

Scroll 3: On Site

Scroll is an annual publication, published by The Contemporary and produced entirely by its intern staff. Each issue of *Scroll* explores a different cultural topic related to the mission and efforts of The Contemporary and is available, for free, in print and online.

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Scroll 3 Staff



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About *Scroll 3: On Site*

In the summer of 2015, The Contemporary moved its offices to 429 N. Eutaw Street, a building that holds a lot of history. The iconic Art Deco facade and black glass “Charles Fish & Sons” sign out front directly point to the building’s time as a department store, but less visible are the many other ventures it has held. Deliberate research into the space introduced us to the building’s surprising history as one of the nation’s first dental schools. Impromptu conversations with local residents informed us of countless other projects once housed inside: a clothing store, a church, a campaign office, a popup exhibition space, and a nightclub.

It felt important to know more about the space because such a defining part of The Contemporary is that it is a nomadic institution. It is meant to occupy various sites throughout the city for brief durations and site-specific projects rather than be permanently housed anywhere. Our research into 429 N. Eutaw Street became the first step of a much larger excavation, one that spanned sites throughout the city that have housed both arts- and non-arts-related projects. Space and vacancy and ownership are complicated. Who has access to certain spaces? Who decides which projects warrant having it? And, maybe most importantly, how can spaces be responsibly cultivated for arts endeavors?

While we understand that no single building can answer every question or provide a comprehensive history of Baltimore, we have found that each space provides great insight into the historical, economic, and cultural climate of the city at various times. All of the case studies investigated in this publication still stand today, though not all are active. *Scroll 3: On Site* provided us the opportunity to explore projects that have been defunct for decades as well as projects inaugurated in the past year.

Thank you to everyone who provided words, photographs, artifacts, and memories of the various projects included in this issue of *Scroll*. We hope that this publication will encourage both research into Baltimore’s active cultural landscape and exploration of the many sites composing it.

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On History, Naming, and Archiving

Allie Linn

Let this work function as an archive.

Archiving has become something of an obsession in the contemporary art world, simultaneously operating as a tool for research, a method of working in the studio, and a curatorial strategy observed in exhibitions and biennials worldwide. The term “archive” itself has become rather nebulous, encompassing a wide variety of research and cataloguing methods, but at its core, the value on collecting and storing information has remained. The archive provides an accumulation of historical records, and there is something inherently hypnotizing about stumbling upon a project from the past, especially when it still feels relevant, even innovative, in the present. As the roles between artist, curator, and writer become increasingly blurred, the term “archivist” begins to extend beyond its traditional definition to include one who sources material to create new content or even one who creates fictitious content to invent narratives.

In the 2008 exhibition *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* at the International Center of Photography, Okwui Enwezor presented films, photography, and catalogued documents to reflect on different means of creating narratives through archives, whether actual or imaginary. By including artists like Félix González-Torres, Lorna Simpson, and Zoe Leonard, Enwezor was able to focus on extremely personal and poetic narratives that can still speak to more universal concerns. Enwezor utilized “the collection” to reference time passing and memory shifting, especially in relation to periods of war and political instability.

The archive is explored through a very different lens by Domenico Quaranta, whose 2012 exhibition *Collect the WWWorld: The Artist as Archivist in the Internet Age* at 319 Scholes focused on the internet as a tool for collecting, copying, re-appropriating, networking, and producing for artists. Confronted by the surplus of information and content available on the web and in physical publications, family records, and public documents, it is unsurprising that we have collectively become enamored with cataloguing the past and present for some use in the future.

Many rich archives already exist to provide a peek into Baltimore's history; local projects like *Baltimore Heritage*, the *Afro-American Newspapers*, and the Maryland Historical Society provide invaluable access to the history of the city through photographs, newspaper articles, letters, and lectures. Larger-scale projects like the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, which strives to archive every single webpage on the internet, sometimes multiple times a day, can fill in the gaps by offering access to content that has been erased or over-written online.¹ Were it not for the Wayback Machine, it would be next to impossible to relocate Doreen Bolger's poignant collection of art writing and criticism on her *Art-Full Life* blog that once existed as part of *Charm City Current*. As the former director of the Baltimore Museum of Art and an active advocate and participant of the arts in Baltimore, Bolger provides descriptions of various exhibitions, performances, and events that preserve a lasting snapshot of the city's arts ecosystem from 2009 to 2012.

1.
Jill Lepore,
"The Cobweb:
Can the
Internet be
Archived?,"
New Yorker,
January 26,
2015, 36.

The form an archive can take, however, has recently become much more fluid. Consider Balti Gurls' Instagram,² sophiajacob's lecture series,³ or the website created shortly after the 2015 uprisings to archive the wealth of video, interviews, and photographs documenting the events following the death of Freddie Gray.⁴ These projects create a territory for themselves as they develop, existing as living, breathing archives to be edited, added to, and always easily accessed. In an article for *E-flux Journal* from 2013, Boris Groys writes, "Archives are often interpreted as a means to conserve the past - to present the past in the present. But at the same time, archives are machines for transporting the present into the future. Artists always do their work not only for their own time but also for art archives - for the future in which the artist's work remains present." Internet platforms allow these projects to be recorded in real time by many authors and then later revisited, when specific historic moments can, as Groys says, "remain present."⁵

2.
https://www.instagram.com/balti_gurls/

3.
<http://www.sophiajacob.com>.

4.
<https://www.baltimoreuprising2015.org>.

5.
Boris Groys,
"Art Workers:
Between
Utopia and the
Archive," *E-flux Journal* #45,
May 2013, 9.

Even the naming of these various projects plays a role in archiving. Szechuan Best, an on-going curatorial project began by Max Guy and Peggy Chiang in 2011, existed in multiple, mostly domestic spaces in Baltimore. The name is drawn from Peggy's family's late restaurant, and the project's website still presents a warm review of the restaurant's cuisine. "Szechuan Best" revitalizes the name and history of the business, continuing the project as a curatorial practice. It is the same technique Load of Fun employed and The Motor House is now continuing, first removing letters from the Lombard Office Furniture sign to reinvent its identity as an arts space and now referring back even further to the building's history as an auto body shop and dealership. The Copycat, Cork



(Top) Image courtesy of Howard Yang.

Factory, and Station North Chicken Box are just a few other familiar examples of current projects that nod towards a previous history.

It is, however, important to remember that an archive is not always an objective resource. In researching spaces for this issue of *Scroll*, we stumbled upon many memories of projects that have become nameless over time and elicit no results when entered in search engines. The spaces that have managed to survive through newspaper clippings and photographs tend to present an extremely whitewashed history of the city. This is, of course, not a problem unique to Baltimore, but in a city with such an extensive history of systemic racism, it is devastating to see how an archive can (and often does) fail to portray a truly objective rendering of a place. It is the same problem Fred Wilson addressed in his 1992-93 project with The Contemporary at the Maryland Historical Society, *Mining the Museum*, reorganizing preexisting



(Top)
Image
courtesy of The
Contemporary.

Install shot
of Fred
Wilson's
*Mining the
Museum*.

archives and museum displays to address how easily history can be warped through biases and underrepresentation. When we look at a space like the Royal Theatre, too, we are confronted with a landmark that has since been razed, a potent gesture that threatens to erase Baltimore's history as a city crucial to the development of jazz and ragtime in the early twentieth century. It is our cultural responsibility to create our own communal memory bank when the ones provided us have failed.

Let this publication function as an archive of only a small sampling of spaces in Baltimore that have housed countless projects, galleries, studios, and businesses. Let these case studies serve as a reminder of the possibility of transforming preexisting space without displacing previous tenants and communities. It is important to periodically step back and take a temperature check of the arts climate in Baltimore; let this publication preserve a collection of voices, nearly a year after Baltimore's uprisings, a time when space and visibility is so heavily on our minds, to reflect on how spaces can be redefined, reexamined, and reimaged.

