

THE ALHAMBRA PROJECT



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An art project by Lynn Marie Kirby and Christoph Steger

Friday September 30th 2016, 7 – 10pm
The Alhambra Theatre / Crunch Gym
2330 Polk St., Russian Hill, San Francisco

[San Francisco, CA, August 1, 2016]

On September 30, Bay Area artists **Lynn Marie Kirby** and **Christoph Steger** will present to the public a night of videos, films and performances at the former Alhambra Theatre, now a Crunch Gym, on Polk Street in Russian Hill. This unusual site was inspired by the original Alhambra Palace in Granada, Spain - an architectural wonder of the Moorish empire and a testament to the coexistence of Muslim, Jewish and Christian traditions in Europe. In the culmination of over two years research, Kirby and Steger have created a neighborhood-wide installation. The work combines a multidisciplinary archive of aleatory neighborhood conversations with a series of video and performance pieces resulting from collaborations with artists from across the globe. Visitors are guided through the installation with a web app-pow-

ered artwork that activates the blocks surrounding the former Theatre. **The Alhambra Project** illuminates layered site-specific history, exploring cultural patterning and visions of exoticism, while using the Theatre's gym conversion as a locus for interrogating the shifting demographics of the neighborhood.

On the night of September 30th, Kirby and Steger present a cycle of 6 video works on the Crunch gym's own monitors. The installation includes video tours of both the interior and exterior of the original Alhambra and collected footage of local pets from today's Russian Hill neighborhood. In addition to their own contributions, the organizing artists present a video piece by New York-based Lebanese artist **Omar Mismar**, which examines bodybuilders working out in ruins instead of gyms. They also present a video text piece featuring an exchange between Kirby and the internationally renowned artist and poet **Etel Adnan** reflecting on the original Alhambra. Interspersed throughout this cycle, and acting as a unifying theme, are animations by Steger based on the 17 possible kinds of infinitely repeatable patterns found in the original Alhambra palace. The artists have also created a series of large color prints featuring portraits of local participants in the project that have been incorporated into one of these 17 designs.

On the gym floor itself, the public is invited to participate in a series of performative exercise classes based on movements isolated from films screened at the Alhambra during its years as an operational movie theatre, 1926 - 1996. A large projection of a video piece based on these movements acts as a backdrop to the performances.

The mobile web app guides visitors around a short loop of the neighborhood with geo-tagged locations that offer music, animations and audio of conversations with local Russian Hill residents, as well as merchants, artists, and scholars. The app is freely accessible and will be available to the public on an ongoing basis. It includes 17 locations (the same as the number of repeatable patterns in the Alhambra). At one of these stops, for example, the geologist, Doris Sloan, tells us about the rock formations of Russian Hill itself, while at another we hear local musician, Carl Blake, play Debussy's "The Alhambra" on the piano. The tour also stops at some local merchants, including Swensen's for some free ice-cream!

The project is funded by an **SF Arts Commission** Grant and a **CCA** Faculty Development grant. It is supported by Crunch Corporate, with **SF Cinematheque** and the **Russian Hill Neighbors** as media co-sponsors.

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Lynn Marie Kirby is an interdisciplinary artist and filmmaker who uses emerging technologies and site interventions to excavate and reveal the traces and effects of the past on the present. She is a Professor of Fine Arts and Film at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco, California. Her work has been widely exhibited in galleries and museums, including the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Olympic Museum, Sarajevo; the Pompidou Centre in Paris; Strasbourg Museum of Contemporary Art, Arsenal, Berlin; Manage, St. Petersburg; Bio Paradis, Reykjavik; Fei Contemporary,

Shanghai; LACE and Hammer in Los Angeles, the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley; the Oakland Museum; the San Francisco Cinematheque, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and the de Young Museum.

Kirby's films and videos have shown at film festivals around the world including Oberhausen, Toronto, London, San Francisco and Athens. She is the recipient of grants and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, Djerassi Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, Film Arts Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Kelsey Street Press, and the City of San Francisco.

Christoph Steger is an artist filmmaker whose work explores the intersections of documentary, animation and experimental film. Incorporating traditional drawing, collage and computer generated images, his films highlight the relationship between reality and its representation through media. His recent pieces are formal investigations into the materiality of digital images.

His work has been shown at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam, the Ottawa International Animation Festival, Tate Modern London, Arnolfini Bristol, the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival and numerous other international film festivals and was screened on television in the United Kingdom and Europe. He received commissions from the Arts Council England and Channel Four TV. Recent video installations have been exhibited at the H&R Block Art Space in Kansas City.

Steger has worked on a wide range of cultural projects for BBC, Channel Four, Amnesty International, the Arts Council England and FACT Liverpool. He is also an Assistant Professor of Animation, Graphic Design and Fine Arts at California College of the Arts.

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