of social scientists to conduct research focused on African Americans and education.

Adam Bush is the founding Director of Curriculum of College Unbound, the Co-Director of The Center for the Transformation of Higher Education, and has co-designed College Unbound’s partnership with the Ashé Cultural Arts Center (www.ashecac.org) in New Orleans to open Ashé College Unbound. Adam received his PhD in 2013 from USC’s Department of American Studies and Ethnicity, is a member of nerche.org, and a board member of Imagining America and the national director of IAs Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) program.

Leslie Sunbaum Danzig is Program Curator of the Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at The University of Chicago. She is a collaborating director with the dance-theater company Lucky Plush Productions and a co-founder of the physical theater company 500 Clown. She received her BA from Brown University and PhD from Northwestern University.

Estelle Carol (Chicago Women’s Liberation Union) was a co-founder of the Chicago Women’s Graphics Collective in 1970 and a founder of the Herstory Website Project in 1999. Active in the draft resistance movement during the Viet Nam War, she joined the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union in 1969 after a stint in the Women’s Radical Action Project (WRAP) at the University of Chicago. She is currently the owner of a home business, Electronic Illustration and Design.

Dana Carter is a Chicago-based artist. Her recent projects pursue interests in light, landscape and translation as metaphor for questions of movement and communication across vast distances. Carter’s materially rich installations often set up perceptual puzzles. She received an MFA from UIC and currently teaches at The School of The Art Institute of Chicago.

Eunyoung Chae is a curator and art critic in South Korea. She curates work about the art’s imagination and practice of re-appropriating capital in the post-fordist system and researches the relationship between community and art. slowrush.org

Sara Chapman (Media Burn Archive) is Executive Director of the Media Burn Archive. Media Burn’s documentary video collection has been recognized with preservation grants from the National Archives and Federal Save America’s Treasures program, placing it alongside recipients like the original Star Spangled Banner and the iconic Rosa Parks bus. mediaburn.org

Sharmyn Cruz Rivera holds a BA in Art History and Modern Languages from the University of Puerto Rico and a MA in Arts Administration and Policy from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Originally from Puerto Rico, in 2006 she stated curating art shows and organizing series of talks and conferences, and from 2010 to 2012, Sharmyn was a writer for the online publication The Fractal, soundmarking.tumblr.com

Billy Dee is the assistant coordinator for The Crib Youth Shelter in Lakeview and has also worked with the P.L.C. Teaching collective, and Project NIA to create artworks, zines, and exhibits.
Claire Demos is a visual artist based in Chicago, Illinois. Her work explores the ephemeral nature of our surrounding environments, intangible presence, and nostalgia. Claire is a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts with a concentration in photography.

Paul Durica (Pocket Guide to Hell) is a teacher and writer whose work has appeared in Poetry, Tin House, Indiana Review, and Mid-American Review, among other places. Since 2008 he has been producing a series of free and participatory public history programs under the name Pocket Guide to Hell. pocketguidetohell.com

Extinct Entities is a collaborative project by Erin Nixon, Anthony Romero, and Anthony Stepter that investigates possibilities for re-engaging with art spaces that no longer exist. extinctentities.tumblr.com

Alexandria Eregbu is an interdisciplinary artist and curator whose concerns lie primarily in performance and community engagement. Eregbu's artwork focuses on institutionalized and public visibility of Black bodies through a contemporary art lens. She earned her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois.

The Joan Flasch Artists’ Book Collection is one of SAIC’s most popular Special Collections. It was officially named and established in 1989 as a separate entity within the John M. Flaxman Library. 'Today it exceeds 6,000 artworks, complemented by extensive reference materials.

Justin Goh—is an artist, designer and business owner—sees beauty and humor in countless things around him and tries to capture it in the work that he makes. Justin was a Mess Hall keyholder from 2008 until it closed its doors in June of 2013. He is also one of the core organizers of Childitarod, Chicago’s Urban Iditarod and food drive.

Tempesst Hazel is a curator, writer, and Director of Sixty Inches From Center, an organization that documents and archives art in all corners of Chicago. Curatorial projects include The Future's Past for the Black Metropolis Research Consortium, The Tipping Point of Me and We for the Contemporary Arts Council, Serenade at Terrain Exhibitions, Diana Gabriel at The Salon Series, and Recess at South Side Community Art Center.

Styia Hearns is an archivist, special collections librarian, curator, and fine art photographer. Skylla’s interests include African American community archives and grassroots archiving. Her projects include Faith in the Struggle: Rev. Addie Wyatt’s Fight for Labor, Civil Rights and Women’s Rights (exhibition), Never The Same Chicago Ephemera Archive, and The Great Black Music Project.

