



Gentrify Me:

ARTISTS' PERSPECTIVES ON
COMMUNITY DECAY, CHANGE,
AND GENTRIFICATION

GENTRIFY **me!**

a group show

**artists' perspectives on
community decay, change, and gentrification**

april 3rd - april 30th 2009
opens fri. 04.03.09 @6pm
gallery crawl 1st & 3rd fridays

Dialect Gallery (NoDa)
DIALECT GALLERY
3204-c n. davidson st.
APRIL 3- APRIL 30, 2009
charlotte nc 28256

Gentrify Me:

ARTISTS' PERSPECTIVES ON
COMMUNITY DECAY, CHANGE,
AND GENTRIFICATION

Essays by Meika R. Fields

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Gentrify

gentrify (v.) (to renovate so as to make it conform to middle-class aspirations)

Gentrify Me (is an art show dedicated to artists' experience and perspective on community change and neighborhood redevelopment). Artist's culture and entrepreneurship are often the catalyst for community revitalization, while the realities of rapid economic development and displacement are often the outcome. The show is relevant to Charlotte, along with many arts communities and cities across the country.

The present exhibit was designed to bring together artist and artist activists with points of view to share about community change through their own experiences. While some artists have taken part in community workshops and meetings related to area development the majority of the artists represented in this show have never been made to feel apart of the community participation or planning process. The artists are from areas throughout the region. Some are current residents of NoDa, Charlotte's historical artists' district, while others have experienced eviction or relocation from the district.

Gentrify Me aims to bring community members and neighborhood artists to the center of community change dialogue in a context that is open, engaging and respectful to varying points of view.

I would like to personally thank all of the artists for their participation in the show, and Dialect Gallery for their support of this venture.

Meika Fields
Artist and Urban Designer

Gentrification in Arts Communities

Gentrification is highly controversial topic. The controversy and criticisms are rarely about economic changes strictly. In the case of communities with distinctive, independent subcultures, such as arts communities, gentrification leads to large shifts in population dynamics. Many districts lose their artists, particularly younger less established ones. Widespread gentrification is counter to artists' interests and city interests.

Geographer, David Cole, wrote about the phenomenon in the article, "Artists and Urban Redevelopment". Artists experiencing gentrification in Manhattan are being priced out of their homes and are moving to areas in New Jersey.¹ For an area like Manhattan that is saturated with people and funding associated with its cultural institutions, museums, and galleries, a decline in its artist

populations due to gentrification may be considered tolerable by some. It may even be good news for neighboring state New Jersey.

However, in smaller creative districts such as North Davidson Street Arts District in Charlotte, North Carolina, and many arts districts across the country, a loss of those creative individuals due to unfocused policies, fragmented planning, and sweeping public and private economic intervention can mean a perceivable loss in sense of place and community character. Such districts rely on reputation, grassroots involvement, sense of authenticity, and active community participants for their success.

Due to multiple factors such as the positive aspects of arts in urban areas, and the vulnerability of arts communities to gentrification and marginalization, there is a need for establishing sustainable arts communities. There is potential for more artists and art communities to prosper with the growth of the city and the district, instead of being some of the first populations pushed out

in search of new fertile ground.

The Setting: NoDa

The neighborhood of North Davidson is just north of uptown Charlotte. North Davidson is an area categorized as North Charlotte and is bounded by North Tryon, East Sugar Creek, the Plaza, and Matheson Ave.

Historically the landscape character of the area was a working landscape. As a mill village, the North Davidson area was suited with workers housing, mills, and a railroad line. North Charlotte had its own downtown on North Davidson Street between 35th and 36th street that served the largely working class community.

The story of North Davidson and its redevelopment into an arts community is frequently traced to two individual artists Ruth Ava Lyons and Paul Sires, original owners of Center of the Earth Gallery. Lyons and Sires were artists in residents at Spirit Square in uptown Charlotte in 1983. In search for affordable studio space, they came upon the old North Charlotte main street. The area was described in an interview as under occupied and nearly abandoned. The galleries that subsequently opened were considered an extension of these artists' lifestyles more than a for-profit business venture.²

The central core of the neighborhood is the historical North Davidson Street Arts District. The historical arts district is defined by a small cluster of storefronts and galleries oriented along North Davidson Street between 36th and 35th Street. A subculture of artists, arts appreciators, and entrepreneurs expanded the culture of NoDa to wider radius beyond this cluster of galleries, yet the characteristic of the arts district remains small, walkable, and anchored to the historical cluster. The North

Davidson neighborhood and arts district which came to be known as NoDa soon created a cultural pull, and a growing sphere of influence in the Charlotte region and beyond.

During the mid 1990's NoDa was applauded for being a "genuine, organic, real place".³ NoDa represented a viable, engaging counterculture in the Charlotte area that was known for embracing emerging artists and entrepreneurs. Gallery crawl was considered to be the city's largest block party. NoDa contributes a large cultural benefit to the city of Charlotte.

Today the areas vicinity to downtown Charlotte, considered the banking capital of the Southeast, has made it more appealing to a growing middle class. A wider variety of income levels can be seen in the historical neighborhood fabric today.

