

# Self-Tour Guide

## ***RISK: Empathy, Art and Social Practice***

February 10, 2014 - April 26, 2014



Samantha Hill, *Great Migration*, 2012. Installation in Faheem Majeed's *How to Build a Shack*. Photo by Tony Smith.

This **Self-Tour Guide** was created as an educational viewer supplement to the exhibition by the Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS). It contains a curatorial essay, specialized glossary, and questions for looking and discussion. Free tours of this exhibition are available. Please contact Camille Morgan to arrange, [cmorgan@colum.edu](mailto:cmorgan@colum.edu). For more information and related programming, visit [colum.edu/RISK](http://colum.edu/RISK)

### **Glass Curtain Gallery**

**1104 S. Wabash Ave., First Floor**

Monday through Wednesday, Friday, 9am - 5pm

Thursday, 9am - 7pm

Saturday, 12pm - 5pm

Sunday, CLOSED

**Free and open to the public**

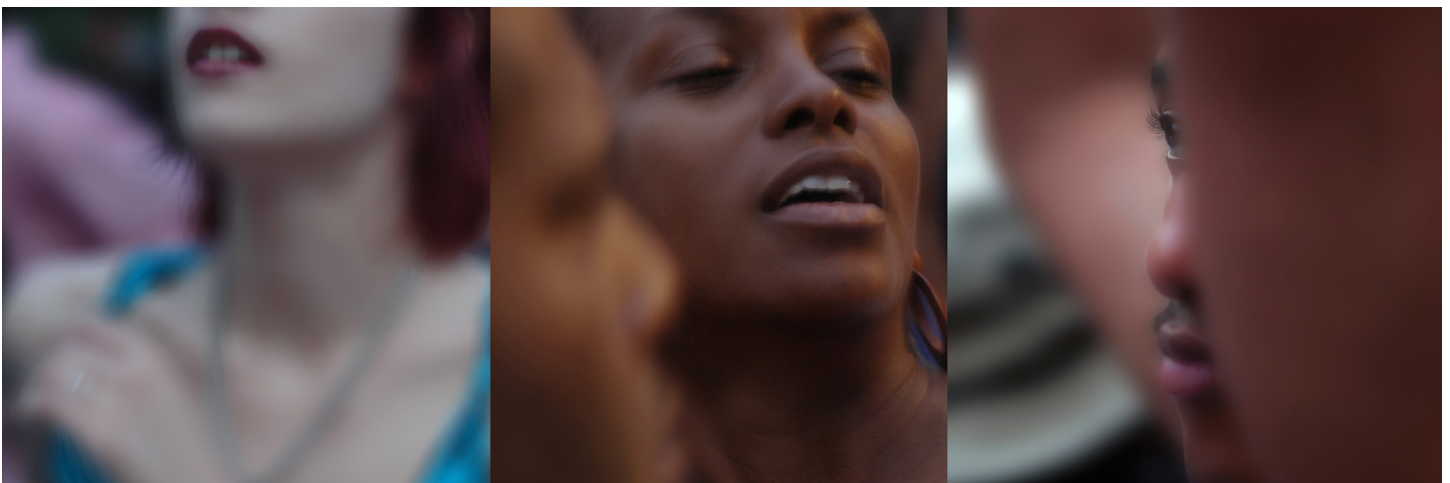
# Curator's Statement

## ***RISK: Empathy, Art and Social Practice***

**Artists:** Alberto Aguilar, Jim Duignan, Industry of the Ordinary, Samantha Hill, Kirsten Leenaars, Faheem Majeed, Cecil McDonald, Jr., Jennifer Mills, Cheryl Pope, Museum of Contemporary Phenomenon, Potluck: Chicago, and Fereshteh Toosi

*RISK* considers the interdependent role of empathy and risk in socially engaged art as practiced by Chicago contemporary artists. The exhibition focuses on artists who work in a public arena to foster connections between individuals and to activate communities. The work is divergent in medium, content and scope, but shares an interest in initiating and negotiating relationships through personal interaction. Working with cultural partners and sites across the city, *RISK* highlights some of the most exciting projects emerging in this field and explores artists' motivations and viewer's expectations of social art practice.