Scroll 3: On Site

2016

SCROLL 3 : ON SITE

11

Ward - 12 Section - 07
Block - 3602 Lot - 008

120 W. North Avenue

Building History

- 1 Various automobile dealerships
- 2 E.T. Newell Auctioneers
- 3 Lombard Office Furniture
- 4 Load of Fun
- 5 The Motor House



(Top) Image
courtesy of
Sherwin Mark.

120 W. North Avenue was built and primarily operated as an automobile dealership, though other speculations about its origins have been made. “It was originally, we think, a hospital,” says Sherwin Mark, previous building owner and founder of Load of Fun, the art and studio space once housed inside. “The motel next door was a hospital. There’s no record before 1906; it just suddenly appears on city records as this car place. It was like the dot com era. Everyone was going to make it big with a car. There were all kinds of cars that were invented and little shops that were making small quantities of cars, hoping that it would be a big hit, and it was all centered around the junction of North Avenue and Howard Street. The building went through many different car dealerships over the years: Rambler, Nash, Ford at one time, Jeep, I think.” The building still stands as a testament to the importance of the automobile industry on Baltimore’s economy for so many years.

Interspersed by periods of vacancy, the space changed hands in 1978 to house Lombard Office

Furniture, a name and sign that would eventually be edited down to “Load of Fun” by early tenants and burlesque duo Trixie Little and Evil Hate Monkey. Barry and Beatrice Gotthelf ran Lombard Office Furniture until 2005 when Mark offered to purchase the space. “They inherited it, I think,” says Mark, “from [Beatrice’s] father. I went down there to buy a chair, and while I was there wandering around, I said, ‘You wouldn’t want to sell this place, would you?’ And he said ‘Yes, I do.’”

Load of Fun is described as a utopian studio space by many of its previous tenants, housing a variety of artists and performers in its studios with communal space for constant dialogue, interaction, and collaboration. Single Carrot Theatre, Make Studio, Baltimore Node Corporation, and What Weekly are just a small handful of projects that once occupied the space.

After more than six years of operation, Load of Fun voluntarily closed in 2012 following a zoning violation (“Something like, ‘Unlicensed use of the second floor front,’” remembers Mark). Nearly four years after Load of Fun’s closing, the Baltimore Arts Realty Corporation has reopened the space as studios, performance space, and retail space under the name “The Motor House,” continuing the building’s legacy as a multiuse arts space.

(Right)
Image
courtesy of
Sherwin Mark.





(Left)
Image
courtesy of
Sherwin Mark.

Performance
from the
Baltimore Alley
Aerial Festival.
Mara is pictured
in the bottom
right.

**Mara Neimanis,
previous artist resident
of Load of Fun**

Scroll: You were one of the early residents of Load of Fun. What drew you to the space?

Mara Neimanis: I had heard about Sherwin through Molly Ross, who ran Nana Projects, a puppeteering project. I invited Sherwin to come see one of my pieces, *Air Heart*, so that he knew something about my work. It was great because he made a connection with me through the art. It's not like it was just retail space, it had meaning. He wanted to build a conglomerate of artists that were doing innovative things. What Load of Fun was for me was an incredible foray into permission.

Scroll: Do you think the physical space of Load of Fun contributed to its success?

Mara Neimanis: Load of Fun was an incubator for innovative things that were not only happening in the city but happening for the city. There were large circular spaces on each level of the building, and [all of the artists] would meet and hang out and talk...The fact is that the building itself allowed for incredible meetings in the hallways. There were a bunch of photographers who had their own collective darkroom that Sherwin built, because he, too, was a photographer. When they were using it I would clean my dog off in the big sink. Sergio [Martinez], from Station North, came from DC and fell in love with Load of Fun and Sherwin. He took the whole third floor and made it into a carpentry studio. Then he grew too big for the space. He threw parties on the roof, and they would have dinner parties in the middle of the gallery. You could join in, and these things were happening all the time... [Load of Fun] was very much a part of the pulse of life. It wasn't like I went to the studio and then I went home. It was very much a part of everything.

I think that most people would agree with that. Now I go to the studio and it's a very separate place. In some respects it's better, it's great, that's what you want in a studio.

Scroll: Can you talk a little bit about the Baltimore Alley Aerial Festival that you began?

Mara Neimanis: The Aerial Festival happened three years in a row. It started in 2010. I saw the alleyway behind Load of Fun and I was looking for a space, as I always am looking for a space, to do more, bigger, different work. I asked Sherwin if I could create a festival there and he said yes. I went over to Lanny [Schuster], a good friend of Sherwin who ran the building and cleaning company next door for thirty years, and he gave me equipment to rig on his roof. I felt that the Aerial Festival was a piece of branding of what Load of Fun was. It was produced by In-Flight Theater, my company, but I felt that it was an incredible extension of what Load of Fun was about. I still have audience members and aerialists say that it was one of the most exciting performance events that they had ever been in because it was real, it was *this* close. With aerial work it's very hard...with Cirque du Soleil, they're there and you're here. But it's very rare that you get an aerialist so close that it's like, "Move back, here comes a foot." It's really close. I think, too, when the Aerial Festival was in the alleyway it broke the borders. There was such a rich diversity in the audience. The graffiti was so amazing. The graffiti somehow matched the whirling, swirling of the aerialists. It was an amazing match that really only happens in Baltimore. It was truly unique, to the point that I'd never want to do it again because it hit it.

Scroll 3: On Site

2016

SCROLL 3 : ON SITE

Ward - 04 Section - 11
Block - 0648 Lot - 013

17

2 E. Redwood Street

Building History

- 1 North German Lloyd Steamship Company**
- 2 Savings Bank Building**
- 3 BMA Downtown Gallery**
- 4 (Returned) Savings Bank**
- 5 FedEx Kinko's**



Now operating as a FedEx Kinko's, 2 E. Redwood Street, nicknamed the "Hansa Haus," retains its original German Renaissance architecture amidst the office buildings surrounding it. Reflecting the influx of immigrants from Germany to Locust Point in the early 20th century, the Hansa Haus was built in 1912 as the Baltimore office of the North German Lloyd Steamship Company, resembling "a half-timbered 16th-century German Rathaus, perhaps the Zwicken in Halberstadt."¹

On January 15, 1974, the Baltimore Museum of Art opened the doors of the Hansa Haus to reveal the new Downtown Gallery, a satellite gallery that had begun two years earlier across the street at One Charles Center. Its new rent-free space was provided by The Savings Bank of Baltimore, allowing the museum to expand both its programming and its audience. The Downtown Gallery represented the country's first satellite gallery and quickly attracted workers from the surrounding office buildings with a variety of programs involving food, dance, film screenings, and lectures to accompany the exhibitions in the space. Roughly

(Top) Hansa Haus, 1978. Richard Childress for the *Baltimore Sun*, BJV-545.BS.

1. Eli Pousson, "Baltimore Building of the Week: Hansa Haus," *Explore Baltimore Heritage*, November 18, 2010.

2.
Council on
Museums and
Education in
Visual Arts, *The
Art Museum
as Educator:
A Collection
of Studies
as Guides to
Practice and
Policy*, ed.
Barbara Y.
Newsom and
Adele Z. Silver
(Berkeley:
University of
California Press,
1978), 153-55.