The prestige of NoDa has created an anchor and sense of pride for the North Davidson Street corridor. The cultural branding of NoDa can be seen throughout the area. It has become a rejuvenating force for North Davidson Street. Businesses and neighboring communities connect themselves to the arts district. Along with increased buzz have come significant development interests. While the branding continues down the North Davidson Street corridor the characteristic of art centered entrepreneurship does not necessarily follow suit. Even still NoDa is proudly incorporated into business names and attached to development ventures.

The district that evolved somewhat spontaneously out of conditions where there was low rent, available space, interesting environmental character, and area artists is changing. Most recently, housing prices in the area have increased sharply. Refurbished mill bungalows are currently being sold for



Johnston Mills Stands Unoccupied on 36th Street

upwards of 300,000. There may be more real estate offices, wine bars, and restaurants than galleries in the historical core. Many claim NoDa is gentrified.

The current economic slump has directly effected Charlotte's banking based economy. The effects are quickly rippling through art industries. While a number of galleries have come and gone in the history of the gallery district, Canvas Monkey and The Art Preserve are the most recent additions to that list.

Displacement and the Mills

There have been recent urban studies that show only a modest correlation between gentrification and resident displacement.⁴ However in the case of the North Davidson area, artists' perceptions of displacement as the outcome of gentrification are larger than studies may portray.

Increased perception of the displacement of

artists is largely due to the closings of City of Charlotte-owned multifamily properties Johnston Mills and Mecklenburg Mills. The mills are located at the heart of the historical arts district, and were occupied by a diverse group of artist renters, many of whom were young and of color. The Charlotte Observer reported how low-income residents were hastily moved out of the Johnston Mill when inspectors found wood decay and structural damage due to termites.⁵

Protests at over the closing of Johnston Mill made local news. Considering the outcome, some of the protesters felt like their efforts were in vain. To date, negotiations with potential developers about the future of the properties are still underway, but appear to be progressing. There is concern over whether artists and arts culture will be incorporated into those developments plans. Additionally community members are concerned that new development plans will not include a critical degree of affordability that would encourage

the diversity that the previous mills achieved.

These highly visible mill closings have affected the perspective of the arts community and damaged trust between artists, community members, and the City of Charlotte. The redevelopment of the mill for economic gain, and a perceived new upper middle class clientele, has made some former residents and artists feel unappreciated and unincorporated in the community in which they were once a very vital part.

The Mecklenburg and Johnston Mill redevelopments have the potential of strengthening the sense of community for the NoDa neighborhood and solidifying the culture of the arts for the North Davidson area. NoDa has a great recent history of embracing emerging artists and a diverse culture. The voices and reflections of those artists therefore become paramount to consider in the wake of community development efforts. This show brings those artists to the forefront of the community change discussion.

Themes within the Exhibit

For the exhibit, artists were encouraged to explore personal stories and reflections on community change, decay, and gentrification. Some artists chose to direct their commentary squarely towards North Davidson, while others chose to explore personal or political sources of inspiration. Some used maps of Charlotte and NoDa, as backgrounds for their commentary, while others chose photography, painting, and sculpture.

The artists' perspectives represented in the show are varying, yet connecting themes can be seen. Antoine William's work explores themes of eviction, placelessness and lack of belonging. Redevelopment and loss of sacred places can be seen in the work of Jasiatic

and Laura Grosch. The state of the housing crisis is examined in wood constructions of de'Angelo Dia and Tomika Elise. Meika Fields' works depicts an aesthetic of urban change through decay and construction.

Footnotes

¹ David Cole. (1987). "Artists and urban redevelopment". *Geogr.Rev.*, 77(4), 391-407.

² NoDa : The evolution of charlotte's north davidson street art district / burke design group ; producer, jerry lee kirk ; director/ videographer, patrick felton ; narrator, fred story.

³ *ibid*

⁴ Lance Freeman. (2005) "Displacement or Succession?: Residential Mobility in Gentrifying Neighborhoods". *Urban Affairs Review*; 40, 463.

⁵ Kelly, F., Observer, T. C., & N.C. (2006, May 28). Change comes with price in NoDa: NoDa's move to more upscale has many moving out. *The Charlotte Observer* (North Carolina).

Voices of the Artists

In preparation for the show, artists were given a questionnaire that aimed to address their perceptions of community change in the North Davidson area. The survey addresses whether the artist felt that the North Davidson area was gentrifying, and what might be some problems and benefits with the changes. Throughout the questionnaire artists were free to give their suggestions on new directions for area growth, and how they felt artists, developers, designers, and the neighborhood could come together for the mutual benefit of North Davidson's communities. All of the responses represent artists who have a great deal of familiarity with the North Davidson area and consider themselves contributors to the local art scene.

North Davidson's Sphere of Influence

In urban studies, the sphere of influence

measures how far the impact of a particular place reaches. In the case of North Davidson, the sphere of influence is larger than the community itself. North Davidson taps into artists apart of a larger regional community of artists, not only neighborhood emerging artists.

