

COOPERATIONISTS /
CAPITAL / SLOW /
PLAINES
MALLA

AD HOC

a collection
of interviews
with seven

ARTIST - RUN PROJECTS

There is a vibrant tradition of eclectic, non-commercial art spaces in Chicago. In the following pamphlet, you'll find seven interviews that highlight a new generation of DIY effort. Many of these art spaces are run by artists. Many have parallel functions, operating simultaneously as apartments and houses for some member/s of the administrative team. These sites are essential to Chicago's art culture. They are watering holes for aesthetic experimentation and community alike. They are also essentially messy. In order to function, they rely on a network of ever-shifting exchange-based relationships. Distinctions between friend, collaborator and co-worker are all but impossible to make. Borders between public and private space are similarly muddled and challenge traditional distinctions of authorship. There is a delight in that messiness, as every day, every show and every administrative decision becomes an open negotiation that ultimately reflects back on an aesthetic agenda and, even, an experiment in idealism. To document this tradition further, I sent a handful of questions, by email, to these spaces. Some answered, others did not. I believe you can see much about each respective aesthetic agendas in the style of their replies.

- *Caroline Picard*

This pamphlet was published by Bad at Sports, a weekly podcast and blog produced in Chicago that features artists talking about art and the community that makes, reviews and critiques it. For more information visit www.badatsports.com. It was printed in conjunction with an ACRE Partner Gallery Tour during Chicago EXPO 2012. For more information about that tour and ACRE, turn to the back of this booklet.

All cartoons by Steve Hamann

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THE QUESTIONS:

The following questions were asked of each gallery:

- 1. What kind of exhibitions excite you generally?**
- 2. Do you have a particular story about what the back-end of your space is like? Something perhaps indicative of your administrative process? (i.e. how do you choose shows? deal with conflict? balance practical issues with aesthetic ones? engage a public audience? write a press release?)**
- 3. Do you think non-traditional sites for exhibition are important? Why?**
- 4. What are some administrative influences and how have they colored your own approach to running a space?**

ATTENDANT

a restroom modification



MDW\FAIR

Friday, October 21 8pm-11pm
Saturday, October 22 12pm-6pm
Sunday, October 23 12pm-6pm

ATTENDANT, a restroom modification. Featuring: Jesus Mejia & Ruth, Industry of the Ordinary, Anna Reich and Jim Zimpel, Sarah Belknap and Joseph Belknap, Lesley Jackson, Jake Myers, and Allison Yasukawa. (Fall 2011)

LOCATION
VARIABLE

HAPPY COLLABORATIONISTS

happycollaborationists.com

1 We like anything funny, we also sometimes like things that are not funny but mostly we prefer art that is funny. This is of course a gross over-simplification of what we look for, which is artists who are considering how their audience is engaged and affected by their work, art that takes into account the visual, physical, mental and even at times olfactory and gustatory experience of the audience. We work with artists who craft positive experiences where people can engage and feel that they are part of something large and wondrous. Because this is our underlying motivation, we have limited the mediums we work with for performance, installation and media arts; all art forms can consider and engage an audience in the manner that we are interested in but we have found that these subsets of art have more consistent success at constructing experiences that transcend the art object, we have also found that these are mediums that artists have had difficulty finding support and space for here in Chicago.

As all of our shows consist of new work constructed with our space in mind, most projects don't struggle with site-specificity at Happy Collaborationists. We will say, though, that the most successful shows have always engaged a community and fostered relationships built on shared experience, much like the work presented by artist Erik Peterson at his 2010 ACRE show – (SWWMYOSBL¹) HALL OF FAME. For EXPO Chicago artist Peterson, with the help of Happy C, James Green and C'ne Rohlsen, will recreate SWWMYOSBL game with ACRE alumni from 2010–2012 on Saturday, September 22 from 5pm - 6pm at Pulaski Park (1419 W. Blackhawk, Chicago, IL 60662)

1 SWWMYOSBL = South Western Wisconsin Make Your Own Soft Ball League

Well, Anna lives behind the gallery if that is what you are asking and it's a lot like a tiny, dark, studio apartment ... but in all seriousness our process is very social; we are always telling people that we don't have skills, just personalities. Our series are built out of being good friends who really enjoy hanging out together; our last MDW fair show, *ATTENDANT*, came out of a night drinking at the VFW bar; that said, after you have a good idea it's all hard work. There is a lot of research and making lists of artists who you know and like and who you don't know and like. Meredith is more or less a rolodex of every artist in Chicago at this point in time. We get really stressed and fight but more than anything we find it's important to make sure that we are balancing each other out. Meredith does all the real work when it comes to keeping up with emails and setting our schedule, Anna makes the brunch, runs the website, mops the floor and it all it works out in the end.

Of course we do, that is why we run one! They let artist's make work and take risks that they couldn't elsewhere. Because of non-commercial spaces, artists can make work they don't have to sell, and take risks that might make a gallery or institution nervous because of install, insurance or content. These are the kinds of risks that are necessary not only to progress and innovation in contemporary art but also in our culture.