Andres L. Hernandez is an artist-designer-educator who works both independently and collaboratively to interpret, critique, and re-imagine the physical, social, and cultural environments we inhabit. Andres received his Master of Arts in Art Education degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he has been an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art Education since 2006. He is concurrently employed as Lead Artist with the Teens Re-Imagining Art, Community & Environment (TRACE) program of the Chicago Park District, and maintains an active studio and writing practice.

Jayne Hileman works as a visual artist, carpenter, and cultural curator, and as an art & design teacher at Saint Xavier University, Chicago. She has been doing mapping projects about Chicago's South Side since 2005. She curated Ocupados/Occupation and Tent Cities at Art in These Times, 2013. www.jaynehileman.com

The Illinois Association of Hair Braiders is a registered association whose mission is to protect the interests of braiders and natural hair stylists promote a common vision as independent entrepreneurs, provide mutual assistance, as well as nurture the leadership capacity of women for collective empowerment and effective advocacy.

Joshua Kent lives and works in a Catholic Worker community in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood. Mr. Kent's visual and performance practice explores "aesthetics of poverty" and adjacent expressions of poetics and longing found therein.

David J. Levin is Addie Clark Harding Professor of Germanic Studies, Cinema & Media Studies, and Theater and Performance Studies at the University of Chicago. In July 2011, he was named the inaugural director of the Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago.

Lisa Yun Lee is a cultural activist and the Director of the School of Art & Art History, a visiting curator at the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, and a member of the Art History, Museum and Exhibition Studies, and Gender and Women's Studies faculty at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Lisa is also the co-founder of The Public Square at the Illinois Humanities Council, an organization dedicated to creating spaces for dialogue and dissent and for re-invigorating civil society.

La Keisha Leek is a senior in the Art History department at Columbia College Chicago. She provides administrative and project support for Theater Gates Studio and assists with Dorchester Projects-based research, programming, and special events coordination and management.

Lora Lode received an MFA from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and has been involved in a variety of collaborative, curatorial and public projects. She was a keyholder at Mess Hall, an experimental cultural center in Chicago, from 2008 to 2013. She is involved in community-driven and imaginative uses of public space and co-manages a NeighborSpace organic community garden in Chicago. Lode currently teaches at the School of the Art Institute and is a co-facilitator at Archeworks for 2013-14.

Josh MacPhee (Interference Archive) is a designer, artist, activist, and archivist. He is a member of the Justseeds Artists’ Cooperative (Justseeds.org), the co-author of Signs of Change: Social Movement Cultures 1960s to Now, and co-editor of Signal: A Journal of International Political Graphics and Culture. He recently co-founded the Interference Archive, a public collection of cultural materials produced by social movements. interferencearchive.org

Taheem Majeed is an artist, curator, and community facilitator. Majeed blends his unique experience as a non-profit administrator, curator, and artist to create works that focus on institutional critique and exhibitions that leverage collaboration to engage the immediate and broader community in meaningful dialogue. From 2005–2011, Majeed served as Executive Director and Curator for the South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC). shacksandshanties.tumblr.com

Nicole Marroquin is an interdisciplinary artist whose creative practice includes collaboration, research, teaching, and strategic intervention. As a classroom art teacher in Chicago and Detroit, Marroquin taught and collaborated with youth on art-based action research projects. In addition to activism in education, Marroquin has exhibited her sculpture internationally, and most recently at the Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares in Mexico City. Marroquin received her MFA from the University of Michigan in 2008 and is now living in Pilsen, Chicago. She makes art, exhibits, and writes about participatory cultural production with youth and in communities. She is an Assistant Professor of Art Education at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Ed Marszewski is the editor, publisher, and creative director of a quarterly culture magazine, Lumpen, and a triannual arts journal, Proximity, as well as several other titles. Since 2002, Ed has curated, organized, and produced the annual Version festival, an international arts convergence. He also is currently the Co-Director and Founder of the MDW Fair, Chicago's alternative art fair.
Haley Martin is a Chicago-based interdisciplinary artist who uses experimental documentary, graphic design, and performance as a means of social and political inquiry. She is interested in developing forms of communication between otherwise disengaged communities, and in alternative forms of historical preservation and tourism.

