

THE PORCH IS THE TREE IS THE WATERING HOLE

Where We Gather - Black in Sistrunk

AFRICAN AMERICAN RESEARCH LIBRARY & CULTURAL CENTER

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Viewed through the lenses of art, architecture, photography, and poetry, ***The Porch is the Tree is the Watering Hole*** is a dynamic exploration of space and community within the African Diaspora.

As Black communities become increasingly marginalized, it is important to be reminded of traditions that have brought people together for centuries. Whether it be a backyard cookout, a Sunday morning church service, or a gathering under a tree to listen to the latest stories, connection has always been at the center of the Black community. It is within that context that a group of Black artists and designers came together to explore life in Sistrunk, a historical Black neighborhood in Broward County, Florida.

Artists and designers Germane Barnes, Darius V. Daughtry, David I. Muir, Adler Guerrier, Olalekan Jeyifous, Adrienne Chadwick, Marlene Brunot, and George Gadson, were invited by curator Dominique Denis to examine the significance of gathering places in Black communities. Through works of art and design conceived or reimagined for this show, they present a tapestry of work reflecting past and present realities.

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On View with timed reservations
from December 12, 2020 to May 29, 2021

[ArtsCalendar.com/Sistrunk](https://www.ArtsCalendar.com/Sistrunk)



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Public spaces are inhabited and experienced differently within the Black community. By exploring important landmarks throughout the Sistrunk neighborhood, local narratives were rediscovered and served as inspiration for the exhibition design; in particular, the American shotgun home and the back alley. These two staples of most Black neighborhoods evoke emotions and memories to be unraveled, augmented, and reimagined as an art exhibition.

Featured artists display their work in “rooms” found within the single-family home. Photographs of the neighborhood are displayed on the walls and fabrics sway on the “front porch” as if hung from a laundry line. Poetry written on the floors and walls reinforces thoughts of shared experiences and collectivity. Chairs in the central gathering space reference the chairs typically found on the porches of many homes in Sistrunk. They recreate the gathering place that both formal an informal porches provide to this Black community. The alley, threshold of public and private land, is the path through which visitors will learn of the community engagement and aspirations. It is also where the visual artists display their work.

The Porch is the Tree is the Watering Hole is an introspection and investigation meant to highlight the Black experience in Black neighborhoods. It is a collaborative effort to bring forth a collective energy that celebrates Sistrunk’s wonderful history.



GERMANE BARNES

Germane Barnes’ research and design practice investigates the connection between architecture and identity. Mining architecture’s social and political agency, he examines how the built environment influences black domesticity. His design and research contributions have been published and exhibited internationally at venues and in publications including The Museum of Modern Art, The Graham Foundation, The New York Times, Architect Magazine, DesignMIAMI/ Art Basel, The Swiss Institute, Metropolis Magazine, Curbed, and The National Museum of African American History, where he was identified as one of the future designers on the rise.

Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown is a celebration of Black hair and Black architecture. In the United States there has been a search for distinctly Black architecture aesthetic. The porch is one instance of this aesthetic. Derived from the iconic shotgun home and Caribbean cottage, a key component of the physical structure is the privately public threshold that separates the interior from the exterior. One of the most important features of the porch, are the chairs. Fabricated from metal and wood, the materials of the chair mimic the materials used to construct South Florida vernacular of wood framed construction with sheet metal roofing. The seating references braiding techniques often found in the Black community. These chairs are inspired by the crowns donned by Black people across the diaspora. From Sunday Service hats to Bahamian Junkanoo Band cosplay to the legendary Afro-pick, each chair promotes Black identity.



DAVID I. MUIR

David I. Muir’s love for candid, cultural and lifestyle photography inspires his work, and is a signature component of his photo-art collections. His critically acclaimed collection, *Pieces of Jamaica*, led to national and international exhibition tours and was published as a book in 2012. His work generally explores the authenticity in people, and relationships between cultural and class identities within the context of his own experiences. He has been part of numerous South Florida exhibitions and collaborations. He is the President of Island Syndicate, a Caribbean media, art and entertainment company. He is an advocate for alternate perspectives of beauty. His intent is to force the audience to reconsider their current perspectives, and possibly realize a paradigm shift.

Where we Gather is a collection of photographs taken by the artist during his exploration of the Sistrunk neighborhood. His goal was to capture the essence of this historical black neighborhood by looking at the informal ways people gather along sidewalks, under a tree or on their porches. These images reflect the underlying communal aspect of this community and the strong relationship people have with outdoor spaces, where the lines between the private and the public are often blurred.