We love threewalls (Shannon Stratton and Abigail Satinsky) because of all of their incredible public programming; Joseph Ravens and Carron Little who constantly take incredible risks to create opportunities for performance art in Chicago; Industry of the Ordinary (Mat Wilson and Adam Brooks) who may be the grumpiest but most generous artists in our city; and we are beyond excited to be working with Cortney Lederer at the Chicago Artists Coalition — because of her enthusiasm and commitment to local emerging artists — her energy is electric.

Beyond that, Anna works for Roell Schmidt at Links Hall who is in her own league of arts administrators. Anna always

says that no one has ever worked so hard to support individual artists and their dreams and visions. Nonprofit arts can be hectic and stressful and you are inevitably working with a smoke-and-mirrors budget, but you can meet some pretty amazing people.

If Meredith could meet anyone (right now) it would be Janet Kim of TINY CREATURES because of the following quotes from Chris Kraus' *Where Art Belongs*:

Kim saw Tiny Creatures' potential to serve as a launching pad from her community to the larger world. TINY CREATURES is making this small community of Los Angeles artists available to the wider world, or perhaps, the wider world available to us.

Happy Collaborationists hopes to give artists opportunities that will generate additional opportunities ...

Happy Collaborationists is the curatorial collective of Anna Trier and Meredith Weber. "Happy C" provides exhibition opportunities for performance, installation and media works - including but not limited to solo exhibitions, public programming and private event planning. Together Anna and Meredith also collaborate on their own performance art practice under the name Meredith and Anna.

LVL3

1542 N MILWAUKEE AVE
3RD FLR CHI IL 60622

lvl3gallery.com

Generally I'm drawn to cleverness and humor presented thoughtfully. Thinking about this question make me reflect on my own work as well. I like material investigation and alteration where I'm trying to figure out what something is. Being confused forces people to think, which I support. How does that aesthetic reflect in your curatorial agenda? I think my curatorial agenda reflects back to my artistic practice and my interest in pop culture. I get extremely excited whenever it's time to layout and hang a new show. It's like watching all the pieces of a puzzle come together. Everything we show at LVL3 should be something I'd be happy to include in my own collection of art. Was there a particular exhibit that worked especially well in your space? I think in general I find it satisfying when we bring different artists together that don't necessarily know each other. I like watching relationships and collaborations develop naturally, like in our exhibition *A Rod Stewart Little Richard Prince Charles Manson Family* (5/07/2011 – 6/12/2011).

Our curatorial process for each show usually develops somewhat slowly. Typically we always interview artists we are interested in and then feature them as an Artist of the Week on our blog (<http://lvl3.tumblr.com/>), then we review the artist we have featured and try to see who we could imagine showing together, always taking into consideration their location of where they are based. Once Allison and I decide on the arts, we begin a dialogue with all of them: we choose a title [for the show], then create the description, discuss work ideas, etc etc...

Yes I think non traditional sites are important because they offer artist and curators freedom to think of alternative ways about howto exhibit work, and attract a diverse audience. Whether it's

a non traditional gallery, an empty CTA Train, or an abandoned store front, thinking about site-specific work and the relevance of a space can be very exciting.

4 Besides being self funded and working within a limited budget, I've gained a lot of knowledge from Art Administration classes at SAIC, as well as through various jobs and internships. But I think the real influence comes from just doing; diving into the process full on, you quickly learn from your mistakes and create memorable experiences even when things might seem to have failed.



LVL3 is an exhibition space in Chicago, IL. LVL3 is dedicated in supporting collaborative work and group shows of all mediums to foster connections between emerging and established artists.

Vincent Uribe, Director
Allison Kilberg, Associate Director
Danielle Campbell, Gallery Assistant
Anna Mort, Gallery Assistant

NEW CAPITAL

newcapitalprojects.com

3114 W. CARROLL AVE.
CHICAGO IL. 60612

Aesthetics often follows content. The look of the show is hopefully born of some necessity to communicate an idea, even if it's a formal one. Structure plays a significant role in this, which is why we were drawn to the two floor architecture of our space. It really sets the stage (so to speak) for this kind of investigation. It allows you to look at each show individually, then as a pair, then together again, etc. It creates those multiple vantages that flip flop and build upon one another.

Still, it's a hard question because we really LOVE every exhibition we've done. But, the *NEW CATALOGUE/KANDIS WILLIAMS* show was the most polarizing and context-dependent. It highlighted the extremes of privilege, poverty, and opportunity in the art world. Because of this, we swapped the exhibitions for the closing to see how the content changed with opposite framing. At the time it felt like a bold move because it was the first time we tipped our hand towards our own pretenses of the gallery functioning as a performative social practice/social sculpture.