3.
Email
correspondance
with Emily
Rafferty, Head
Librarian and
Archivist at the
BMA.

36,000 people visited the Downtown Gallery in its first year, many of them office workers stopping in during their lunch breaks.²

The exhibitions presented inside were numerous and varied, spanning collections of courtroom drawings to a comprehensive history of the postcard. A 1974 exhibition entitled *Highlights from the Atlanta University Collection of Afro-American Art* presented traveling work from the High Museum's collection, which boasted the largest number of works by contemporary black artists at the time. Hale Woodruff, Elizabeth Catlett, and Jacob Lawrence were among over sixty artists presented. Supported by the the *Afro-American Newspapers*, the exhibition was supplemented with gallery talks, lectures, and two film series, *Of Black America* and *Black Artists in America*.

In addition to the Downtown Gallery, various other efforts were made by the BMA throughout the years to establish branch museums and satellite programs, including at the YWCA International Center, Jewish Education Alliance, and Sheraton Belvedere Hotel in the 1940s and, later, at the Mall of Columbia in the 1970s and 80s.³

(Right)
Downtown
Gallery (detail),
The Baltimore
Museum of
Art, November
1975. Buildings
and Grounds
Photograph
Collection,
Archives and
Manuscripts
Collections,
The Baltimore
Museum of Art.
GGPC8.5.1.





(Top)
Brenda Edelson
(second from
right) at the
opening of
Apropos USSR:
Photographs by
Henri Cartier-
Bresson at the
Downtown
Gallery, March
1975. Collection
of the *Baltimore*
Sun, BJS-919-
BS.

**Brenda Edelson,
previous gallery
manager of
Downtown Gallery**

Scroll: How did the Downtown Gallery begin? Was it your idea?

Brenda Edelson: No, it started when Tom Freudenheim was the director of the BMA, and that was in 1972. And it was the first satellite gallery in the country, even before the Whitney satellite. We had free rent for three years. And in 1978, it closed.

Scroll: And how did it fall into your hands to be the director of that project?

Brenda Edelson: I had community organization experience, and I knew how to get projects going. I had started a number of things before, but I did not have an art background. Tom Freudenheim told me he did not need another curator! He had plenty of those and he needed somebody who knew how to organize and get things done, and that's what I knew how to do. I had been the director of the Maryland Committee for Daycare before that and we had started a number of projects.

Scroll: What were some of the most memorable shows you organized?

Brenda Edelson: We had a wonderful Toulouse-Lautrec show and a photojournalism show that was circulated by the Museum of Modern Art called *Behind the Picture Press*. For the Toulouse-Lautrec exhibition, we had Linda Brown making crepes and can-can dancers in the street, and it was great fun. I usually either had a speaker or films that related to the exhibition.

Scroll: Were there any other exciting projects going on nearby at the time?

Brenda Edelson: George Dalsheimer ran a beautiful gallery downtown on Charles Street, and they were open quite a while. The Dalsheimer Gallery had world class photography exhibits, and it went on for probably ten years. I would think it closed around 1985. I also had a gallery briefly on Charles

Street after I left the museum with a partner, and we showed contemporary prints. We had shows of work from Frank Stella, Helen Frankenthaler, David Hockney, and Robert Motherwell. It was during the print boom, when prints were getting bigger and more expensive, and we had a very good success, but I just did not like retail, doing it that way. I think I was just in it for about a year and it continued for several years, I don't remember how many, with just Silvia Cordish running it. I became a private dealer afterwards. The Downtown Gallery was wonderful, but it takes a lot of energy and money, and it's hard to find that today.

Scroll: Was the BMA already doing its biennial Contemporary Print Fair at that time?

Brenda Edelson: It may have been a little earlier, but it wasn't too much earlier. But you know, the museum also had a wonderful Sales and Rentals Gallery, and it was a very successful program that got a lot of people in Baltimore collecting for many years. They could rent a print for three months at a time and then buy it or return it. It gave them a chance to see how they liked living with something. Wonderful print shows, photography shows, drawing shows. It was a great effort. But it was before things got so very expensive. It was during the years when things were more affordable and approachable.

I went on to become the program director at the Baltimore Museum of Art. I was there until 1985. We had a good time doing it, I loved doing it. I had a lot of support from the director to do whatever my creative mind came up with, as long as we could afford it, and it was a very exciting time.

Scroll 3: On Site

2016

SCROLL 3 : ON SITE

Ward - 04 Section - 02
Block - 0562 Lot - 040

23

823 E. Baltimore Street

Building History

- 1 Undaground Radar Magazine Offices
- 2 Apollo Design, Inc.
- 3 The Incredible Little Art Gallery



823 E. Baltimore Street, an unassuming rowhome in southeast Baltimore, has mostly housed various architecture firms and offices. Its history as a creative incubator began when the building served as the creative headquarters of *Undaground Radar Magazine*. *Undaground* is a local publication featuring interviews with Baltimore-based musicians and artists and offering coverage of local shows and events. When *Undaground* decided to relocate in 2015, Milly Vanderwood and Jerrell Gibbs moved in, initially planning to use the space only as creative offices and studios.

(Top)
In-progress work in the studio of Jerrell Gibbs.

However, the two quickly decided to open to the public, and in December 2015, Vanderwood and Gibbs reopened the doors to unveil The Incredible Little Art Gallery, an art space that “strives to be the youngest African-American-owned art gallery in Baltimore.” Exhibitions, such as the recently-closed *Art in the Hands of Men*, showcase local talent, including Ernest Shaw, Eric Briscoe, and Jason Harris, and are supplemented with artist talks, art classes, and other programming.

Milly Vanderwood + Jerrell Gibbs, founders of The Incredible Little Art Gallery

Scroll: Can you tell us a little bit about your backgrounds?

Milly Vanderwood: I was a rapper since the age of twelve. I stopped a couple years ago and started managing artists and building brands. I became involved in the arts about a year ago, when Jerrell and I linked up. Jerrell started painting about a year and a half, two years ago. I'm still into music and I'm still into art, and now I'm trying to merge the two together. I've always looked up to Diddy.

Jerrell Gibbs: I used to draw and sketch when I was younger, and I stopped because I really wasn't getting feedback and encouragement from my family. Art to them wasn't what it was to me, it wasn't a way to make money. It wasn't cool at that time. I used to pick up a pencil and I would sketch, but then I just stopped. I got involved in sports, because that was the cool thing to do and that got me to high school. Later, I linked up with a few friends and started managing hip hop artists. I ended up going to college playing football, and we kept moving with the music, which was going well, but the more you work with individuals, the more you see that everyone's visions and determination aren't the same as yours, so I kind of cut ties with the music. I ended up dropping out of college after that, because I was really frustrated. Maybe a year later I picked up a pencil again and

started sketching. The following year, my wife and my daughter gave me an easel for Father's Day, and I started painting that day. I have not stopped since. The progression over time reiterates that I should have been doing this all along. What I'm putting out and the amount of work I'm doing in this short amount of time is just reassurance that I'm doing the right thing.

Scroll: How did The Incredible Little Art Gallery begin, and what are your hopes for the space?

Jerrell Gibbs: It began when we got the space, we pretty much were using it as studio space and a place to have meetings, the business side of things we had going on. Out of the blue, Milly had the idea to turn it into an art gallery.

Milly Vanderwood: We were doing exhibits and showcases anyway, so it was like well, why not.

Jerrell Gibbs: It made perfect sense. After that we figured out a date to do an opening, we made sure we had a few things in order, and we made it happen. On December 19, we opened to the public, and here we are now. We want this to be the platform for underrepresented artists. That's what our goal is, to provide a platform for them to have a place that people come and enjoy their work, especially people that typically wouldn't come to a gallery in the first place.

We want people like art critics, journalists, and bloggers to come as well, just to see a different side of the art world. Just to understand the culture that we have in here and understand that there is a market for artists that do work like we do. That's what we're doing with The Incredible Little Art Gallery right now. One of our goals is to take over this whole block and make it into an arts district. We're starting right here, taking it day by day. We have some great things in the future lined up.