The North Davidson area pulls in participation from artists from a variety of communities Charlotte-wide and even outside of Charlotte. The artist respondents live in the NoDa neighborhood, Plaza-Midwood, Uptown, the University Area, Oakhurst, Greensboro, Huntersville and Davidson, North Carolina. Many are neither current nor past residents of NoDa.

On Fulfilling a Void in the Arts Community

The North Davidson area is a congregating place for area artists and meets an important need. The North Davidson area is meeting a need for "hang out" spaces where artists interact with each other to give and get feedback. The Arthouse, The Neighborhood

“Most of the things that are springing up in this community are disconnected from the arts.”

Theater, Smelly Cat, Area 15, The Beet Gallery, Canvas Monkey, Boudreaux's, Cabo Fish Taco, the Boulevard, and Niche were all mentioned as places where artists come together to find out what is going on within a community of artists. Gallery Crawl was also mentioned as a time where artists can find out what is going on in the art community.

Artists on Development

In the survey, artists were also asked what resources they believed would most advance their art career. Certainly more money was quickly suggested, but also the artists questioned expressed a real need for space to do artwork. One artist specified the need for a woodshop. Another wrote “space to engage and collaborate with other artists” would most advance his/her career. Additionally, a multi-media artist wrote that there should be more organizations and resources that invest in artists, and that the city should sponsor more events that recognize artists.

When asked about their support for new artist centered developments, the arts questioned responded most favorably to living in an affordable artist's live/work building, and developments such as a multi-disciplinary artists' center with training, equipment, performance, and presentation space.

The survey also asks the artist to assess the kind of effect new growth and development has had on the vibrancy of the art scene, prestige of the area, affordability of services and housing, ethnic and economic diversity, and entrepreneurship in the North Davidson area. Generally, the artists recognized a

somewhat positive contribution of new development to the vibrancy of the art scene, and prestige of the area. New growth and development is seen as most negatively affecting affordability, ethnic diversity, and economic diversity.

Artists on Funk

So, is NoDa losing its funk? The general consensus from the artists was “Yes”. This topic of conversation is not new news for NoDa. Most artists chose to elaborate on how they felt NoDa is changing.

“Yes. Lost that a long time ago, save for a few places...some of them have closed down.”

“Most of the things that are springing up in this community are disconnected from the arts. The businesses that support the arts are losing business and new expensive housing is being built right in the area that is the arts district. The very things that draw people to the North Davidson area (the arts and the artists) are being forced out of this area because it's being built over them, not for them or with them in mind.”

“More than sometimes I feel it's lost its funk and wow factor. Something needs to happen with NoDa. It's a great spot to hang out and display work, but again I stress, this needs to happen without losing the integrity of what NoDa is and what it's been for us as artists.” Development and over-investment are viewed as large contributors to North Davidson's loss in funk. Funk is largely seen as an organic energy encouraged by the grassroots. North Davidson's draw and sense of place has historically been associated with arts and open culture. New development may be creating a challenge for the cultural hub.

These responses about the loss of funk in NoDa should be viewed in light of the previous ones about making NoDa a more artist-friendly place. On one hand artists are

“bring back the true artist.”

expressing concern about overdevelopment while on the other hand artists are making suggestions for development potential that might improve the character of the area and the vitality of the arts. These views are not in conflict. What they may demonstrate is that there is a balance that artists would like to see in the types of development in the North Davidson area. That balance would likely include more art space, arts-oriented business, workshops, affordability in housing, and artist housing than currently exists in the North Davidson area.

“I think the businesses in NoDa provide support. I am not clear on whether the city infrastructure truly supports the arts. I am also unclear whether individual members of the community who are not involved in the arts truly benefit from this area as a historic arts district.”

On the topic of making the North Davidson area a more artist friendly place, the artist respondents had a few suggestions. Affordability was echoed in the responses. One artist suggested affordable artist living space and more varied arts events. None of the artists’ stances were outwardly anti-development. Another respondent felt that the North Davidson area could use the development of more art space. Another artist

wrote: “I think they could clean it [NoDa] up a little without destroying the integrity of the neighborhood. It would be nice to see NoDa expand and bring in more business.”

Another artist wrote simply that NoDa needs to “bring back the true artist” to make the area artist friendly.

To the survey question: “Does the North Davidson area provide adequate support for artists?” The results were mixed. One artist offered some personal insight by stating: “I think the businesses in NoDa provide support. I am not clear on whether the city infrastructure truly supports the arts. I am also unclear whether individual members of the community who are not involved in the arts truly benefit from this area as a historic arts district.” Individual business and entrepreneurs are seen as leading in arts advocacy in the North Davidson area. Unfortunately their efforts may not be being bolstered by a larger city-wide network of support for the arts.