The exhibition *HARLAN/LARACUENTE/LICHTY/EARTH* also worked really well. This was our first group show, and we did it because the artists had a really inventive approach to blur the boundaries between, group exhibitions, collaborative art making, and anti-art gestures. The three artists Charles Harlan, Andres Laracuente, and Stephen Lichty flooded the downstairs gallery (the old boiler room) with one ton of gravel. They then built a table from foundation stones in the building and showed 6 objects from moments geological time such as a meteorite older than the sun and a triceratops vertebrae. They consider this an activity, not an artwork, because they differentiated as an activity using their skills as artists versus an artwork, and they claimed that the earth was the author of the work. In the upstairs white cube space, they then showed an individual work

from each of them. All of their work is sculptural, minimal, and poetic and the experience downstairs then became a shared context for their own individual practices

Well, it's really personal, because we live there. And it's weird because it's our office as well as our home, and our own studio space. So we really feel, to some degree, that we're always working, but we are also always surrounded by amazing art! It's awesome and intense.

Our process for choosing shows is super intuitive. We put a lot of trust into our instincts and running the space has really helped us sharpen that skill. However, we knew from the very beginning the potential danger of this approach, which is to pick low fruit, and follow what's "in the air" as opposed to what's really good, what you believe in, or what you discover you are interested in after careful investigation.

Trust in instincts is just as important as being critical of them. We didn't just want to show our friends work. We wanted every show to be very intentional, and to really push the boundaries of our networks.

We were interested in discovering the actual boundaries of our networks, if that existed at all? And had the hope to create a new network that was not singularly influenced by a corporation like Face Book or an institution like School of the Art Institute of Chicago (though we have love for both :)

We were also interested in simply seeing what people were making now. And, tried to find that out from as many people as possible. We wanted to understand contemporary art through our own navigation of the world, to produce culture with other people as much as we have consumed it in the past.

In addition to frequenting as many studios as possible here in Chicago, we made a few trips early in the formation of the gallery to New York and LA. Those trips were rigid! We scheduled studio visits practically on the hour, every hour and hardly slept, it was so much fun! We made those appointments by asking everyone we knew (whether we knew them well or not) who they were interested in, and if they knew of any artists we should visit. We have been totally amazed and humbled by

how many people will open their doors to you when you ask! And, we saw some really exciting work! We also stayed in touch with international acquaintances to find out what they were interested in at the moment.

Engaging a public was also one our major concerns from the very beginning. Our approach was to focus on relevancy and diversity. If we did that, we'd service communities locally and abroad. And I think it has played out pretty well. We structured our program this way with openings and closings, so we could show painting, sculpture, installation along with sound, performance and video. We wanted to work with as many people from as many disciplines and backgrounds as possible.

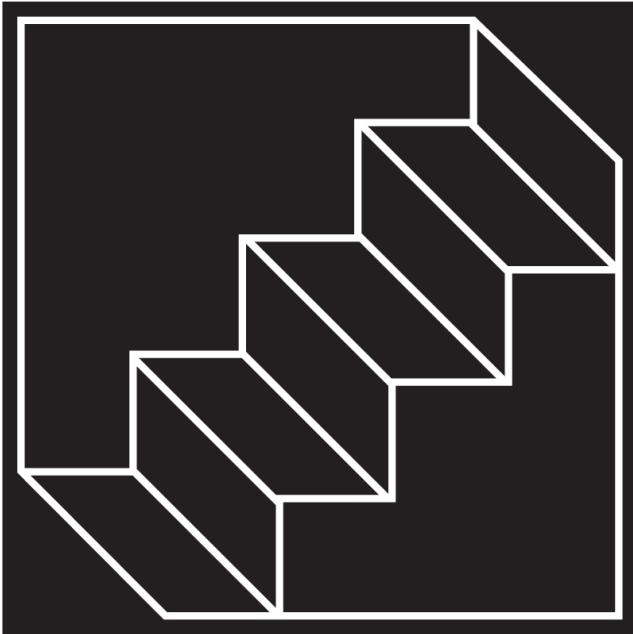
I (Ben) learned a lot by watching Hamza Walker write a press release when I worked at The Renaissance Society many years ago. That man does his research! He finds any and every reference in an artwork or practice and then goes to the library and checks out books and researches every possible connection. I'd see this inspire his writing and really contextualize a practice in the world at large. He'd build a history. It's what we try to do on a much smaller scale. We try to take all these ideas and strip them down to their essentials. Chelsea and I do this together — usually obsessively for about 48 hours straight — a week before the show opens!

In some ways its great to be able to rethink what you are doing just before a show is opened up to the public, you can be really nimble and honest. But, we don't actually like doing things at the last minute and on such tight budgets, it's just what it sometimes comes down to when you are trying to do a lot.

We also thought a lot about different contexts for presentation. We knew Facebook was going to be important, but we really wanted to use it in a way that was appropriate to the medium. We usually only show pictures from receptions that document the social event there, not so much the show itself. That happens on the website. Our design choices on FB are also more casual; we use the staircase logo there. The branding is more explicit and fun. The website we keep pretty paired down, the branding is more subtle.

3 They're not only important, they're necessary. Close to 100% of the projects we've put on, could not, or would not have been put on in commercial galleries or institutions and its because of either over-head or beauracracy. Don't get us wrong, all of these venues are necessary and play a role in facilitating culture. However, artist run spaces share a focus with the artists they exhibit that allows for risks that can really push a practice forward.