(Right)
Image
courtesy
of Jerrell
Gibbs.



Scroll: How did this space get chosen for The Incredible Little Art Gallery?

Milly Vanderwood: Somebody I know had a magazine, *Undaground Radar*, and this was their office at first. He was transitioning to move, and he knew I was looking for a space. He called me, I came and looked at it, and I liked it. This is where I was going to be at first, just this [pointing to the front room we're in]. Then the landlord showed us that side and we thought, "That's better and cheaper." We ended up just having that space for five or six months. We were just using it for creative space, office space, meeting space. We just acquired this front room three weeks ago.

Scroll: What would you say the major values of the gallery are? What do you look for in an artist?

Jerrell Gibbs: [Milly and I] vibe the same way, but we also understand that everyone doesn't think like us, everyone has different opinions. We're open to all of that. Our goal is to have people who come in here and want to be involved and put their work up. We want you to believe in yourself, we want you to be respectful. We're not the biggest space, and we might not have all the resources everybody has, but at the

end of the day, when you come here, you know you have people that are really going to back you and believe in you and work for you. We're not charging that much for artists to sell work. It's a business, but at the same time, we know that in order to get where we want to be and get other artists to where they want to be, we can't be out here charging astronomical prices. That's not our goal at all.

Milly Vanderwood: Your mind can't be strictly on money.

Jerrell Gibbs: We're right here, a block and a half from the Shot Tower, so we can have people come who typically wouldn't go to a gallery in the first place. They come in, bring their kids, and experience something different. We're not worrying about schooling. We don't care who you know. Our difference, honestly, is our age and the energy that we have. We are a whole new generation of art and energy. We take so much that we do for granted, because we're so focused on this project. We're working and working and we're not even taking the time to really see what's happening. We haven't even digested everything yet. We're providing a platform. We're risking what we have going on with our personal lives to have a place for people to come and do something different and have an avenue to show their work.

Scroll 3: On Site



Ward - 04 Section - 10
Block - 0619 Lot - 019



118 N. Howard Street

Building History

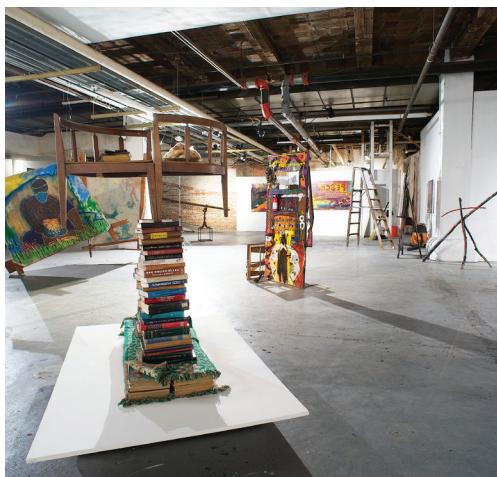
1 Bernheimer-Leader

2 The May Company

3 Hecht's

4 Rite Aid Pharmacy

5 SubBasement Artist Studios



From the 1840s through the close of the twentieth century, Baltimore's department store industry thrived. The palatial remains of the best-known of these stores, Hutzler's, Hochschild, Kohn, and Stewart's, still stand, having long outlived the businesses once inside. The largest of these spaces was located at the intersection of Howard and Lexington and transferred ownership multiple times between a handful of department store giants before transforming into a gallery and artist studios much later.

118 N. Howard Street may have never quite rivaled Hutzler's as Baltimore's most popular department store, but it did carve out a space for itself as one of the first department stores to appeal to the middle class and the growing immigrant population by offering affordable goods and services. In the summer of 1923, Bernheimer Bros. and the Leader department stores, two early bargain stores, merged to form the Bernheimer-Leader stores.¹ Just two years later, the May Company, the nation's largest department store corporation at the time, reopened the space under its own name.² The May Company would run

(Top)
Image
courtesy
of Ryan
Stevenson.

1. Michael J. Lisicky, *Baltimore's Bygone Department Stores: Many Happy Returns*, (Charleston: The History Press, 2012), 65.

2. Lisicky, *Baltimore's Bygone Department Stores*, 67.

3.
Lisicky,
*Baltimore's
Bygone
Department
Stores*, 68.

out of 118 N. Howard Street for thirty years and included a luxurious restaurant on the eighth floor. Unfortunately, many viewed May as an outsider; whereas many of the other nearby department stores took pride in being run by multiple generations of family members born and raised in the city, it was difficult for the May Company to find its place. Suspicions rose when a large fire, the biggest since the Great Fire of 1904, broke out at the May Company in 1947. Deemed an act of arson by the fire department, the event remains unsolved even today, though it seems clear that a malicious event took place.³ Later, another merger would take place, this time between Hecht's and May.

Many years later, through a connection through the Downtown Partnership, artist and curator Jeffrey Kent was able to move into the space to begin a project aptly called SubBasement Artist Studios. After heavy cleaning and renovations, Kent opened the space as a gallery in 2004. SubBasement would go on to run for a decade, showing over two hundred artists in its 8,000 square foot gallery.

(Bottom)
Image
courtesy
of Ryan
Stevenson.



Jeffrey Kent, founder of SubBasement Artist Studios

Scroll: Can you talk a little bit about how SubBasement began?

Jeffrey Kent: Back in 2003 I needed a studio, and through the Downtown Partnership I was introduced to David H. Hillman, the president CEO of Southern Management Corporation. At the time, I was with a group of artists who were being displaced from their studios at the historic Abell building, which had been condemned by the fire department. I contacted Mr. Hillman and told him what I'd like to do with the subbasement space by housing artist studios and exhibition space, which was a void, I felt. Especially one with African diaspora in Baltimore. He agreed to let me get the space at a below market value into which I'd put sweat equity to make SubBasement. It was very dark and dank when I moved in - that's a quote from a *City Paper* article, 2004 I think. It took me about six months to clean it out and paint the floors and add lighting, maybe another six months to start having exhibitions.

Scroll: Was the location or physical space of SubBasement important to you in choosing a place to house this project? Did the history of the space inform any exhibitions you put on?

Jeffrey Kent: SubBasement had a lot of space, and it wasn't a place where I could disturb other people. It was two stories underground. The title of the first exhibition was *Deep Under Lexington*, and it was related to the Lexington Market corridor and the history behind it.

Scroll: Did SubBasement deliberately set out to fill any specific gaps in Baltimore's art scene?

Jeffrey Kent: At the time, it definitely filled the gap for minorities and women artists and the ability to do large, museum-sized exhibitions without museum budgets. There weren't a lot of work spaces in the downtown area at the time.

Scroll 3: On Site

2016

SCROLL 3 : ON SITE

Ward - 04 Section - 10
Block - 0643 Lot - 009

33

307 W. Baltimore Street

Building History

- 1 Faust Shoe Manufacturer
- 2 Various Auction Firms
- 3 Baltimore Shoe House
- 4 The Trading Post
- 5 In/Flux Gallery
- 6 EMP Collective



307 W. Baltimore Street still stands today after three prominent fires and numerous tenants. Despite facing damages from the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904, which destroyed over 1,500 buildings in Downtown Baltimore, and smaller fires in 1907 and 1911, the five story building retains its original Corinthian columns and large arched windows on an elaborate cast-iron facade.

307 W. Baltimore Street is most commonly referred to as the Appold-Faust building, named for entrepreneur George Appold, who commissioned the building in 1870, and shoe manufacturer John Faust, who shortly after purchased it.¹ The twentieth century saw a variety of department stores occupying the building, and after periods of office space and vacancy, the doors reopened in the fall of 2010 as the In/Flux Gallery, a year-long project run by Sarah Doherty.

Now called EMP, the space today functions as performance and gallery space.