On Coming Together

The final question of the survey was an open-ended one that asked how developers, artists, private land owners, community residents including non-land owners, entrepreneurs, and city of Charlotte government might begin to come together for the benefit of North Davidson’s communities and artists. One artist wrote: “Start with a meeting. Come with the potential development plans and hear the concerns of the people. After all, it’s the

people of NoDa, not the City of Charlotte Gov't or the developers that live and work there. There is always room for change that will allow us to keep some 'pocket change'" This final suggestion carries with it a few major points. First, these individual groups need to find ways to meet, and respond to individual and group concerns. The second point is that community members and artists alike are looking for a greater deal of transparency with regards to development and community planning. There is a desire for planning goals to come internally from those communities and integrate their definitions of culture and success. The third point goes back to a key dilemma with cultural zones. These cultural activists are looking for, yet infrequently find, methods for increased and equitable profitability from the success of these districts. Developers frequently earn huge dividends through the success of the cultural zone, while key cultural players struggle to receive their share.

Ultimately coming together requires "communication...willingness to listen...and open minds", as one respondent wrote.

Artist populations offer important insight on the health and vitality of our communities. The survey respondents represent a group highly connected with the North Davidson area. Their concerns and suggestions for the future of the area are worthy of consideration in a time of goal setting and community change.

Works and Biographies

Special thanks are due to the artists who have contributed to the exhibit Gentrify Me: Artists' Perspectives on Community Decay, Change, and Gentrification. These artist are also arts activists. They were invited to the show because of their interests, involvement, and active roles in community change in the Charlotte area.

ChadwickCartwright



Courtesy of the Artist

I enjoy the beauty of seeing the world from the perspective of others. Wanting to invite others to see the world from my perspective is what leads me to create. I make art that reveals what I think is beautiful. Through my work, I aim to connect with people in a positive way.

In my photography, I capture images of people or things that I find stimulating or interesting. I enjoy looking at things that are common and finding something unique in them. When my images resonate with people, it reminds me that an individual's unique way of seeing things is important.

Themes that appear repeatedly in my work are: women and

standards of beauty, music (often hip hop and jazz) and its cultural influence, and nature as it reflects God. I often enjoy working with different processes in a single piece, as it makes each project more engaging for me. It also adds texture and depth to my work. When I finish a piece, I reexamine it and allow it to tell me something about myself and what I should create next. It's an interesting exercise in self-expression and self-reflection.

I'm constantly exploring new media and working to overcome my inhibitions creating art. In the future, I will begin to merge my photography into my mixed media work.



Courtesy of the Artist

de'angeloDia

Born 1976 in Savannah, Georgia

Lives in Charlotte, North Carolina

Writer and visual artist de'Angelo Dia, has studied art in Athens Greece, Guadalajara Mexico, and Nairobi Kenya. His artistic influences include Chicano and street art, Basquiat. He has earned his Bachelor

of Science in Applied Communication and Sociology from Appalachian State University and his MA, with a concentration in Cultural Studies and Literature from The University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

He is a member of God City, www.godcity7.net, and the Artist Round table of The Afro-American Cultural Center.



Courtesy of the Artist

TomikaElise

Born 1984 in Charlotte, North Carolina

From piano lessons to tap dance as a child, I unceasingly went back to painting and drawing. My art career jumped off when I began my college career at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, NC. I concentrated in graphic design and screen-printing. After leaving CPCC, I moved to Greensboro, NC to further my education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro where I am currently studying fine arts with a concentration in painting and printmaking.

I am acknowledged as an artist whose work is engaged with feminist characteristics. My work provokes conversation on sexuality, political irritation and tension and personal/ public relationships and other interactions. I allow my work to play with varied ranges of ambiguity and transparency that allows delicate attributes to take place. In many ways my work is made for my viewer to investigate the world around them and how it affects them as individuals. It is in other ways made for the individual to investigate himself or herself by promoting personal dialogue. This examination is based

on interest of personal experience led by existence of memory or lack thereof, social class and status, indirect political hierarchy and sexual identity and role in intimate and social settings.

My artist influences include Susan Harbage Page, Robert Rauschenberg, feminist KiKi Smith, Kerry James Marshall, Herakut and Wanghechi Mutu. This wide range of influences gave me permission and authority to venture out into different means of representation. I am grounded in painting, etching, sculpture, drawing, photography and writing. I explore through narrative, iconography and any other means of representation. There is order and chaos to everything I manifest. I focus on layering; additive and subtractive methods to further explore the composition.

The journey will always be hard, but my belief is to do work that you can never get enough of and surround yourself with people you absolutely love that will continue to make you laugh and smile. At least this way the journey will be always be worthwhile.



Courtesy of the Artist

Fertile and Ready



Courtesy of the Artist

Stop for Gas

MeikaFields

Born 1981 in Baltimore, Maryland

Lives in Clemson, South Carolina

Meika Fields was born and raised in western Baltimore City, Maryland. The urban landscape of Baltimore, including urban blight, has had a profound impact on her artwork and professional interests. Meika moved to North Carolina to pursue undergraduate study at Davidson College where she was a Romare Bearden Art Scholar. Painting,

world arts and cultural anthropology were interests of hers which lead to travel; exploring the arts of Florence, Italy, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, Ghana, and Mexico. The texture and the richness of the so-called “third world”, called her to reconsider texture and meaning in the urban American landscape.