4 We've both been influenced by the individual artists and art institutions we have worked for, but what's really interesting about working on a project that requires so much admin is developing your own style (and in our case a collaborative) style. It's actually a very expressive medium, if you allow it to be. But that does take some courage and it doesn't always work to your advantage.





it ain't over, installation shot, April 2012

2153 WEST 21ST STREET,
CHICAGO, IL 60608

slow

paul-is-slow.info

I like an exhibition that gets under my skin. Art is best when I am not sure whether I like it or not, but I can't stop thinking about it. I always try to get artists to present work in ways they would be less likely to without me, or the kind of space I run. That means pairing people who otherwise would not be paired, encouraging a new direction in the work or taking more risks in its presentation. I have been really lucky to have worked with a lot of really fantastic artists, but I have two favorite shows: one was called *the low down* and featured the work of Jeffrey Grauel, Caroline Allison, and Danica Favorito. Jeffrey covered all the windows with panels of crocheted video tape. It brought a darkness to the space — clearly because it was a sort of blackout curtain, but it also just pushed its presence into the space generating a kind of tension. Well, the fact that you also walked straight into a slowly spinning baseball bat maybe helped that a little too. I also really loved the play between Caroline's gorgeously printed and beautifully framed photos with Danica's that were off her junky inkjet she had at home, wrinkled and hung with obvious pieces of masking tape. I think one of Danica's photos had a coffee stain on it.

The second show was last spring, titled, *it ain't over*. Brent Garbowski and Joe Mault collaborated on this work that was not just designed for the space, but for people who come to it, for me. There was a kind of specificity to the work that was truly remarkable. They cut down a power pole and lay it down on the floor so that it cut through the gallery, through the entrance of my apartment and ran alongside my bed. They fabricated a swing arm with the familiar arch of a streetlight, so that the bulb illuminated my bed, complete with the way-too-bright light of an outdoor fixture. They are in the process of installing parts of that pole in another space and it is becoming a wholly different work. I also love that I got Barbara DeGenevieve to make work that was really light-hearted. I was really excited that she, one of

my more established artists, was excited to work with Brent and Joe, two boys still in undergrad.

I would probably not be running a gallery if there were no separation between my private apartment and the storefront gallery. It is funny to me now, but I thought I wanted to keep people in the public space and keep my home out of the mix. A couple of shows into it I just realized it was ridiculous — it was more comfortable to use my home as the space to hang out in. If I haven't swept the floor in my apartment and there is an opening, I just let it happen anyway. "Y'all come to see the work and enjoy a beverage. Hell, some of you seem comforted that there are little mounds of my dog's hair everywhere."

I made a rule — if I find you difficult to work with, it is not worth it to me. I will also not work with you if I don't trust you to be alone in my home. I do this because I love it, and it is important for me to continue loving it. I have only had a few conflicts, and I hope I have resolved them well. Most of the artists I have worked with have truly been a pleasure. Not that there is never stress; stress is part of getting something worthwhile to happen. But the artists I have worked with have been helpful, resourceful, and interested in having good shows. I have been thrilled to see it work that way. I have had artists who have shown in my space just jump in and help with practical chores even when it is not their show.

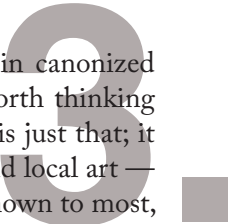
I keep a running list of artists that interest me. Some, I check in with from time to time. I throw ideas around, often in casual conversations with friends. Just keep at things until an idea clicks. Then I approach the artists. Sometimes that doesn't work out and it means I have to start again. Maybe an artist is unavailable, or sometimes just not into the idea. I usually have three or four studio visits with each artist leading up to a show and I always run my show ideas by Jeffrey Grauel, my co-director.

The biggest practical decision I make is to avoid shipping work. I have done it, and it has worked, but I mostly show

Chicago folks. I find the practical matters to be a part of the scene, so working within the resources and space I have is a part of the fun. I don't choose in a terribly practical fashion. I mean I had a power pole hovering over my bed for two months, and I let a performer live in my space drunk for a week.

I write for every show. It brings clarity about the show and why I put the artists together in the first place, and it helps the artists understand it too. When I get it right, the writing also helps generate some interest in the shows. But I try to avoid describing the work. I want to generate experience with the work on its own terms. I have my ideas, but I don't ever want to impose them on the work in a way that overshadows the work itself. I don't have my writing in the space at all during a show. It resides on the internet on purpose.

I don't understand your question about, "engaging a public audience"—I mean, people come; the events are, in some direct way, public. It is a bit of a mystery to me that I engage a consistent crowd of undergraduate artists, and a consistent crowd of adults who have been out of school for a good long while, whereas I don't draw a ton of graduate students. It is a little frustrating to me, because critical attention has a way of following the interests of those grad students. But I think the shows at slow are better than that. And not that the projects haven't received attention, because they have. But sometimes I still feel like slow is a secret. I have had a couple of grad students tell me straight up that it doesn't seem like a place where they can figure how to get in — and if it doesn't present them with opportunities then they don't get invested in the space. The funny thing to me is that it can present them with showing opportunities. And then there's the flip side of the same question: what good does it do for anyone if the venue will show anything that comes along? Editing, some kind of vision and hierarchy, seem to facilitate better things all the way around. I guess I am still figuring out some things, and those artists are too. But I want to maintain a kind of criticality, a kind of rigor, and I don't mind that there are interesting artists who remain outside my radar.