DARIUS V. DAUGHTRY

Darius V. Daughtry is a poet, playwright, and educator. He is an artist whose main medium is language. Story and authentically told narrative are at the center of everything he does. Whether poem or play, he is meticulous about making sure each word read or heard evokes thought and/or an emotional response. Since a high school creative writing teacher saw worth in his writing, he has not stopped being inspired to elevate the stories of the unheard. We all have stories to tell. The pauses in an overheard conversation, a look on a stranger’s face, a song on repeat in the back of his mind, can all serve as an impetus to put pen to paper. The process of taking those moments and carefully creating poems, scenes, dialogue, or song lyrics, is what his artistic journey is all about. From societal ills to unrequited love, Daughtry finds pleasure in asking the questions that take everyone to the heart of the matter. And once we get to the heart, that’s where we begin to find and feel empathy. He is a storyteller. Daughtry is the Founder and Artistic Director of Art Prevails Project, a performing arts organization dedicated to cultivating community through the power of storytelling, arts education, and community engagement. He has written, directed, and produced a series of successful theatrical productions, including *The Happening: A Theatrical Mixtape, Vol. I and II*, and the *Walls Came Tumbling*.

Daughtry’s artistic piece, *these wizards of ours*, 2020, written for the exhibition *The Porch is a Tree is a Watering Hole*, is a poetic exploration of the culture and community of the African Diaspora and the connectivity that exists through gathering and storytelling.



ADLER GUERRIER

Adler Guerrier, born in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, lives and works in Miami, Florida. His work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States and abroad, including *Coffee, Rhum, Sugar, & Gold: A Post Colonial Paradox* at Museum of African Diaspora, and *Adler Guerrier : Formulating a Plot* at Pérez Art Museum, Miami. Guerrier recently organized the group exhibitions *Between the legible and the opaque: Approaches to an ideal in place*, presented at Bakehouse Art Complex and *Notices in a Mutable Terrain* at Fundacion Pablo Atchugarry. Guerrier’s practice is best known for works in photography, drawing, and installation, that explore the poetics and politics of place. Guerrier received a BFA from New World School of the Arts/University of Florida.

For this exhibition, Guerrier developed an installation of works-on-paper employing photographic images, a layer of diffused forms, collage, and framed artworks, including works by George Gadson. The installation mirrors the alleyway’s municipal lanes organized to offer some access to private properties and yet are not the primary and may not be proper points of entry. Views glimpsed from this vantage point are not formal; they hold bits of private life and the furnishing of everyday living. Gadson’s work, as incorporated into the artwork, function more explicitly in its expression of lived experiences through the use of assemblage to form a work of art out of found and manipulated materials. The photo-based images retreat as settings, as places in which narratives are situated, and as sites in which objects resonate historically.



OLALEKAN JEYIFOUS

Olalekan Jeyifous’s work has been exhibited at venues such as the Studio Museum in Harlem and Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Vitra Design Museum, Germany and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain. He has spent over a decade creating large-scale artwork for public spaces. He created award-winning installations for Starbucks located in the Barclays Arena in Brooklyn and Flagship store in Chicago’s Gold Coast neighborhood. Most recently,

he completed commissions for the Durham SmART Vision Plan, a 50ft-tall sculpture for the 2017 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, and large-scale sculptures for Public Square in downtown Cleveland. Olalekan Jeyifous received a Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell University.

Not My Business is named after a poem by Nigerian poet, dramatist, and literary critic, Niyi Osundare. These small-scale sculptures loosely reference the poem’s thematic purpose and reflect on the fact that at the time of their making, the artist had not been back to Nigeria since he was a small child. In this way, the title also interrogates the propriety of his “speaking” on matters pertaining to a home he had not yet returned to. *I No Get Change O!*, 2017 and *Dispatches From/To*, 2016 are two sculptures from the Not My Business series.



ADRIENNE CHADWICK

Adrienne Chadwick is a visual artist who utilizes accumulation, repetition, and translucence to express ideas related to power and resistance, in society and nature. Her work has been exhibited at Aqua Art Fair Miami Beach, Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator Miami, Girls Club Collection, The Project Space and 1310 Gallery in Fort Lauderdale, and Spady Museum, Delray Beach. Born in Toronto, Canada, with origins in Belize, Central America, Chadwick lives and works in Hollywood, Florida.

She has worked as a museum administrator since 1994, earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from New World School of the Arts and a Master of Public Administration from Nova Southeastern University.