Meika has exhibited in North Carolina, Maryland, as well as internationally. She is also muralist with interests in public art.

Her abstract and representational paintings are influenced by natural forms, urban forms, portraiture, and the physicality of history as expressed in everyday environments. During the art making process, she often uses patterns, torn papers, debris, found objects, house paint, and vintage wallpapers reflective of personalized spaces.

Meika is currently pursuing a master's degree in landscape architecture at Clemson University.



Courtesy of the Artist

Lacunae
2006
Mixed Media on Canvas
15 x 30 inches

Laura Grosch

Born 1945 in Worcester,
Massachusetts

Lives in Davidson, North
Carolina

Painting, printmaking,
gardening, ecology, and
family have been and are
the focus of my life. My
work is in 64 Museums
and public collections
including the Boston

Museum of Fine Arts, the
Brooklyn Museum, and
the Mint Museum. I have
been exhibiting my work
in galleries since 1963.
Currently my work can
be seen at the Christa
Faut Gallery, Cornelius,
NC. My career is
documented on my web-
site www.lauragrosch.com.



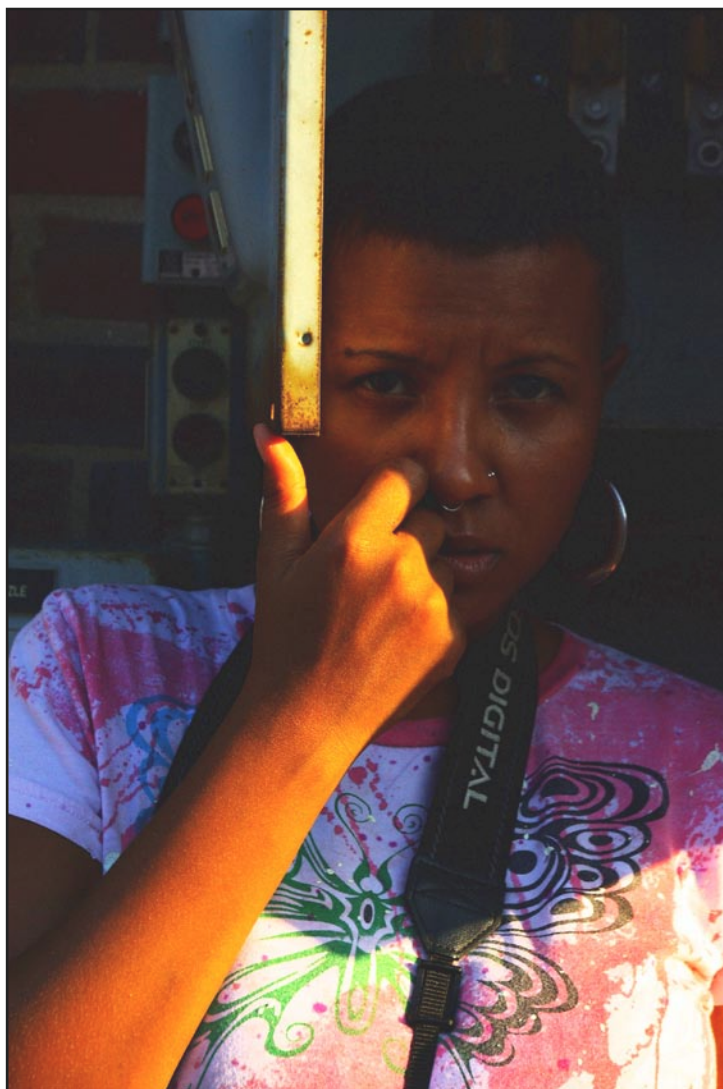
Courtesy of the Artist

Orchid Fantails
2006

Jasiatic

Born 1975 in Charlotte,
North Carolina

Lives in Charlotte, North
Carolina



Courtesy of the Artist

Moye

Artist's Statement

My art is about freedom
About upsetting you to the point of bliss
About tender aggression
Naked eyes and exposed lies
About emotional extremes with subtleness
My art is about the pain i feel
And the beauty you see in that
My art wants to slam contradiction in your face
To epitomize the coexistence of you and i
My art is merely us
You and i
Entangled in some unknown position
Fighting, loving, laughing, crying
Living
The whole journey through



Courtesy of the Artist

Fet-usFeed-usFree-us (Self-Portrait)

Born in Nuremberg,
Germany

Moye grew up traveling the world from Korea, Germany, and China to Virginia, Louisiana and the Carolinas. These travels have helped create her unique sense of style, design, color, fashion and photography. After spending several years moving about the world and refining her craft, Moye decided to share her love of art, design and photography by creating Inclusive Photography by Moye.

Moye is using Inclusive

Photography to inspire a new generation of photography by incorporating, chic designs and classic style with innovative techniques and distinguishing features. As a child, Moye had a knack for the arts. Her love for photography began in middle school, when her older cousin gave her father a Minolta Camera. Moye's father didn't use it often, so Moye claimed it as her own. With this camera and her inherent gifts, Moye was able to capture the essence of posture and pose, points of view

and language along with extraordinary images of the world and priceless moments in time.