Important is a funny word. Curators that work in canonized venues rely on the rest of us to decide what is worth thinking about, worth seeing. But what burbles to the top is just that; it is the thing that garnered attention. Local food and local art — you know? A lot of the best stuff will remain unknown to most, and that is why we visit the places that produce locally. It isn't so much that that venues like mine are important, but we do a kind of work that isn't done by important venues. Not so long ago Hamza Walker spoke very directly about waiting in the wings until a certain few venues have chosen first to pay attention to an artist, or to a new kind of approach. I think it is common for important critics and curators to wait and see what the lesser of us do. If a non-traditional venue bites on a new hook, and the results are well received, it can move through a system and become important. But I want to work from a messier place that is full of risk and opportunity. I love to play with ideas on their own terms. I love the heady space of “why the hell not” and “it's about time.” That can happen when there is no bureaucracy. I can risk a big failure because nothing so terrible happens when I do fail. The payoff can be so much more satisfying when it comes from that sort of space. It isn't all just freedom and light, but it is so much closer to the fantasy of how the art world works. I support what strikes me, what feels ignored or absent from the scene, but nevertheless compelling. I hope to bring a critical eye to my part of the art world in a time where criticality is threatened and disappearing.

The television show *The Wire* changed how I think about storytelling. You get such a deep version of a really compelling story if you see the entire 5 year arch of the show. Artists usually work more like the storytelling in *The Wire* than in, say, *Gilligan's Island*. But we tend to see work that is from the fresh young thing just out of school. Or the work that has become important in the meantime. We see the same details, the same place in the storyline, repeated over and over. It is set up in this way that we think we are seeing a serial, but we're really seeing one or two pieces of a story set on constant repeat. But there is so much more happening than either of those snippets. And I get to pay some attention to work in a way that has a different piece of the

puzzle precisely because I do not aspire to become important as a venue.

Importance is overrated.

4 Artists need good opportunities to exhibit. I feel privileged to have such a big part of my own creative process that functions through the work other artists have made. I try to make the work and the show the focus of the experience. As much as I have a point of view in this, I want that to support the artist's work, and not the other way around. I have worked as an administrator in several other capacities, and what everyone seems to want is freedom to choose things that have an importance, and for the things that aren't valued by the individual to just disappear, to be done by elves. I work to make everything simple, approachable, and pleasant for the artists. If I can't be the elf, I let them know. But if I can make something easier, I certainly will. My structure, my approach, is built on the philosophy that this will be what I want it to be, and what the artists want it to be, as much as possible. This is the place where you can ask to do anything, and it is a simple conversation. I am very aware that I am not an institution. I am not aspiring to be a lucrative business. I am opinionated, invested in fearless and sometimes transgressive art, I have a sense of humor, I have a sense of style, I am social and chatty, I enjoy a good beverage with friends, and I am intellectually motivated. I try to structure the shows to take advantage of all those qualities.

Est. 2009, slow is an alternative exhibition venue for contemporary art. Not quite an apartment gallery, not commercial. Art that leans away from hipster toward introspective and vulnerable (read slightly nerdy).

ROXABOXEN

roxaboxenexhibitions.blogspot.com

2130 W 21ST STREET
CHICAGO, IL 60608

Written by Virginia and Brian

B: The stuff that sticks out to me personally is the work that relies on a playfulness, humor or else some sense-heavy (not necessarily light-hearted) engagement. Music (Xina Xerner or Young's *Death Rites* work circa 2009) and theater (with Baltimore Annex + Tears of Joy) are obvious examples, but I also think of the *Gli.tch* show (Sept 2010 <http://www.hellocatfood.com/tag/roxaboxen/>) or Christopher Meerdo's *Stalemate* (on page 22, for reference). Sometimes I guess it's more appropriate to have a wine-and-cheese conventional solemnity to art openings, but I like seeing people pulled out of that tone when it is congruous with the work. It's probably worth saying that all of these aforementioned works have much more dimension than this element and are thematically pretty varied, but that makes me love the element/idea I'm singling out even more.

I also really appreciate people who take the time to transform the physical space or take time to communicate with it in some way. On one extreme, Hyeon Kim completely filled the place with a maze of dry-cleaned laundry (*Maze*). But it doesn't have to be so intense. Rebecca Beachy opened up a sort of vestigial vent/door from some previous incarnation of the building (a pretty common symptom in the space) near the ceiling at her show last year. You wouldn't have noticed it right away but it was a great little artifact that I think melded well with the nature of her work.

B: We've had conversations about themes (death, regeneration, play) and we get a ton (a TON) of love (read: selectively osmoted aesthetic) from ACRE and their artists. Sometimes the shows are pretty dependent on the artists and who they

working with/come in contact with at the gallery. Of late, I see a collective curatorial taste emerging. And it's mutated from an ongoing, internal conversation in the house/greater community at large who help run this space.