The installation *Resettlement* examines ongoing concerns with housing inequality, institutionalized racism, economic and climate gentrification in communities of Black, Indigenous, and people of color. It also describes forced migration of a large group of people imposed by a government entity. Even after the end of racial segregation in the United States, policies such as redlining, and the deliberate denial of loans continued to impact minorities. *Resettlement* is a part of a series inspired by the children’s book “Mr. Pines Purple House” written and illustrated by Leonard P. Kessler in 1965. The story involves a neighborhood of identical houses, with characters that cannot identify their homes from one another. In this installation, each clay house’s handmade quality brings attention to conformity and inspires individuality, independence, and pride in our communities.



GEORGE GADSON

George Gadson discovered his talent for art in 1981 while in search of a means of creative relaxation from the rigors of a demanding banking career. He is a multi-disciplinary artist, griot and philosopher of the contemporary African American experience. Gadson’s body of work includes commissions such as an ornament for the White House Christmas Tree, two South Florida Super Bowl bronze commemorative sculptures, the Jim Moran

Foundation Award, the African American Achievers Awards, and large-scale sculptures for the African American Research Library and Cultural Center and the Urban League of Broward County. He is a native of the small southern town of Ft. Meade, Florida where he experienced racism and segregation in a way that has allowed him to use art as a means for healing and self-empowerment. He is a graduate of Duke University.

Rebirth of Cool, 2019 retells a childhood memory of planting a family garden with peanuts. The rusted welded metals are pieces from the family plow used to prepare the soil for seedlings. These pieces combined with found metal, morph into a powerful spiritual symbol of freedom, African American resilience, and unlimited possibilities. *Doors of Separation*, 2013, has a multi-layered meaning – one associated with the Door of No Return that all Africans had to enter before coming to this country and the other to the reality of experiencing racism and segregation. *The Doors of Separation* represents important symbolic ideas of freedom and progress for Black people. The memory of overcoming this separation is a cathartic experience.



MARLENE BRUNOT

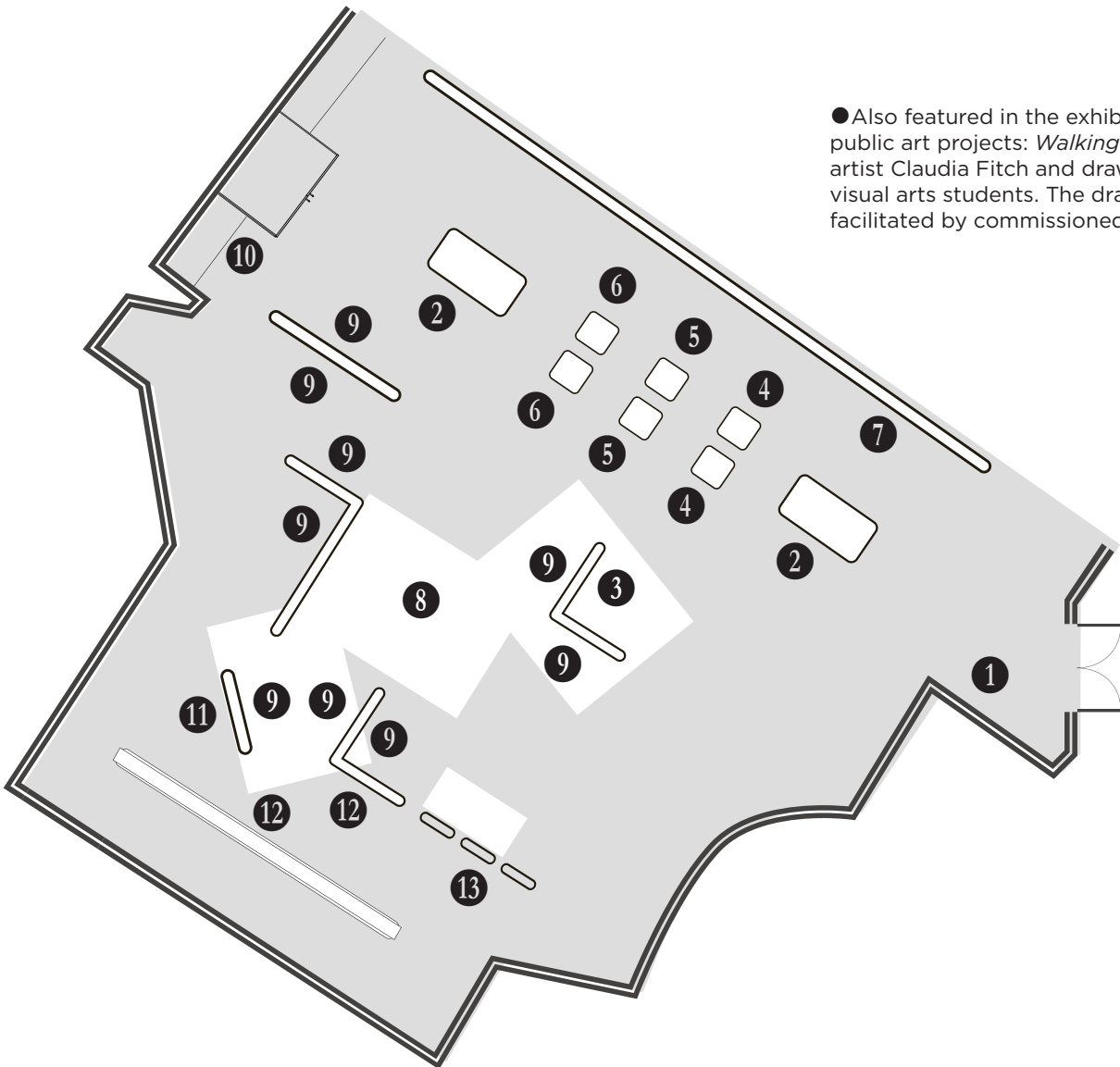
brings a fresh and unique approach to the visual representation of subject matters related to community engagement, neighborhood improvement and public investment. Her design training started at the Urban Design Studio within the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council and continues to be influenced by the architects, urban designers, and visual artists that she collaborates with throughout the South Florida region. Ms. Brunot graduated from the Florida