Daniel Joseph Martinez has engaged for over thirty years in an investigation of social, political, and cultural mores through artworks that have been characterized as “nonlinear multidimensional propositions.” Martinez has been teaching since 1990 at the University of California, Irvine, and is currently professor of theory, practice, and mediation of contemporary art in the graduate studies program and new genres department. Martinez is currently represented by Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, California, and Simon Preston Gallery, New York, New York and contributed to Culture in Action with two large-scale projects.

Carla Mayer, Arts and Culture Manager at the Chicago Park District, provides vision and direction for the Arts and Culture Unit, the locus of arts learning at the District. In and out of work, she is a committed youth developer and creative activist, and a trained circle-keeper. As an installation artist and sculptor, her work focuses on silenced voices, familiar materiality and including non-artists in the process of art-making. She is part of the organizing collective behind Chicago Torture Justice Memorials.

Sarah Mendelsohn is an artist living in Chicago. She currently works at the Smart Museum of Art, and teaches through the arts mentorship program Ag47. She graduated from the University of Chicago in 2012 with a BA in Visual Art and Anthropology. Mess Hall (2003-2013) was an experimental cultural center. It was a place where visual art, radical politics, creative urban planning, applied ecological design, and other things intersected and informed each other. Mess Hall hosted exhibitions, discussions, film screenings, brunchlucks (brunch + potluck), workshops, concerts, campaigns, meetings (both closed and open), and more. messhall.org

Stephen Monkemeier is a Chicago-based sign painter, hand letterer, and illustrator. He is a graduate of Wheaton College and New York Center For Art & Media Studies. He has participated in sign painting shows across the country and recently opened his own sign shop in West Town.

Dave Pabellon is driven by curiosity and defined by eclectic overlaps. He wears many hats (literally) from designer, educator/student, activist, traveler to aspiring semi-professional volleyball player. It’s this threading of worlds and perspectives that informs his many hats (literally) from designer, educator/student, activist, traveler to aspiring semi-professional volleyball player. It’s this threading of worlds and perspectives that informs his work. His non-9 to 5 projects have included instructing locally, lecturing nationally, and exhibiting overseas. Dave completed his B.A. at California State University, Hayward and his M.F.A. at the University of Illinois, Chicago.

Laurie Palmer’s work takes various forms as sculpture, public projects, writing, and interdisciplinary collaborations. She has shown, lectured, and published nationally and internationally since 1988, both independently and with the artist collaborative Haha. Around the year 2000, she began to focus her individual practice on local projects relating to land-use. For the last sixteen years she has taught sculpture at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She also was an art writer for ten years.

Mary Patten is a visual artist, video-maker, writer, educator, occasional curator, and political activist. Patten has directed and participated in many large-scale collaborative art projects for over thirty years, including the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials project, Pathogeographies, Project Enduring Look, billboards with ACT-UP/Chicago, Artists’ Call against Intervention in Central America, Action against Racism in the Arts, and Cityarts Workshop. She teaches in the Film/Video/New Media/Animation Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Claire Pentecont is a Professor in the Department of Photography at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has realized numerous projects, essays, lectures, and seminars on art, agriculture, the state of interconnectedness that we call “nature,” and the state of disconnection in the current definition of “knowledge.” She is widely traveled in alternative universes. publicamateur.org

Audrey Petty teaches at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and in the Clemente Humanities Program at Harlan Community Academy. Her work has appeared in StoryQuarterly, Callaloo, The Massachusetts Review, The Oxford American, ColorLines, and The Southern Review, among other publications. She is editor of High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing.

Chaitra Powell, certified archivist, received her MLS from the School of Information Resources and Library Science at the University of Arizona in 2010. She currently works as a project archivist at the Mayne A. Clayton Library and Museum, a community archive in Culver City, California. claytonmuseum.org

Matthias Regan helped to found the Next Objectivists poetry workshop and the Compass group of the Midwest Radical Cultural Corridor; he's a member of Feel Tank, and was a Mess Hall key-holder for seven years. He currently teaches in the English Department at North Central College. His most recent books of poetry include Gapers' Delay (Virtual Artists Collective), CHVMS, and Oil Stuck Rainbows (Beard of Bees).