Beyond that, we live pretty intimately together. All the intricacies that go along with that are probably easily imagined and actually kind of boring. We usually keep it healthy.

I like living in a place where people are working/living and trying to actuate a collective vision of what a "space" is (or manifest any collective vision for that matter). I think it can come across as "experimental" to people who are unfamiliar with the space (family, mostly) but I'm unsure if it is.

V: Running Roxaboxen is an ongoing learning process for us and a constant negotiation with the building's physical limits (age, deterioration, size) it's past identity(ies), and what we want it to become. The building is a member of our collective and we have had to learn to negotiate with it. A labor of love would be an understatement. But when with the curated work, there are all these idiosyncratic aspects of the space that can work for or against certain work. We both fight with and accept the physical space of the building, letting certain aspects dictate the work we choose, while renovating/remasking other parts.

It sometimes feels like we are in constant dialogue with the space, fixing old flimsy walls, problem solving to find the balance between making it a clean space for artists to work in, while maintaining its past as an individual presence. Being an old funeral home, it demands a lot of physical work to stem the natural tide of aging. Adaptation is a huge part of what we do.

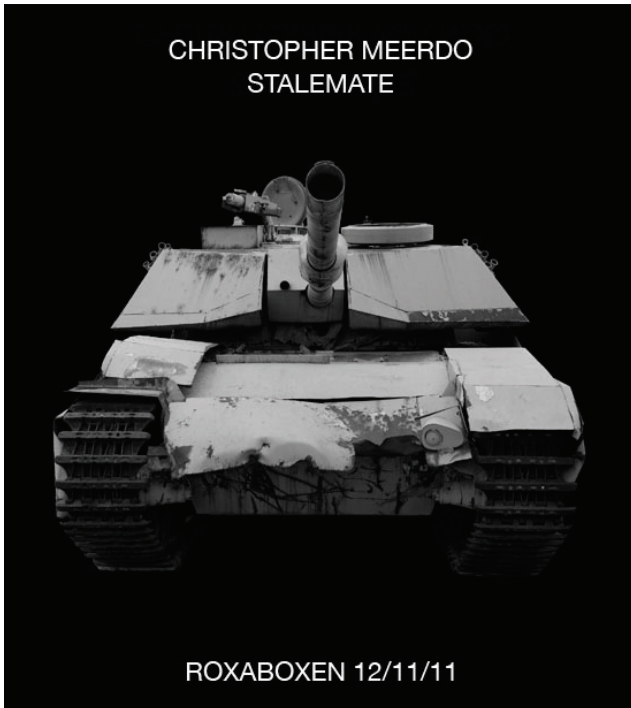
B: I think it's important (and becoming more so) that there be as many exhibition/venue/gallery spaces in Chicago that are at least mostly unfettered by a monetary/market value system.

I also hope we (Roxaboxen and the bigger, wondrously vibrant community of similarly minded spaces) can connect a lot of different young (at-heart) creators within the art discipline and beyond. I'm trying to find a way say this that isn't diluted

by too many buzzwords, but I think our age-group is always fighting a tide of complacency and given the ever-rising tide of aesthetics and structured meaning being shoved on us, it's important to have small (or enormous, but those seem to get shut down), free, open space for people to visit and make work within: A soapbox/sandbox.

B: Color coding on google calendar, meeting around food, trust-falls (we don't really do those), and trial-and-error, the seasonal basement floods.

4.



1822 S DESPLAINES ST,
CHICAGO, IL

PLAINES PROJECT

Written by Alexandra de Leon
and Etta Sandry.

plainesproject.wordpress.com

1 Everyone living here approaches organizing from a different perspective and we all have different interests as far as exhibitions and events go. The Plaines Project has been extant for going on six years now, and every time people move in or out of the house, the dynamic of the space changes, reflecting the diversity of thought and practice that its members engender here. The communal goal, however, has always been and will always be supporting a community of artists and musicians by providing a space where dialogues can be had, visions sustained and nurtured. The PP doesn't have one dominating or specific curatorial vision. In addition to the projects we curate in-house, we accept a lot of proposals from artists and independent curators. We also work with partner organizations in Chicago, like ACRE or Spudnik Press, and the artists associated with them. This results in a patchwork quilt variety of the types of shows and events that are held here throughout the year. Because of this, each exhibition draws a slightly different audience and continues to build a general art community as people are exposed to the space and return to see shows that they may not have seen otherwise.