Moye's passion for photography has continued to grow. That growth can be attributed to the diversity of life and the people who inhabit it. Her dream for photography is, to help others, as well as herself, open doors to places untouched, to keep the catalyst alive in places already discovered, and to push the boundaries of what society views as beautiful and artistic.

Antoine Williams



Good Bye NoDa
2005
Acrylic on Canvas
28 x 36 inches

Born 1980 in Red Springs, North Carolina

Lives in Charlotte, North Carolina

Question Everything?
If people had taglines that probably would be Antoine Williams'. He's always been that observant person to ask "why" or better yet "why not". Even as a kid back in the small rural town of Red Springs, NC where he was born in 1980. Antoine used

his creativity to feed his hunger for the unknown. This inquisitive nature followed through art school at UNC-Charlotte. Here Antoine began to notice social differences and injustices whether it be racial, cultural, or economical. Influenced by artist such as Diego Rivera, Banksy, Barkley Hendricks, Shepard Fairey, and Emory Douglas, Antoine began to comment on issues that concerned yet interested him. Antoine's

work is a fusion of street art, hip hop culture and propaganda art that comments on social/political issues as they relate to everyday people. "I feel that art should be for everyone not just the elite."

In 2005 Antoine co-founded the art collective God City whose mission is to educate, entertain, and assist the people through artistic expression.

Antoine currently has work in The Mint Museum of Art permanent collection and in the homes of various collectors while continuing to exhibit work and while push his artistic abilities and message.

Plates

The following are works in the exhibition.

1. No Occupancy. Jasiatic. 2009. Photograph. 11" x 14".

2. Lacunae. Meika Fields. 2006. Mixed media on canvas. 15" x 30".

3. The Nomadic Ghetto. Antoine Williams. 2009. Mixed Media on Canvas. 48" x 36".

4. I Can Not Be Defined (Fuckn Art Genius). Moye. 2006. Photograph. 11" x 14".

5. In the Beginning. Moye. 2008. Photograph. 11" x 14".

6. 107. de'Angelo Dia. 2009. Wood Construction.

7. In ? We Trust. de'Angelo Dia. 2009. Wood Construction.

8. Good Bye NoDa. Antoine Williams. 2005. Acrylic on Canvas. 28" x 36".

9. Rekindling. Jasiatic. 2009. Photograph. 8" x 10".

10. Memories. Jasiatic. 2009. Photograph. 8" x 10".

11. The Cipher. Jasiatic. 2009. Photograph. 8" x 10".

12. What's Left. Jasiatic. 2009. Photograph. 8" x 10".

13. Holding On. Jasiatic. 2009. Photograph. 8" x 10".

14. AphroWoman: Kiss My Condo. Chadwick Cartwright. Mixed Media on Canvas.

15. AphroWoman: Urban Beautification. Chadwick Cartwright. Mixed Media on Canvas

16. AphroWoman: Community In Transit. Chadwick Cartwright. Mixed Media on Canvas.

17. Bountiful Garden; Sheltering Forest, South Main Street, Davidson, NC, 1995. Laura Grosch. 2009. Acrylic on Canvas. 9" x 12".

18. Development Devastation: Gentrification is not Gentle. South Main Street, Davidson, NC , now. Laura Grosch. 2009. Acrylic on Canvas. 9" x 12".

19. Chelsea 3808. Meika Fields. 2006. Mixed Media on Canvas. 30" x 40".

20. Knocked Down to Muted Memories. Tomika Elise. 2009. Wood Construction with Mixed Media.

21. There Are No Happy Endings or Fairy Tales. Tomika Elise. 2009. Wood Construction with Mixed Media.

22. **The Threadbare of Sentiments and Flashbacks.** Tomika Elise. 2009. Wood Construction with Mixed Media.

23. **Urban Renewal.** de'Angelo Dia. 2009. Photograph

24. **Cordelia in View.** Meika Fields. 2009. Mixed Media on Canvas. 6" x 8".

25. **The Roofless.** Meika Fields. 2009. Mixed Media on Canvas. 6" x 8".

26. **Johnston Fleeting.** Meika Fields. 2009. Mixed Media on Canvas. 6" x 8".

27. **Optimist Park.** Meika Fields. 2006. Mixed Media on Canvas. 30" x 40".

28. **The Other Side.** Jasiatic. 2009. Photograph. 8" x 10".



