

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Curated by Dawoud Bey

LISA LINDVAY • JON LOWENSTEIN • JASON REBLANDO • JESSICA RODRIGUE • DAVID SCHALLIOL • LEILANI WERTENS

Hyde Park Art Center

September 25, 2011-January 15, 2012



No Place Like Home includes the work of six photographers concerned with how we construct, and visually represent, the complex reality of home. The notion of home—and by extension community—is fraught with both personal and sociological baggage. The terms home and community have long been invoked in terms often bordering on the reverential, with the home being seen as a refuge from social turmoil, and community being viewed as a group of people united—by design or happenstance—to create and reinforce that sense of social refuge within a particular geographical area. The dissonances between the ideal and reality of home is the subject of this exhibition.

Because all social formations—including home and community—contain some underlying tensions, the disjunctions between home and community as an ideal construct and its more complex representations made for rich possibilities as I began to think about these various groups of works in relation to each other. Each artist's works marks out a particular and unique terrain of inquiry, and taken in sum they make for a provocative and nuanced contemporary examination of this issue. While each artist had their own reasons and motivations for making their work, it was my intention to create a broader conversation by bringing them together to shape a larger narrative.

The show takes its title from “The Wizard of Oz” and Dorothy's desire to leave Oz and return to a normative and secure sense of home through the recitation of the magical mantra, “There's no place like home.” Of course the secure, idealized place she wishes to return to is one that exists largely as a mythic and nostalgic construct. Indeed Dorothy herself lived with her Aunt Em and Uncle Henry on

Left to right:

Jon Lowenstein

Mariah Plays Hide and Seek, 7300 Block of South Chicago
2004

Black and White Silver Print
16x20 inches

Jason Reblando

Gazebo, Greendale, WI
2009

Archival Pigment Print
32x39 inches

the Kansas prairie, and in the original book version of the story was an orphan. Her wishful longing for a return to a more stable home, rather than the fantastical and often threatening world she found when she left to go “over the rainbow,” was indeed a life that had already experienced a familial rupture that could be seen as less than ideal.

Creating a secure sense of home is, of course, more complicated than clicking ones heels together three times, or going over the mythical rainbow and back. There are a host of social forces militating against the establishing of a stable sense of both home and community. Class is certainly one factor influencing this. And the degree to which race and class often intersect creates yet another set of possible social strictures working against the kind of stable home life and community one would consider to be the ideal. Economic forces, too, influence the shape and growth of community, and the degrees to which it thrives or languishes due to aggressive social engineering. Conflicting agendas on all sides of this socioeconomic equation are thus constantly at work, creating a state of home and community in perpetual and eternal flux.

Lisa Lindvay's photographs of her father, sister and two brothers describe the trauma of a fractured American family and the domestic space that they inhabit with each other. In the absence of their mother there is a pervasive sense of desperation in the family's attempts to both create and continue a semblance of a stable home life in a home and family that has seemingly lost its center. The myth of the perfect middle class nuclear family and domestic bliss is forcefully and evocatively exploded in Lindvay's pictures, which are made all the



more vivid because they are a depiction of her own family. The intimate photographs reveal both the current state of affairs within this home along with material evidence of its more stable past. And the photographer—who exists outside of the frame of the actual pictures—is indeed a part of the familial proceedings.

Jon Lowenstein's black and white photographs of Chicago's South Side describe both intimate and public moments that give an expansive and dimensional sense of that community and its inhabitants. The consciously distressed material character of his pictures combines with the subject matter of his work to create a visually layered narrative that evokes the social and personal dynamics that make up the complex nature of communities; the small joys and human tragedies that make up every community. The black urban community is often exclusively through a lens of social pathology. While Lowenstein doesn't shy away from the violence and dysfunction within these urban neighborhoods, his pictures provide rich evidence of a strong sense of connectedness among the residents and families there as well, a connection both to each other and indeed to the community itself.