Atlantic University with a Master’s in Urban and Regional Planning. She is the founder of Brunot Maps, a company whose mission is focused on bridging the gap between design and technology.

Ms. Brunot’s work is primarily focused on revealing community identity using information technology and creative design. The Sistrunk Blvd. corridor map is intended to introduce the exhibition audience to the significant landmarks and gathering spaces within the Sistrunk area. The design concept was developed by identifying the physical features that carve out the distinct neighborhood boundaries. The use of sepia tones and classic font styles were chosen to support the historical theme of the exhibition. After viewing the map, the audience should walk away with a sense of familiarity and understanding of this often-overlooked place at the core of Broward County, Florida.

LEGEND

- 1 Exhibition Narrative
- 2 DILLARD CENTER FOR THE ARTS VISUAL ARTS STUDENTS
Untitled, 2018
- 3 DARIUS V. DAUGHTRY
these wizards of ours, 2020
- 4 ADRIENNE CHADWICK
Resettlement, 2020
- 5 OLALEKAN JEYIFOUS
Not My Business, 2017
- 6 GEORGE GADSON
Rebirth of Cool, 2019 & Doors of Separation, 2013
- 7 ADLER GUERRIER
Untitled (Sistrunk--in medias res. Unfurling the presence of Black life.), 2020
- 8 GERMANE BARNES
Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown, 2020
- 9 DAVID I. MUIR
Where we Gather, 2020
- 10 CLAUDIA FITCH
Walking Sticks with Stories to Tell, 2021
- 11 MARLENE BRUNO
Historic Sistrunk Boulevard Corridor Map, 2020
- 12 Historic Sistrunk
- 13 GERMANE BARNES
Untitled, 2020



●Also featured in the exhibition are two Broward Cultural Division public art projects: *Walking Sticks with Stories to Tell*, 2021, by artist Claudia Fitch and drawings by the Dillard Center for the Arts visual arts students. The drawings were created during a workshop facilitated by commissioned artist, Blessing Hancock.



DOMINIQUE DENIS

Dominique Denis is trained as an architect with more than two decades of combined experience in architecture, urban planning, and public art curating. She has worked for several architectural firms in the New York metropolitan area and South Florida. For the past six years, her experience working for the Broward Cultural Division with artists, architects and other design professionals has introduced her to the world of cross-disciplinary collaboration and community engagement. As an independent design professional, she is conducting a multi-phase research exploring the unconscious collective memory of people of African descent and its impact on space planning. Denis holds a Bachelor of Architecture from the City University of New York and a Master’s in Urban and Regional Planning from Florida Atlantic University.

The overall concept for the exhibition was conceived during the Summer of 2019. While managing public art projects in the Sistrunk area, Denis felt a sense of déjà vu and wanted to further explore the neighborhood to better understand the relationship Sistrunk residents have with the built environment. *The Porch is the Tree is the Watering Hole's* design concept is centered around two staples of most Black neighborhoods: the gathering place and the back alley. The exhibition main goal is to bring about a better understanding of this historical Black community and to inform the type of public art projects best suited for the area.