(Top)
Image
courtesy of
Balti Gurls.

Joy Postell
performing
at EMP.

1. Dan Windmueller and Theresa Donnelly, "Appold-Faust Building," *Explore Baltimore Heritage*, March 28, 2016.

Roundtable: EMP Collective

**Carly Bales + Brad Leroy + Ebony Evans
+ Alex D'Agostino + Chanel Cruz**

Scroll: Can you give us an introduction on EMP collective?

Carly Bales: EMP is an artist-run, multi-use art space downtown. We started as a multidisciplinary (performance, film, visual art, music) experimental performance collective with our first devised performance in Baltimore in January 2010.

Scroll: How did EMP Collective get together in the first place?

Carly Bales: We've been running a space rooted in interdisciplinary work and performance since fall 2011. We were able to be granted funds to start the space as part of an initiative from the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore (DPOB). The original members first met in college in Tallahassee, Florida and came together after they all found themselves in the Baltimore/DC area years later. It was kind of chance, but weirdos have a way of finding other weirdos. Of course, now it has evolved and taken on other folks and other work.

Scroll: Was it difficult to start a space without real estate professionals, legal advisors, etc.?

Carly Bales: Well, it's definitely been trial and error.

Brad Leroy: For our first couple of shows, we found that we spent a lot of time and resources just trying to find a location. If we could use that energy in the shows, we figured we'd be better off.

Carly Bales: It took us 6-8 months to find a space we could adequately use for our ambitious purposes that wasn't market rate or more and that wasn't a deathtrap, and we had help locating interested landlords from DPOB. We do not own the building. We were given funds to start the space and run it for a year. We stretched out those funds for quite some time past then.

Scroll: So how did you guys end up in the space?

Carly Bales: Originally, we were in a basement space in an alley on 306 Redwood Street.

Brad Leroy: A few key folks at DPOB helped us 'broker a deal' and provided some upkeep incentives for the building's owners [of 307 Baltimore Street].

Carly Bales: We've been on a month-to-month with our landlords since 2012. We got kicked out so they could turn it into office space, but we were able to develop a relationship with our landlord so they were willing to let us rent the upper first floor "for the time being." Our back space still has the original office walls if you ever go back there.

Brad Leroy: But as Carly mentioned, that was after months of looking at spaces on our own and with DPOB's input. Lucky for us, the In/Flux gallery on 307 Baltimore St. had also recently come to the end of their lease. So we moved on up.

Carly Bales: The building was a former shoe factory turned mercantile outpost, to the best of my knowledge. We worked with Rotating History Project on an exhibition related to the history of the building and its former place in the Garment District of Baltimore in 2012.

Scroll: How does programming work at EMP Collective?

Alex D'Agostino: We all take turns helping with other collective members' shows and juggling our own lives and artistic practices with the awesome circumstance of sharing/

caring/transforming what people expect to experience from a space.

Brad Leroy: So in some ways, EMP is like an umbrella organization, providing a location and resources for all of our members, new and old.

Ebony Evans: This is my first time being a part of EMP, though I'd heard of EMP and visited numerous times. I honestly didn't know too much about it, because it wasn't a venue well known in the "black arts" scene of Baltimore. So when I began to plan my events for the space, many had no idea of what EMP was. Once I was able to see events outside of what I would normally visit for, I realized how connected I was to it. So the programming is definitely outstanding, pushing societal norms of art. The three events I was able to organize at EMP have been successful. The space is huge and can be turned into any vision that you see fit. I love that aspect.

(Right)
Image
courtesy
of Emilia
Pennanen.

*Potatoes
of August,
October
2014.*



Carly Bales: We've brought on a lot of new members since 2014, including individuals, like Ebony [Evans] and Mia [Loving], and other small collectives that are growing, like Balti Gurls and Llamadon.

Scroll: Cece, can you tell us about Edge Control?

Chanel Cruz: Edge Control was created to provide a platform for black and brown female-identified artists.



(Left)
Image
courtesy of
www.
Strangers
WithStyle.
.com.

DJ Amythsx
at Edge
Control 2.

Edge Control is a party, but it is also a celebration for black-and brown-identified females. We noticed how a lot of shows in Baltimore City were lacking this inclusion, and we thought we could pave the way for these women. The event is a way for us to raise money as well as bring brown and black female artists to Baltimore from all over. The funds are used for our collective, such as traveling expenses, website updates, etc. EMP is a very supportive space for numerous functions such as performance art, music, and gallery setups. EMP was perfect for Balti Gurls to incorporate all of the things we practice. And due to [Carly's] support for us and Llamadon, there is more awareness of EMP in the Baltimore community. It's a win-win for everyone.

Scroll: Your website defines the EMP project Le Mondo as "an artist-owned-and-driven project positioning Baltimore as a center for theatre and the live arts, nationally and internationally. Comprised of three buildings on Baltimore's historic Howard Street corridor, the project will champion a diverse community of arts and community organizations, individual artists, curators, and arts-lovers in the city." Can you talk a little bit about this project?

Carly Bales: Le Mondo is sort of a logical evolution of what we do at the space and the kind of support systems we want to see live on in the arts community. It derived from a series of conversations between several folks at EMP and a slew of small performance companies addressing potential solutions

to the ongoing lack of safe, affordable, and lasting performance space in Baltimore. I see Le Mondo as a tool of empowerment for a community not typically empowered in the world of real estate, development, and city planning by creating a stakehold in the community we live and work in and a permanent home for artistic experimentation and growth.

Brad Leroy: Le Mondo is us taking a giant leap forward with some great partners. It's something bigger than any one organization.

Carly Bales: A lot of things will change in the next ten years as I am seeing it. The city has been parcelling out the former Superblock on the Westside and releasing RFPs for these buildings to be privately developed.

Brad Leroy: Major construction is getting underway right now on Baltimore Street, next to EMP. A new high rise and commercial properties will definitely alter our block. Getting priced out of the neighborhood is inevitable.

Scroll: Can you tell us more about the RFP?

Carly Bales: An RFP is a request for proposals. Meaning: the city publicly opens up the development process and allows anyone to submit a proposal for whatever buildings or areas are up for sale by the city.

Scroll: I see. We often have discussions on artists being used as a tool for gentrification.

Carly Bales: Absolutely. For me, this process has been about empowerment in a venue where artists are used, abused, told one thing, given much less, pushed out by changes in the market. As I was having these roundtable meetings about space, collective ownership, shared resources, etc., we began to talk about what area we would most like to try and make it happen in.

We all loved Howard Street and the wonderful energy that still radiated from it despite its abandonment. Around that time, the city issued an RFP for buildings on Howard on the exact block we loved.

Scroll: What do you think is currently missing from Baltimore's art scene?

Alex D'Agostino: Funding and public transportation that makes it easier to get places, among other things.

Carly Bales: I keep hammering it in, but we all need to step up our support game to empower and advance the community artistically, professionally, and politically. Go out, make yourself uncomfortable, support people you don't know, hang out with new people all the time outside of events. I find we are all working so hard we sometimes self-isolate by discipline and along well-wrought social lines. It's not fucking easy when you juggle multiple projects, one or more side gigs, and personal relationships. I'm as guilty as the next. Sometimes the simplest thing like showing up makes all the difference.

Brad Leroy: With the creation of Art-Part'heid,¹ the arts community has begun to address some of these boundaries, but we've got a long way to go. Acknowledging the issue was a hurdle itself. With regard to funding, there are resources out there for start-ups and LARGE anchor organizations, but there isn't much support for groups in between. How you get from your first patron to being an organization that can properly pay the people that work tirelessly for it is still sort of a holy grail.

1.
<http://bmoreart.com/2015/01/art-partheid-bridging-the-gap-of-disparities-in-the-baltimore-arts-scene.html>.