2 The Plaines Project has no director or hierarchical structure. We are all co-directors of the space and with this comes a sense of responsibility for the projects we take on and the activities associated with those projects. This is far from a utopic situation though; nor is it strictly egalitarian. There's a lot of push-pull. Transparency is integral. We cooperate out of necessity; no one can get fired at the end of the day. Certain members take on more

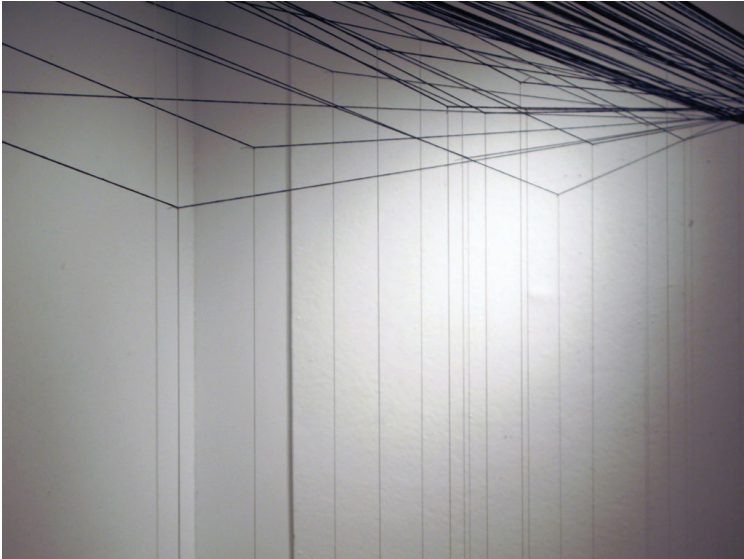
of the administrative duties than others; Etta Sandry created our web presence and handles a lot of our communications. This space requires that kind of initiatory agenda from its members, and a mutual level of support.

Places like The Plains Project are essential in helping to build a community of strong artists, especially in a city like Chicago, where there is such a wide range of types of artists working on all different levels — from students and emerging artists, to mid-career artists, to artists showing internationally. A lot of us are still early in our careers as artists or are still developing our work and practice. Showing in more traditional galleries isn't always an option but alternative or DIY spaces offer opportunities to emerging artists to show work and support each other. Artists can gain experience showing work in somewhat professional context and as their body of work grows and changes, they can continue sharing with each other, getting feedback, and gaining exposure. If profit isn't the goal of an exhibition space, it also provides a site for more alternative practices that may not be marketable in a traditional sense — like performance or installation. These spaces provide flexibility for artists which allows them to really experiment with their practice and presentation of their work and a symbiotic relationship grows between the organizers of these spaces and the artists working together with the space. In this way Do-It-Yourself becomes Do-It-Together. DIT.

E: Roxaboxen Exhibitions is a space that I look up to as kind of a big sister DIY gallery in Pilsen. They have really strong and varied programming and have partnered with a variety of organizations from within Chicago. They are another space that I think reaches various aspects of a somewhat vast community of artists and musicians and crosses these bounds to bring creative people together in ways that they may not have come together on their own.

A: Creative arts administration in my opinion is what sets Chicago apart from other major art cities. ThreeWalls is an enduring example, HATCH projects, Happy Collaborationists, ACRE . . . all of these approach the fostering of art in a multi-dimensional, trans-platform way. Despite the fact that these projects might not function practically for us (within the context of an unfunded DIT project space) they provide a constant source of interesting approaches that we can learn to integrate/mutate.

The Plains Project is a collective living and exhibition space in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago, IL. For six years, the house has been hosting a variety of events including art exhibitions and music shows.



Dressing the Loom: First Iteration, October 14, 2011, Alex Miller and Lorraine Barger, cotton yarn, metal weights

JOHALLA

PROJECTS

johallaprojects.com

1821W. HUBBARD ST.,
SUITE 209
CHICAGO, IL

While we do have a physical gallery space that exhibits some of the most exciting new contemporary work in the city, we also really enjoy our involvement in publicly commissioned work with large scale installations or murals in collaboration with other artists, collectives, or atypical venues. This has allowed us to reach a more diversified audience than one would typically have walk through your gallery, and that is something we thrive off of. For example, we just completed a huge installation for the Pitchfork Music festival and received great reviews.

As far as shows working within the context of our physical gallery space, we have had many successful shows over the years that have contributed to the transformation of Johalla Projects. From sound installations to print media and suspended sculpture to furniture design, we have pretty much run the gamut on presenting art to the masses and for the most part, we would like to feel that they each worked equally as well. The “space” is truly just the confines within which we present the art; the artists and their work are what really make the gallery come to life and take shape.

Our "administrative offices" have been somewhat a struggle for us over the years. We do organize everything quite well, but we have not yet been able to raise the funds to purchase the necessary office essentials, like computers, quality printers, and framing and matting supplies.

We typically choose our shows through a very long and drawn out discussion that involves lots of great ideas that are then pared down to accommodate roughly 9 solo shows and 1

or 2 group shows. We are not a gallery that holds representation rights over any artists, however, we do work with many artists that we have shown in the past or collaborated with on public projects. We like to choose from a staple of fantastic and local artists that span all mediums and reach varied audiences. We have not shown signed artists, but we would like to think that we have had a small part in helping develop a couple of artists whom we have shown and heavily supported in the early stages of their career. We are always looking for the next new idea and accepting of various, unique approaches to presenting art. As for writing our press releases, we typically tend to keep to a pretty straightforward and professional format.