Rebuild Foundation helps neighborhoods thrive through culture-driven redevelopment by activating abandoned spaces with arts and cultural programming. We transform under-resourced communities by leveraging economic and cultural resources to strengthen, create, educate and invest. rebuild-foundation.org

Tomeka Reid is a Chicago-based cellist, composer, and educator. As a 2012/2013 Arts + Public Life/Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture Artist in Residence, she founded the first annual Chicago Jazz Incubator at Washington Park. Recent commissions include compositions for the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians and the Chicago Jazz Ensemble with performances at the Chicago Jazz Festival. Reid is also an ABD doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Sarah Jane Rhie is a movement photographer documenting grassroots struggles in Chicago. She was politicized when her daughter Cadence entered the Chicago
School system, and she was radicalized in the struggle for education justice thereafter, starting with the Whittier Occupation in the fall of 2010. She currently uses her photography to document the stories of people organizing to dismantle all forms of oppression. She is also the photographer for the Social Justice Initiative at UIC. loveandstrugglephotos.com

Sarah Ross is an artist who works in sculpture, video, and photo. Her projects use narrative and the body to address spatial concerns as they relate to access, class, anxiety and activism. Sarah also works collaboratively with other artists on projects such as Compass (of the MRCC), Regional Relationships, Chicago Justice Torture Memorials, and Prison and Neighborhood Arts Project. She teaches at The School of the Art Institute Chicago and is a co-organizer of the Prison and Neighborhood Arts Project, an arts and humanities initiative at Stateville Prison.

William Ruggiero is an art historian and critic with two centers of interest: Latin American art, and current trends in socially engaged art practice. From his research and projects, he centers on the way in which the urban sphere is made, and the modes through which artists engage with it. He currently dedicates his time to researching as a curatorial assistant for Sullivan Galleries on an upcoming exhibition in 2014 that will focus on Chicago social practice.

Laura Sabransky’s advocacy for a more just, humane, and sustainable world has been as volunteer—serving on boards, organizing/working events & grassroots activism campaigns, participating in demonstrations, and writing to influence change. Her degrees are in Psychology and Interior Design. activistsdiary.com

Emma Saperstein is an artist living and working in Chicago. Recently, her practice has been engaging a personal and localized study of her experience in Chicago. She slings, sells, and eats cheese for her bread and butter and assists in running an artist’s work space with her fellow cheesemongers.emmasaperstein.com

Abigail Satinsky is the Associate Director at threewalls in Chicago and a member of InCUBATE, a research collaborative dedicated to art economies and founders of Sunday Soup, an international micro-granting initiative. She co-edited the most recent PHONEBOOK, and co-founded the Hand in Glove conference, a national convergence of artists engaging socially engaged art practices for publications and exhibition catalogues, and contributes to Bad at Sports podcast and to ACRE Residency & Exhibitions.

Allison Schein (Experimental Sound Studio), a certified archivist, received her MLIS at Dominican University in River Forest, IL concentrating in archives and technical services. She is currently the archivist for the Creative Audio Archive and project archivist for the Studs Terkel Archive.

Mike Schuh is Program Coordinator at the Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago, where he has worked since 2012. Mike has also worked as an artist and arts organizer in various capacities across the country for ten years. Bob Sloane (Chicago Artists’ Archives) is Head of the Art Information Center in the Harold Washington Library Center. Sloane received a BFA in Fine Arts Photography, 1976 and an MLS in 1989. He has been working in the Art Department since 1989.

Cauleen Smith received her BA from the School of Creative Arts at San Francisco State University and her MFA from UCLA School of Theater-Television-Film. For the past several years Cauleen Smith has produced multi-channel film and video installations that incorporate sculptural objects and text. Her interests roam from her roots in structuralist filmmaking to Afro-futurist narrative strategies. Smith currently lives in Chicago and recent projects include 17, a series of hand screenprinted wallpapers which ruminate on sound, and Black Utopia LP—A Cauleen Smith Movie, vinyl records accompanied by 35mm slides featuring performances by Chicago poets Krista Franklin and Avery R. Young.

Baraka de Soleil is an award-winning creative practitioner, curator, and consultant, and has been involved in the live arts scene for the past two decades. His writings, poetic reflections on culture, performance, conversations, and travels within and beyond the African diaspora can be found at: www.dunderbelly.wordpress.com.

Jillian Soto is an artist, writer and educator with a teaching focus on performance practices and women and gender studies. Soto is co-founder of the artist collective ESCAPE GROUP, whose mission is resource-sharing in the Chicago and the greater Midwest as well as collaborative projects including performance-making, writing, and curatorial programming. Over the course of his career, Soto has participated in programs including Crew Leading in the California Conservation Corps within the California State Parks system, which offered him a hands-on foundation in civic-scaled design-build projects as well as a pedagogy in building and sustaining teams through collaboration. Soto received his BA from San Francisco State University in Art and an MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Karen Stanworth is a professor at York University, Toronto. Her curatorial work focuses on gay narrative, including Gay Premises: Radical Voices in the Archives, 1973-1983, exhibited at the CLGA in summer 2013. She recently completed Visibly Canadian: Imaging Collective Identities in the Canadas, 1830-1910 (MQUP, 2014).