Carly Bales: Talk is cheap! Werk!

Ebony Evans: I'm thankful to be a part of EMP and to watch it flourish. It's a real collective, and I'm looking forward to growing more!

:Scroll 3: On Site

2016

SCROLL 3 : ON SITE

41

Ward - 12 Section - 07
Block - 3602 Lot - 008

1317 N. Charles Street

Building History

1 Harley's Sandwich Shop

2 Proposal Gallery

3 Turp's Sports Bar



Let's rewind back to the 70s. In 1979, Charles Street was mostly occupied with vacant buildings and small businesses. 1317 N. Charles Street, which currently houses Turp's Sports Bar, was then known as Harley's Sandwich Shop.¹ Feeling pressure from neighbors to renovate the upper, unused levels of the building, owner Harley Brinsfield reached out to Fred Lazarus, former president of MICA, with the intent of repurposing the building as an art space. "Well, Fred was interested and told [the Rinehart School of Sculpture Director] Norman [Carlberg] about it," says Bill Tata, one of Proposal's founders. "We had just graduated a year out of Rinehart, and Norman contacted us, saying, 'We have this building that you guys would be interested in doing some work on, you will have a studio and gallery space.' After talking to him, after discussions, yes's and no's, we finally decided to move forward with it. I met with Harley at his apartment on Charles Street and told him we were interested in getting involved. I think he was a little reluctant at first because, you know, we were almost students, just out of school."

(Top) Image courtesy of Bill Tata.

Opening night at Proposal: Gallery, 1979.

1. Harley Brinsfield owned a local chain of fast food restaurants. There were several Harley's Sandwich Shops across Baltimore City.

Brinsfield agreed and six friends and graduates of the Rinehart program, Bill Tata, Mark Sullivan, Maripat Neff, Jim Adajian, Melanie Yushkevich, and Allen Hurdle, signed the lease for the cost of one dollar per year.

The artists dedicated their post-graduation year to renovating the space and building a gallery on the second floor and three stories of artist studios above. The collective named the project “Proposal:” to emphasize the experimental spirit and interest in accepting all mediums of art.

“We tried to do a lot of experimental stuff, non-commercial projects,” says Jim Adajian on the programming within the space. “There weren’t a lot of galleries in the city at the time. Now there are a couple dozen. We wanted to have a few performance things, poetry readings, movie screenings.” The first show in the space was a solo exhibition of work by sculptor Norman Carlberg, the professor who had helped the crew move into the space.

(Right)
Image courtesy
of Bill Tata.

Norman
Carlberg’s
sculpture work
in the storefront
of the gallery.





(Left) Image courtesy of Bill Tata.

Portrait of the founders of Proposal: Gallery.

After just 11 months, the lease expired and the gallery closed down. The founding artists, occupied with other full-time jobs, decided to put an end to the collaborative curatorial project, vacating the property. Craig Hankin, one of the founders of *City Paper*, wrote about the space many times and remembers that “although it lasted such a short time, it was this brief, shining moment. There were just a handful of spaces back then, and Proposal: was one of very, very few spaces run by people in their twenties at the time. They were real pioneers in that way.”

(Right)
Image courtesy
of Bill Tata.

Opening night
at Proposal:
Gallery, 1979.



(Right)
Image courtesy
of Bill Tata.

Article on
Proposal's
opening
and Norman
Carlberg's
exhibition
from the News
American in
1979, written
by Jacques
Kelly.

(Bottom)
The logo of
Proposal:
Gallery.

The News American

**Unusual art gallery
in offbeat city block**

**Neighborhood
WATCH**

By Jacques Kelly

The 1300 block leans toward the unorthodox. It's a seven-story building at Mount Royal Avenue, the corner building at Mount Royal Avenue, is, as they say, a hotel. The top floor is a restaurant. The basement features the Bucket of Blood saloon. In midblock, the Two Crazy Saloon, which is open 24 hours, rag-tag following. There also are bars and liquor stores that contribute to the neighborhood's reputation for disorder. The police say, for example, that the Transvestite crowd does not frequent the saloons, but the police say that as much as it used to, but it can still be found, especially after 2 a.m.

The artists are quite serious about using their space for the newest in art in Baltimore. It will be open to all the city's art community and "for the exchange of ideas among artists and the public on art issues and trends."

"Proposal" is designed to function as a "support system committed to the encouragement and accessibility of many diverse art forms," the artists said.

The artists used their own labor and money to strip old paneling and closets, resurface the walls and paint them that stay, while maintaining a uniquely quirky feel for galleries today.

The gallery has an expansive window overlooking the corner of Mount Royal Avenue and Charles Street, a

FIRST SHOW: Sculptor Norman Carlberg will have the first show at "Proposal," located in the Harley building behind him.

The building was condemned in 1976, when it is generally considered the area hit rock bottom. A former beauty shop used their own labor and money to strip old paneling and closets, resurface the walls and paint them that stay, while maintaining a uniquely quirky feel for galleries today.

The gallery has an expansive window overlooking the corner of Mount Royal Avenue and Charles Street, a



THIS AGREEMENT made this 7th day of August 1979 between
HARLEY BRINSFIELD as Landlord
and Artists - ADAJIAN, HURDLE, NEFF, SULLIVAN, TATA, YUSHKEVICH as Tenants.

Witnesseth: The Landlord hereby leases to Tenant and Tenant hereby hires from Landlord 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th floors in the building known as 1317 North Charles Street for the term of ONE & years to commence on the 1st day of September 1979 and to end on the 1st day of September 1980, upon the conditions and covenants following:

Rent 1st. We, the tenants, shall pay the annual rent of \$1.00

Rent shall be payable in the full amount for the five year term upon the signing of this agreement.

Utilities We shall pay our share of gas and electric utilities and a portion of heat and hot water expenses determined by Mr. Brinsfield and mutually agreed upon at the time of this signing.

Occupancy 2nd. We shall use and occupy demised premises for no purpose other than as an Art exhibition space and artists' studios.

Repairs 3rd. We shall take good care of the premises, and make good any injury or breakage done by us or our visitors.

Require. of Law 4th. We shall promptly execute and comply with all statutes, ordinances, rules, orders, regulations and requirements of the Federal, State, and City Government and of any and all their Departments and Bureaus applicable to said premises, for the correction, prevention, and abatement of nuisances or other grievances, in, upon, or connected with said premises during said term.

(Top)
Image courtesy
of Bill Tata.

Copy of the
lease agreement
with Brinsfield.
Annual rent is
listed as one
dollar.

Scroll 3: On Site

2016

SCROLL 3 : ON SITE

Ward - 12 Section - 07
Block - 3602 Lot - 008

47

1910 N. Charles Street

Building History

1 Lee Gwang Baek Family Clinic

2 청음보청기 (Clear Sound Professional Hearing Aid Services)

3 John's Breakfast & Coffee

4 MVP Bus Stop

5 The Crown



The Crown is an artist-run venue that keeps Baltimore's music scene weird and alive. Located in Station North, which was once active as Koreatown,¹ The Crown holds multiple restaurants and performance spaces. The signs of many previous Korean businesses still hang outside and allude to the building's varied history, including "Professional Hearing Aid Services" and "Acupuncture and Herb Clinic." The first sign mysteriously explains itself as "청음보청기 (금융/보험/법률)," which translates to "Clear Sound Professional Hearing Aid (Finance Insurance /Law Services)," an unusual mixture of services coexisting in one business. Upstairs houses The Crown's Red Room and Blue Room, while the first floor of the building continues to be used as a bus stop for MVP Bus, a Chinese-owned corporation that travels throughout the East Coast.

1. The Korean community expanded largely in the late 90s in central Baltimore.

Seola Lee, "Jae Won Kim, Seoul Rice Cake owner, whose father's portrait looks over Station North," *City Paper*, June 2, 2015.