Jason Reblando's photographs of the planned communities of Greenbelt, Maryland; Greenhills, Ohio; and Greendale, Wisconsin, describe Franklin Roosevelt's idealistic New Deal vision to create planned suburban and rural communities, formed to provide housing for those displaced during the stock market crash of 1929. These communities were inspired by and based in part on the 19th century Garden City Movement in England that sought to create housing far from the pollution and overcrowding brought on by the Industrial

Revolution. Roosevelt created three such New Deal communities that still exist today. In his photographs, Reblando undertakes a visual examination of these utopian communities as a place, an ideal, and a reality. Reblando's photographs provoke a set of questions around the degree to which a "perfect" community can be created, and how such a community might possibly sustain itself.

Jessica Rodrigue's photographs describe communities in Chicago that are living at the edge of the commercial shipping industry and its various intrusions. Surrounded by mountains of metal shipping containers—the visible evidence of US trade imbalance—the neighborhood is bisected and defined by railroad tracks. Towering power lines used to operate the industry are situated just yards from the houses. These communities seem to find a way to persist and coexist, even as the containers, trucks, and trains themselves become part of the industrialized suburban landscape. Her photographs seem to suggest that home and community are a product of collective perseverance, as neighborhoods co-exist alongside larger counter-vailing social and economic forces.

David Schalliol's richly descriptive photographs of isolated structures describe the physical decimation and disinvestment of communities on Chicago's south and near west sides. Schalliol's photographs suggest the complex set of socioeconomic forces at work that allow once thriving neighborhoods to become urban wastelands. Just as neighborhoods are allowed to flounder, their decimation often then sets the stage for the next round of investment and development, most often leaving anyone still remaining behind or unable to adapt.



Jessica Rodrigue
Electrical Tower
 2010
 Archival Pigment Print
 32x42 inches



Leilani Wertens
Nutall Road Riverside, IL 60548
 2008
 Archival Pigment Print
 20x28 inches

David Schalliol
Isolated Building Study 1
 2008
 Digital Chromogenic Print
 19x29 inches



Schalliol's photographs evocatively hint at the forces that define, control, sustain, or reshape communities. Their vivid depiction of decimation also hints at the possible reinvention and revitalization of the neighborhood. Given the demographics of the neighborhoods in which he has made these pictures, a series of uneasy questions are raised about the role that race and class play in the planned evolution of neighborhoods, their formation and dynamics, and who this planned evolution is intended to benefit or not.

Leilani Wertens's photographs depict homes as they appear during estate sales when those who previously inhabited them are no longer living and their former residences then become places of commerce before beginning yet another cycle of habitation. Through the objects that remain behind in these now uninhabited houses a sense of the impermanence and transitory nature of home is hauntingly and vividly evoked. Wertens's pictures suggest that home is indeed a cyclical experience and a highly personal construct, which is established through the subjectivities inherent in one's choice of possessions and décor among other things. All personal belongings are eventually replaced by someone else's within those same walls. Wertens's photographs remind us that even as the physical structures of home often persist, the residents themselves pass on, creating yet a new set of possibilities for the constructing of both home and community.

—Dawoud Bey

Events for *No Place Like Home*

Please visit the Hyde Park Art Center website calendar page for more information on the program.

EXHIBITION RECEPTION

Sunday, September 25, 2011, 3–5 pm

Neighborhood Writing Alliance Workshop

Tuesday, October 11, 2011, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

In collaboration with the *Journal of Ordinary Thought*, **Ronne Hartfield** will facilitate a workshop to explore writing about topics of home and place.

Symposium: *The Home in/as Community*

Sunday, November 13, 2011, 1–5 pm

Moderated by photographer and Sociologist **David Schalliol**, panel participants will address the issues of social housing policy and the contemporary life and community that has been shaped by them, ultimately considering how the city has changed and how home as changed with it.