- Amy M. Mooney and Neysa Page-Lieberman, Curators



Cecil McDonald Jr., *Dusky Record, So Black is Beautiful, One Black Eye*, Archival pigment print, 2013

# Glossary

**Altruism:** The principle or practice of unselfish concern for or devotion to the welfare of others.

**Civic Engagement:** Individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern.

**Divergent People:** People drawing apart from a common point.

**Empathy:** The intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another.

**Enfranchisement:** To be free from political servitude, and can also refer to the act of awarding a right or privilege to a person by the government.

**Entitlements:** The right to guaranteed benefits under a government program, such as Social Security or unemployment compensation.

**Participatory Art:** An approach to making art in which the audience is engaged directly in the creative process, allowing them to become co-authors, editors and observers of the work.

**Relational Aesthetics:** Term coined by Nicolas Bourriaud in his 1998 book of the same name - refers to a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than solely within an independent and private space.



Potluck: Chicago, photograph from *Inspiration Kitchen's Potluck*, Photo Credit: Ali Zaidi

**Social Practice:** Involves artistic engagement with communities of interest by creating a practitioner-community relationship wherein there remains a focus on the skills, knowledge, and understanding of people in their personal spheres.

**Social Work:** A professional and academic discipline that seeks to improve the quality of life and subjective well-being of individuals, groups, and communities through actions including: research, policy, direct practice, crisis intervention, teaching, etc.

**Spectatorship:** The act of being engaged in the observation of an event.

# Questions for Looking and Discussion

**Engage with the individual artworks and consider the following:**

1. Why is there a mirror next to Alberto Aguilar's picnic table installation? What might it symbolize?
2. Artist Cheryl Pope works with high school youth to visualize their concerns by stitching them onto colorful banner flags. What do you normally see on banner flags in a high school setting?
3. Think back to a time when a stranger **empathized** with you. How did it make you feel?
4. Can the artists in the show be described as truly **altruistic**? And does it matter?
5. Who takes the **risk** in **participatory art**? The artist(s), the audience, or the funders?
6. A great deal of the art industry is based on value of ownership. Who "owns" community-based art projects?
7. How can more introverted people participate in **social practice** projects in a meaningful way?
8. How does the work these artists are practicing differ from what a social worker or politician does?
9. All of the artists in the exhibit are partially funded by grant money. How are members of the community **enfranchised** to decide how best to spend private and government monies in their neighborhood?
10. What kind of art project do you think could benefit your current neighborhood?



# Resources

## A Few Polemics

As social art practice is an open ended, evolving realm, the following polemical perspectives can encourage further dialogue and inquiry as to its meaning and possibilities. Additional references are listed below.

**Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London: Verso (2012): 5**

“...visual analyses fall short when confronted with the documentary material through which we are given to understand many of these practices. To grasp participatory art from images alone is almost impossible: casual photographs of people talking, eating, attending a workshop, screening or seminar tell us very little, almost nothing about the concept and context of a given project. They rarely provide more than fragmentary evidence, and convey nothing of the affective dynamic that propels artists to make these projects and people to participate in them.”

**Thomas Finklepearl, *What We Have Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press (2013): 362**

“The cooperative artist does not separate social insight from aesthetic vision. The aesthetic vision is in fact social. The artistic product is not secluded within the academy or the art world or ‘set apart from common experience,’ but rather is integrated into and in many cases actually consists of common experience—not ‘art as experience’ but socially cooperative experience as art.”

**Pablo Helguera *Education for Socially Engaged Art* (2011): 4**

“...art students attracted to this form of art-making often find themselves wondering whether it would be more useful to abandon art altogether and instead become professional community organizers, activists, politicians, ethnographers, or sociologists. Indeed, in addition to sitting uncomfortably between and across these disciplines and downplaying the role of the individual artist, socially engaged art is specifically at odds with the capitalist market infrastructure of the art world...”

**Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*, London: Routledge (2011): 14**

“When a political art discourse too often celebrates social disruption at the expense of social coordination, we lose a more complex sense of how art practices contrive to inter-dependent social imagining.”

## Additional References

Becker, Carol and Ann Wiens, ed. *The Artist in Society: Rights, Roles, and Responsibilities*. Chicago New Art Association, New Examiner Press, 1995.

Jacob, Mary Jane; Brenson, Michael and Olson, Eva M.; *Culture in Action*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1995.

Kester, Grant H. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004.

Sholette, Gregory and Nato Thompson, *The Interventionists: Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life*. MIT Press, 2004.