1910 N. Charles Street's formal name is the Hyundai Plaza. It is unconfirmed if the building has an actual connection to Hyundai, one of Korea's biggest corporate importers and exporters of cars and electronics. The former chef of Jong Kak has recently opened a Korean BBQ restaurant on the ground level of the building as well as a deli in the storefront. The building has added another hand-painted sign, containing a misprinted character, which roughly translates to "C-Crown Seoul."

(Right)
Mural and
new signage
for The Crown
Seoul, a recently
opened Korean
restaurant.





Kahlon is an on-going series of cultural events curated by Baltimore-based artist Abdu Ali and DJ Genie, with assistance from Lawrence Burney, editor of *True Laurels*. Kahlon takes place at The Crown and continuously invites artists from Baltimore, as well as nationally and internationally. "Kahlon challenges the boundaries of genre-specific music events and presents new wave artists with distinctive styles on one stage to a colorful influx of music enthusiasts to cultivate a fresh take on traditional showcasing," says Abdu.

(Top) Image courtesy of Abdu Ali.

DJ Genie and Abdu Ali.

(Bottom) Image courtesy of Diamond Dixon.

Lawrence Burney playing at Kahlon.



(Bottom)
Kahlon flyer
by Theresa
Chromati.

2016

SCROLL 3 : ON SITE

KAHLO N

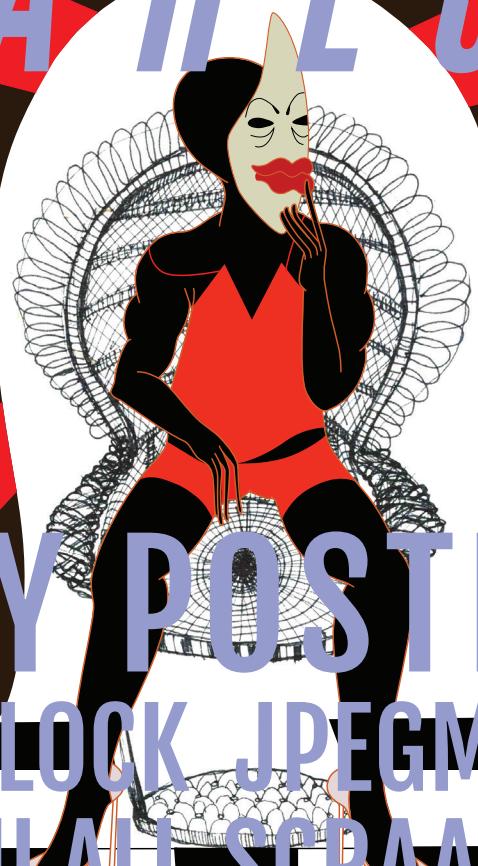
JOY POSTELL
HEMLOCK JPEGMAFIA
ABDU ALI SCRAAATCH
DJ UNDERDOG KATE BOSS

\$8

CROWN

JANUARY 30

9 PM





Abdu Ali, founder of Kahlon

(Top)
Image courtesy
of Diamond
Dixon.

Abdu performing
at Kahlon.

Scroll: What impact do you hope Kahlon will have on the Baltimore community?

Abdu Ali: With Kahlon, I want to elevate a progressive and beneficial platform for those underrepresented in music: POC [people of color], womyn, and the GLBTQI [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex] community.

Scroll: What are your hopes for the future of Station North?

Abdu Ali: I hope the institutions and resources in Station North become more accessible to everyone and not just white people or MICA students. As of right now, I do see more diversity in the future, but I just hope it's not at a limited cap and for the face value or the benefit of commercialized institutions and MICA/JHU [Johns Hopkins University].

Scroll 3: On Site

2016

SCROLL 3 : ON SITE

Ward - 12 Section - 07
Block - 3602 Lot - 008

53

500 Block of Franklin Street



Following the inception of projects like Gallery Four in 2000 and Nudashank in 2009, many spaces in the downtown neighborhood of Seton Hill have carved out artist-run galleries and projects inside of homes and live/work spaces in recent years. The largest of these buildings, almost a neighborhood in itself, is the H&H building. Built as the Summit Waist Company nearly a century ago, the H&H now borrows its name from the outdoors and military surplus store that has occupied the building's basement, first, and second floors since 1973. J. Harold Rosenblatt and his partner Howard (left unnamed in legal documents) founded the operation in 1947, moving to 405 W. Franklin Street almost thirty years later. Gallery Four, the now-closed Nudashank, the semi-active Whole Gallery, many music spaces, and events like Transmodern have made the H&H one of the most active creative hubs in Baltimore for the past decade.

Across the street, the group of storefronts along the 500 block of Franklin Street, which now function as galleries and project spaces, mostly hold histories as salons and churches, but other unique projects have popped up intermittently as well: Words by Wendell, a bookstore and personal stationery shop, at 512 W. Franklin Street; Carly Ptak's Integration Hypnotherapy office at 508 W. Franklin Street. Many of these spaces are defined by their brevity, creating programming for brief durations and then changing hands between artists and curators. The newly opened Phoebe Projects, for example, which hosted its inaugural exhibition just this past January, uses its name to subtly nod to the previous gallery occupants of the space, Freddy and sophiajacob.

(Right)
Images courtesy
of Carly Ptak.

Photographs
of Integration
Hypnotherapy
at 508 Franklin
(now Rope).



405 W. Franklin Street

Building History

- 1 Summit Waist Company**
- 2 H&H Outdoors**
- 3 Classic Pup**
- 4 Gallery Four**
- 5 Nudashank**
- 6 The Whole Gallery**

500 W. Franklin Street

Building History

- 1 A Perfect 10 Hair Salon**
- 2 First Continent**

502 W. Franklin Street

Building History

- 1 Illusions Barber Shop**
- 2 Purposed Ministries**
- 3 Springsteen Gallery**

(Top to Bottom)
Images
courtesy of
Alex Ebstein
(Nudashank),
Nate Grossman
(First Con-
tinent), and
Amelia Szpiech
(Springsteen).



508 W. Franklin Street

Building History

- 1 T-Shirt Shop**
- 2 Integration Hypnotherapy**
- 3 Franklin Street**
- 4 Rope**

510 W. Franklin Street

Building History

- 1 DBS Printing Shop**
- 2 sophiajacob**
- 3 Freddy Gallery**
- 4 Phoebe Projects**

512 W. Franklin Street

Building History

- 1 Baltimore Free School**
- 2 Words by Wendell**
- 3 Rock512Devil**
- 4 Open Space**

(Top to bottom)
Images
courtesy
of Stephen
Booth (Rope),
Alex Ebstein
(Phoebe
Projects), Colin
Alexander
(Open Space).



Alex Ebstein, founder of Phoebe Projects

Scroll: How did you come up with the name Phoebe Projects?

Alex Ebstein: The name Phoebe upholds the tradition of the space which has exclusively housed galleries named after people or human names. Phoebe has a pop-cultural household association as well as mythological and ornithological; it seemed to encompass a set of references that were appropriately niche and broad.

Scroll: Did you have conversations with previous space owners (Freddy, sophiajacob) about Phoebe Projects? How did you start planning out your curatorial practice?

Alex Ebstein: No, but I attended the exhibitions and programming of the other spaces and was generally a fan. I think there is a lot of room for different curatorial visions and the sensitivities of different curators taking over the same space and adding to its history.

Scroll: Phoebe's programming seems to focus heavily, if not entirely, on female-identifying artists. What are your opinions on female representation in Baltimore's art scene or in the art world in general?