Jacqueline Stewart (South Side Home Movie Project) is Professor of Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Chicago. She is the author of Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity (University of California Press, 2005), directs the South Side Home Movie Project, and is co-curator of UCLA Film & Television Archive’s L.A. Rebellion Preservation Project.

Sydney Stoudmire is an independent curator and photographer based in Chicago, IL. She is a graduate from the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, where she earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Art History, with a concentration in Photography and Contemporary Art. sydneystoudmire.weebly.com

Neil Taylor (Read/Write Library) is the founder and executive director of Read/Write Library (formerly the Chicago Underground Library) and co-creator of The Printers’ Ball, an annual inclusive event for the broadly defined small press community.

Alda Tchochiev is a scholar and curator based in Chicago. She served as the Director of Discourse for the 2012 Rapid Pulse International Performance Festival. Her
interests include discursive and socially engaged art, and the contemporary art of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

Victoria Tharmond is a Chicago-based human being. She is the Garden Manager for the Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization as well as a founder of Pueblo Semilla, a Pilsen based seed library. Victoria is part of the Collective Cleaners, an arts collective, and has previously worked with the Southside Hub of Production and Creative Reuse.

Samantha Topol is a writer, editor, and artist based in Chicago. She is cofounder of Original Features, a project-driven collaboration that supports multiple forms of artistic and discursive production. She was the program director for the exhibit Spontaneous Interventions when it traveled to the Chicago Cultural Center in the Summer of 2013. Spontaneous Interventions was organized by Cathy Lang Ho for the Institute for Urban Design and selected by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) to represent the United States in the U.S. Pavilion at the 13th International Architecture Exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia (2012). spontaneousinterventions.org

Daniel Tucker works as an artist, writer, and organizer developing documentaries, publications and events inspired by his interest in social movements and the people and places from which they emerge. His writings and lectures on the intersections of art and politics have been presented internationally in journals, magazines, galleries, community centers and universities. In addition to his work on the Never The Same, he is currently at work on editing the book Immersive Life Practices and producing a documentary video about the human aspiration for self-sufficiency. miscprojects.com

The United African Organization promotes social and economic justice, civic participation, and empowerment of African immigrants and refugees in Illinois.

Washington Park Arts Incubator is a 1920s building located at Garfield Boulevard and Prairie Avenue has been renovated for the University of Chicago’s Arts + Public Life initiative. Envisioned by artist Theaster Gates, the Arts Incubator is a space for artist residencies, arts education, community-based arts projects, as well as exhibitions, performances, and talks.

Dan S. Wang is a writer, blogger, and printer living in Madison, Wisconsin. He lived and worked in Chicago from 1997 to 2007 and maintains close relationships with collaborators in the city. prop-press.net

Sherry Williams (Bronzeville Historical Society) was born and raised on the south side of Chicago in the Englewood Community. She is Founder and President of the Bronzeville/Black Chicagoan Historical Society. Williams offers significant oral and written documentation of African and African American contributions to Chicago and is the author of “100 Notable People and Places in Bronzeville (Black Chicago).” bronzevillehistoricalsociety.wordpress.com

Nicholas Wylie is an artist, organizer, and educator based in Chicago. Currently Artistic Director at Mana Contemporary Chicago, he received his BFA from Carnegie Mellon University, did post-baccalaureate work in Art History at Northwestern University, and received an MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago. In 2006 he co-founded Harold Arts, and was its co-director until early 2010, when he co-founded ACRE (Artists’ Cooperative Residency and Exhibitions), a 501(c)3 centered around a residency program in rural Wisconsin and an exhibitions program in Chicago.

Rebecca Zorach is an art historian, writer, editor, activist, and curator in Chicago. She co-founded Never The Same and curated AFRICOBRA:Philosophy (summer 2013) at the University of Chicago’s Logan Center for the Arts, working closely with the South Side Community Art Center and the DuSable Museum.

35. Acknowledgements

Never the Same was founded in 2010 by Daniel Tucker and Rebecca Zorach with support from the Propeller Fund (administered by ThreeWalls and Gallery 400). Throughout 2011 and 2012, they focused primarily on conducting oral history interviews with a wide range of artists, curators and collectors. With the support of the Mellon Fellowship for Arts Practice & Scholarship at the Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at The University of Chicago in 2013, the collaborators are now expanding NTS into an educational, curatorial, and archival project. never-the-same.org

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