3 We are firm believers (and practitioners) of non-traditional, site-specific exhibitions. We believe that transcending the typical gallery audience is crucial to the development of both an artist and gallery's career. We have worked on large scale public installations (like the aforementioned Pitchfork installations), multiple murals, and have most recently turning the Damen Blue Line stop into a rotating exhibition space, utilizing the station house. These are just a few of the ways in which we have fulfilled our promise to present art we believe in to those that not only want it, but need it.

4 We initially began and have continued to run the space as a collective with a somewhat loose infrastructure, spearheaded by the efforts of founder and Director, Anna Cerniglia. However, as our interests have developed and our programming has grown, we have begun to look to colleagues and other galleries that we respect for additional advice and as role models for the possible growth and maturity of Johalla Projects into something more structured and solid.

The CTA, in collaboration with West Town's Johalla Projects, has selected Ryan Duggan as their featured artist for the new installation at the California Blue Line Stop. The mural is entitled *Today Is Yours* and will occupy a 4' x 8' space on the northwest interior wall residing at the base of the platform staircase. This artwork is part of an innovative initiative to remove art from the confines of the gallery and provide accessibility to thousands of daily CTA riders.



The everyday routine that is overcrowded and leaves no room or time for personal reflection or creative production, gives way to a succession of days that seem to be part of the same, never-ending stream of conscious indifference. Ryan Duggan, an artist in affiliation with Johalla Projects, states that his piece is meant to remind us all that “each day is a gift and we should make efforts, no matter how small, to make use of our limited time here.” Perhaps, through his personal artistic effort to influence and inspire others, Duggan will prompt the next great maker or thinker to take the next step into the unknown and away from the daily and familiar. His message is clear: today really is yours—and mine, and ours.

Located at the California Blue Line Station

Johalla Projects was established in the fall of 2009 by Anna Cerniglia as a venue for emerging and mid-career artists. Prior to the founding of Johalla Projects, Cerniglia ran South Union Arts for several years; after its closing, she felt a need to establish a home base for her curatorial work. Located in Chicago's West Town neighborhood, Johalla Projects exhibits art of all mediums that excels beyond conventional expectations. Working together with various artists and curators, we are the collective known as Johalla Projects. As a collaborative project space, we are a haven for artists, curators, and patrons who desire to expand their aesthetic horizons. Every exhibition undergoes a thoughtful selection process, assuring that each show presented at Johalla Projects is comprised of the finest contemporary work.

ACRE PARTNER GALLERIES TOUR

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2012 4-9PM

*Those not registered for the VIP bus tour
are welcome to follow along in their cars.*

ACRE (Artists' Cooperative Residency & Exhibitions) has organized a tour of several Chicago non-commercial and artist-run exhibition spaces. Featuring ACRE's partner galleries, this tour provides a snapshot of the do-it-yourself ethos that is the engine of Chicago's young art community.

Join us as we tour this network's season-opening exhibitions, and have en-route discussions about the artwork and spaces. Meet the artists and organizers that make Chicago's young arts community thrive, and enjoy Lagunitas beer at each venue along the way.

TOUR ITINERARY

4pm: Start at EXPO/Navy Pier

4:20: Happy Collaborationists

(performance in nearby Pulaski Park)
Corner of Noble & Evergreen Streets
happycollaborationists.com

4:40: Lloyd Dobbler / Roots and Culture

1545 W. Division, 2F / 1034 N Milwaukee Ave
lloyddobblergallery.com / rootsandculturecac.org

5:35: Heaven Gallery / LVL3

1550 N Milwaukee Ave, 2F / 1542 N Milwaukee Ave
heavengallery.com / lvl3gallery.com

6:15: New Capital

3114 W. Carrol Ave.
newcapitalprojects.com

(over)

6:35: The Hills

128 N Campbell Street
thehillsestheticcenter.com

6:55: Johalla Projects

1821 W Hubbard St Suite 110
johallaprojects.com

7:20: Slow Gallery/ Roxaboxen

2153 W 21st Street / 2130 W 21st Street
paul-is-slow.info / roxaboxenexhibitions.blogspot.com

8:05: ACRE Projects

1913 W 17th Street
acreresidency.org

8:30: Plaines Project

1822 S Desplaines Street, Chicago 60616
plainesproject.wordpress.com

9:00: Alderman

1138 W Randolph, Second Floor, Chicago 60607
www.aldermanexhibitions.com

ACRE (Artists' Cooperative Residency and Exhibitions) is a volunteer-run non-profit based in Chicago devoted to employing various systems of support for emerging artists and to creating a generative community of cultural producers. ACRE's summer residency program takes place in Steuben, WI starting mid-July through August. Supported by ACRE's dedicated volunteer staff, artists interact with visiting luminaries, exchange skills, produce new work, and engage in transformative collaborations. Residents have the opportunity to expand upon their individual practices and take part in optional programming within a collaborative community.

Over the subsequent year, ACRE endeavors to provide opportunities and exposure to its alumni. Each resident is offered an exhibition opportunity at ACRE's square foot gallery space in Chicago or at a number of other partner galleries. These efforts complement other activities and programming designed to create the conditions for a thriving and enduring arts network.

HAPPY COLLAR
LVL3 / NEW CA
ROXABOXEN /
PROJECT / JOH
PROJECTS /