Courtesy of the Artist



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Courtesy of the Artist



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Courtesy of the Artist

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Courtesy of the Artist

Courtesy of the Artist



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Courtesy of the Artist

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Courtesy of the Artist

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Courtesy of the Artist

Courtesy of the Artist



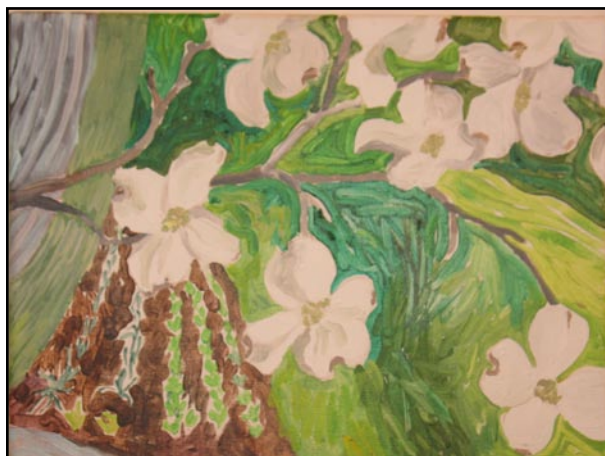
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Courtesy of the Artist

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Courtesy of the Artist



Courtesy of the Artist

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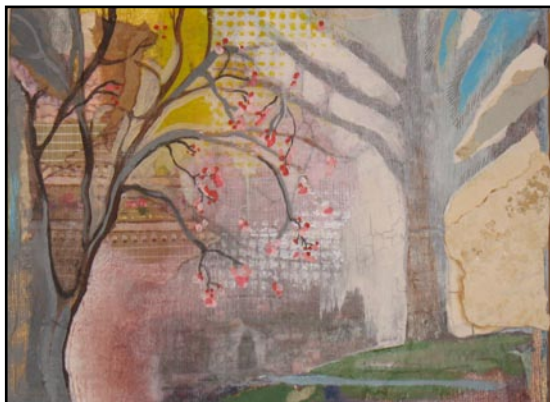
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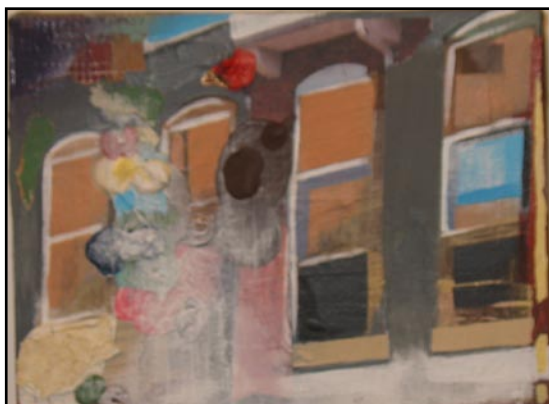
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Courtesy of the Artist

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Community Response: April 3, 2009

Gentrify Me was designed as an art show about artists' perspectives on community change. During the opening night of the show we wanted to give an opportunity for community members to express their opinions about community change in North Davidson.

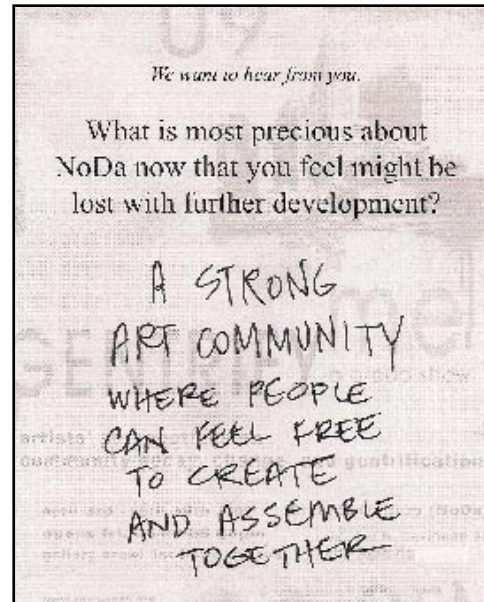
On small slips of paper, gallery visitors were encouraged to respond to the following question:

What is most precious about
NoDa now that you feel might be
lost with further development?

Responses:

1. The diversity and captivating beauty that can be found here could not sustain itself with further encroaching commercial development. Mecklenburg County has more than enough underdeveloped areas then to place anymore in NODA.
2. Music (not just rock), diversity, openness to new ideas
3. Artistic expression and integrity
4. The urbanness. It used to be urban all the time. A lot of classy people come to these events, and make them look like it's not about art.
5. The art galleries and tradition of the area. It provides an outlet for Charlotte artist(s) and those who enjoy their work.

6. Small businesses, local artists
7. The culture that represents the diversity in Charlotte
8. I believe the area would loose its flair. It would become a cookie cut out of other areas. While today it holds its own place of originality.
9. The freedom of artistic expression
10. The artists



11. Close community, profound artists
12. The mix of cultures. I used to love running in the area of 34th-36th and seeing the older white and black families on their porches on a spring/ summer evening. The new and old can and should co-exist effortlessly.
13. Nothing
14. Everything...The people, the soul, the art, the music. Everything. I can live anywhere. Noda was supposed to be my sanctuary....