Alex Ebstein: Baltimore is a place where women are very visible and active in the directorial roles of the art community. It is an excellent and exciting place to be a female artist and curator, but even so, it has its share of problems [including] venues and prizes in which women are not equally represented. Inequality is an issue that is being tackled by women internationally, and I am happy to contribute in some small way by exhibiting work by artists that I most admire, many of whom are female.

Scroll 3: On Site

2016

SCROLL 3 : ON SITE

61

Sight Specifics

Brandon Buckson

Living in Baltimore, depending on where you're from, it can be really easy to become comfortable within your bubble. I say "depending on where you're from" because that bubble can be paradise or purgatory. Like many urban cities, proximity to opportunity and resources is greatly contingent on what part of a city you come from, including the culture and demographics of that area.

Growing up in East Baltimore has been, in many ways, both challenging and exciting. As a young person, I was somewhat sheltered from other cultures and spent most of my childhood with individuals who looked like me. My community consisted of buildings, row after row of houses, and although some of the homes were well taken care of, many of them should have been condemned, as they were not truly suitable for children and families to reside. Countless homes had horrible issues with roaches, mice, and backyards full of rats. To make matters worse, our homes were painted on the inside and outside with a monster called lead paint, poisoning children and causing irreparable brain damage. Living as a young man under this landscape made it really difficult to become familiar with other communities directly surrounding me. For me, growing up in Baltimore City, it appeared as if all neighborhoods in the city were identical. After looking back on my childhood, I realized that I had been raised in a very specific culture.

Culture can be characterized as a way of life for a particular group of people, which includes behaviors, beliefs, and values that are passed along from one generation to the next. This notion leads me to the question: what does it mean to examine the cultural history and spaces of a city so segregated? To start, we can look at history through the lens of popular written news mediums in Baltimore such as the *Baltimore Sun*, *City Paper* and *Bmore Art*. During the research

process for this publication, we discovered that when it comes to art in Baltimore, local press and coverage heavily focus on Baltimore's close community of artists, curators, and professionals. As we continued to research the art culture in Baltimore City, my inquiries shifted towards the reflection of African-American art in Baltimore. We reviewed specific publications like the *Afro-American Newspapers* for history, not African-American specific, but simply including African-American art or artists in the dialogue of the city's history.

As neighborhoods become more gentrified, we see less and less of a traditional passing down of culture from one generation to the next. Areas like Highlandtown, East Baltimore, Hampden, Cherry Hill, and Canton reflect questionable urban planning and are predominantly comprised of one ethnic population. For institutions in the city like Johns Hopkins, MICA, and Peabody, it is an operational necessity to create housing and comfortable living spaces for the people who support them. New residents to the city means rediscovery of the city and its history, and at the moment we are seeing lots of turnover and repurposing of city areas and architecture. Areas like North Avenue have made 180 degree turns in the past two decades, re-emerging as thriving arts districts, and areas like the Middle East have gone from a scene reminiscent of Iraq circa '05 to an emerging business area with a new \$43 million dollar facility acting as the first new school in East Baltimore in 20 years.

I was about fourteen years old when I left 817 Kinwood Avenue for 925 Kinwat Avenue, which was one of the most memorable times of my life I can remember. I distinctly remember my mother often being in conflict with herself and her friends. It wasn't until I was older that I realized she was dealing with a sort of social stigma attached to leaving the



neighborhood that she grew up. I was able to take what I was accustomed to and juxtapose it against what I was encountering for the first time. Observing inner city culture and suburban culture at the same time allowed for me to see the differences and to observe with a critical eye. Being from the inner city and also cultured away from it made me an anomaly. As an African-American male from an educated background, I was an ideal mentor, particularly for young men of color, as well as an ideal candidate for diversity initiatives and leadership programs. It can be a daunting task to be seen as the ambassador for your race at such a young age, especially when the culture you represent isn't particularly valued by your audience.

Recently, Baltimore, specifically its destitute African-American communities, have been in the national spotlight. Despite the fact that Baltimore is a city in which 64% of the population is African-American, it is ironic that it is so difficult to find ethnic events and history showcased and covered in local publications. From what I've observed, African-American culture in Baltimore City is dealt with on an almost obligatory basis. The current climate of Baltimore City is of commercial potential; there is so much money here, untapped in the form of space, culture, and proximity to important resources like transportation and healthcare.



Special Thanks to —

Abdu Ali	Jenny Ferretti
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Alex Ebstein	Jim French
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Anna Fitzgerald	Joshua Abelow
Barker French	Kim King
Balti Gurls	Kimi Hanauer
Baltimore Heritage	Lee Heinemann
The Baltimore Sun	Lily Clark
Bill Tata	Mara Neimanis
The BMA	Max Anderson
Brenda Edelson	Max Guy
Brett Barthlow	Milly Vanderwood
Carly Ptak	Olivia Obineme
Colin Alexander	Open Space
City Paper	Patricia Kendall
Craig Hankin	Peggy Chiang
Doreen Bolger	Rashid Belt
Diamond Dixon	Rope
EMP Collective	Ryan Stevenson
Eli Pousson	Sarah Doherty
Emilia Pennanen	Sherwin Mark
Emily Rafferty	Springsteen Gallery
First Continent	& especially Deana, Ginevra, Lu, Lee, Dom, and Erica.
Howard Yang	
James Singewald	
Jazmin Smith	
Jeffrey Kent	

Director's Letter

Scroll 3: On Site is seemingly about many things. First, it is about the making and closing of art spaces and the specific conditions in which that occurs. It is also about the evolution of commercial spaces over many decades, realizing car factories, department stores, and sports bars as faint testaments to the ideals of our society at those times. And, after watching Allie, Brandon, and May's process over this past year, I've realized that this third iteration of *Scroll* is a testament to the power of storytelling. This publication is about knowing that there aren't enough websites, newspaper clippings, and microfiche pages in the world to properly convey the history of any given thing. It is about understanding that an archive is only as complete as the voices that were able to author it, leaving much of our recorded memory riddled with social, economic, and racial bias. It is about confirming that people's stories need to be documented or we risk losing them forever.

As a nomadic museum, our research is forced to turn outward across the various sites in Baltimore we utilize for projects and the arts spaces we learn from daily. It is why this edition of *Scroll* is so meaningful for us. It feels like a natural extension of the work we do regularly while also operating as an advocacy piece for the folks managing arts spaces against all odds. We are so indebted to these arts spaces. They have created a viable landscape for our work and advanced the field in ways institutions could never have done on their own.

It should be known that it took many months and dozens of case studies to produce the final eight that are neatly published in these pages. Allie, Brandon, and May worked tirelessly to scout buildings and immerse themselves in their histories. Their research required endless phone calls, emails, and meetings. Thus, I want to send my extreme gratitude to the individuals and groups listed in the thank you page—we appreciate you sharing your stories and for all that you have done to literally make space for the arts in Baltimore. It has been generative in so many magical ways. I also want to acknowledge the landlords and organizations that have invested so lovingly into the arts: BARCO, Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, and the Towner Management French Companies. Your advocacy for this community is not unnoticed—thank you, thank you, thank you, and please keep it up!

I can't stress enough how much of The Contemporary's work relies on the collective efforts of our team—literally none of this, least of all *Scroll*, would be possible without the efforts of Dominiece Johnson, Ginevra Shay, Lee Heinemann, and Lu Zhang. I want to thank Erica Goebel, one of our incredible volunteers, for her flawless editorial eye, endless wisdom, and generosity of spirit. I also want to plug our Board because if any Board deserves to be plugged it is most certainly this one: thank you for always having our back and for supporting this program and these interns without question. And, finally, I tip my hat to Allie, Brandon, and May. They are the kind of compassionate producers and deep listeners that our city, nation, and world really need right now. Thank you for filling our office with so many incredible stories. Great work!

Deana Haggag
Director