15. The “spirit”
16. Housing costs will increase making the area unaffordable for artists. The somewhat bohemian feel will be lost.
17. NoDa today is “authentic and that will be lost with uncontrolled development.
18. The most precious are the gallery crawl nights. Just to have an array of different folks coming out to enjoy the work, that’s most precious to me.
19. Relaxed, community feel. Comfortable like an old shoe.
20. Diversity of people. Unique art corner of Charlotte (only place for good art).
21. NoDa was once well known as an artist’s community, but now it has lost that. I feel the atmosphere of the overall community...the friendliness, the décor, the nostalgia is the most precious.
22. A strong arts community where people can feel free to create and assemble together.
23. Love and passion for diversity. Open mind, pure simple art.
24. The music and art. But I feel the vibe of Noda has changes already.
25. There is still culture here. And by culture I mean blacks, asian, indian, etc...I see NoDa having no trace of ethnic influence in the years to come. Culture is what keeps this place thriving.
26. True artist appreciation
27. Socio-economic diversity
28. Noda is safe as long as you don’t have a Walmart.
29. I like the use of the original building as small galleries or restaurants. It would not be the same with large commercial stores.
30. I like the mixture of places, which are good for communication. A lot of shopping stores would destroy a lot.
31. Artist housing
32. Culture. Nothing gentrified exhibits a unique culture. Everything gentrified has the same culture. Without culture what will we be remembered for?
33. Independently owned shops with a diversity of tastes and brilliant arts and music community.
34. Sense of place
35. The family/ community/ personable feel may be sacrificed.
36. The originality of “north charlotte” before it became “NoDa”
37. I fear the loss of the family connections, the ability to know the person walking down the street. Also the “hidden treasures” found on every corner that have been left by passersby.
38. This place has personality. It stands out from the rest of town. Further urbanization and commercialism may destroy what makes Noda unique.
39. History, people, life. Use what’s here to further develop. No new buildings.
40. The culture, meeting new people. The

history.

41. I like the community feel, that galleries and shops are small and have character. It's not a commercial place (like the mall) and there are no big stores (like Walmart). Even with development it would be important to keep the character.

42. The heart and soul of a laid back space in the middle of the hustle and bustle.

43. I think NoDa is losing several things. 1. Artists 2. Individuality 3. Diversity. This neighborhood is being overtaken by yuppie families who want to push out everything else—that's too bad.

44. The most precious to me would be a loss of real culture with all the buildings in NoDa (Davidson). I remember when it was just 36th street. Fat City was torn down, now pricey lofts will have the same name. Was nothing what Fat City Hip Hop Mondays was about. Kind of yuppie culture art things, more folks need to come out support these artists and inspire new ones to really have an "art culture" in the QC.

45. The most precious thing is an unattainable almost indescribable feeling of belonging. A section of town that I know and can express myself fully.

46. I don't know much about the area but if it's too overly developed then the vibe and the "cool factor" will be lost.

47. Just don't bulldoze the taco joint.

48. The art community and the free spirits

49. Diversity of perspectives

50. The variety of art

51. Sense of community awareness. Real soul to pseudo soul.

52. I'm new to the area but have been here a few times. Noda is a cool place with a real history. Don't change!

53. More urban/ young artists

54. It has already lost so so much of the "working" artist vibe—I would like to see affordable housing and work space for artists.

55. It is becoming more and more difficult for artists to live in this "art district" due to the greed of developers, "flippers" and realtors.

56. Vintage homes. An open area for everyone.

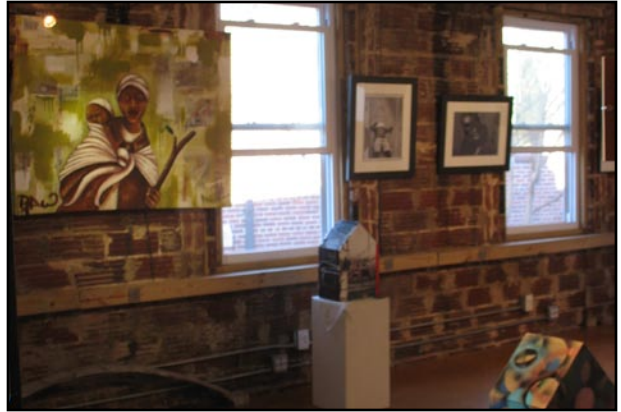
57. The accessibility for local artists to afford studios and gallery space and to be highlighted as a vital part of this city's artistic prominence.

58. The most precious thing about NoDa is that it inspires people of all walks of life to keep on pushing. It gives those who can't experience art the opportunity to learn and express themselves. At least I know it's given me inspiration and only being 25 I hope when I have kids I can bring them to NoDa too.

59. Its character. The real people who live in the city will be run out.

60. The art crawls are such a big part of NoDa and I love that they bring such a diverse crowd to the neighborhood. An outside movie theater would do great here.

61. It's unique. Let's not let it go the way of so many other special places. Once it's gone it's gone.



Selected Readings

The following resources are good sources of information for individuals and groups who have interests in community design and a healthy incorporation of the arts.

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Markusen, Ann and Amanda Johnson with Christina Connolley, Andrea Martinez, Paul Singh, and Galen Truer. 2006. *Artists' Centers: Evolution and Impact on Career, Neighborhoods and Economies*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, Project on Regional and Industrial Economics.

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For Questions Please Contact:

Meika Fields
Artist and Urban Designer
meikafields.com
meikafields@hotmail.com