PARTICIPANTS: **Iker Gil**, Director of MAS Studio and Editor in Chief of the design journal MAS Context; **D. Bradford Hunt**, Author and Associate Professor of Social Science and History at Roosevelt University; **Natalie Moore**, Author and Reporter for WBEZ, and Adjunct Professor at Columbia College Chicago; **Emmanuel Pratt**, Executive Director for the Sweet Water Foundation, Artist-in-Residence at the Hyde Park Art Center and PhD Candidate in Urban Planning at Columbia University, New York.

The Pruitt-Igoe Myth, (2011), 83 min.

Movie Screening and discussion

Wednesday, November 30, 2011, 6 pm

The Pruitt-Igoe Myth explores the social, economic and legislative issues that led to the decline of conventional public housing in America, and the city centers in which they resided, while tracing the personal and poignant narratives of several of the residents of the notorious Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex in St. Louis. The film is directed by **Chad Freidrichs** and co-produced by **Chad Freidrichs**, **Jaime Freidrichs**, **Brian Woodman**, and **Paul Fehler**.

Curator's Talk with the Artists

Saturday, December 17, 2011, 3 pm

Dawoud Bey will discuss the work in the exhibition with artists **Jon Lowenstein**, **Jason Reblando**, **Jessica Rodrigue**, and **David Schalliol**.

Scrappers: Recycling the American Dream (2010), 90 min.

Movie Screening and discussion with the Directors

Thursday, January 5, 2012, 6 pm

A multi-award winning film documenting two metal scavengers weathering the 2008 financial collapse and crackdowns on undocumented immigrants, which jeopardize their means of providing for their families. Co-Directors/Co-Producers **Brian Ashby**, **Ben Kolak**, and **Courtney Prokopas** will be present to discuss the film following the screening.

The Hyde Park Art Center is at once an exhibition space, learning annex, community resource, and social hub for the art curious and professional artists alike — carrying out its mission to stimulate and sustain the visual arts in Chicago. The Art Center is funded in part by the: Alphawood Foundation; Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts; Chicago Community Trust; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; David C. and Sarajeen Ruttenberg Arts Foundation; Field Foundation of Illinois; Harper Court Arts Council; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Irving Harris Foundation; Joyce Foundation; Leo S. Guthman Fund; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; National Endowment for the Arts; Polk Bros. Foundation; Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust; and the generosity of its members and people like you. The Hyde Park Art Center does not discriminate against any person for reason of race, gender, age, place of national origin, handicap, religious conviction, marital status, veteran status or sexual preference.

Dawoud Bey is currently Professor of Art at Columbia College Chicago. He is also a board member and chair of the Exhibitions Committee at Hyde Park Art Center. His photographs have been exhibited extensively in museums and galleries throughout the United States and Europe. His essays and writings on art and society have appeared in a wide range of publications as well as in his blog "What's Going On?." He has curated exhibitions at the Addison Gallery of American Art, the Museum of Contemporary Photography, the Weatherspoon Art Museum, and the Wadsworth Atheneum among other institutions.

Lisa Lindvay received her MFA in Photography from Columbia College Chicago. Her work has been exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery/ Smithsonian Institution, Erie Art Museum, and other institutions in the United States. She is the recipient of the Stuart and Iris Baum Project Grant among other honors. www.lisalindvay.com

Jon Lowenstein attended the University of Iowa and graduated with a BA in English in 1993. In 2011 he received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in Photography, and was also selected to be a TED Global Fellow. www.jonlowenstein.com

Jason Reblando received his MFA in Photography from Columbia College Chicago, and a BA in Sociology from Boston College. He is a recipient of a Community Arts Assistance Program grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and an Artist Fellowship Award from the Illinois Arts Council. www.jasonreblando.net

Jessica Rodrigue received her MFA in Photography from Columbia College Chicago. She has exhibited at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art, and the Institute for Contemporary Art/Maine College of Art among other institutions. www.jessicarodrigue.net

David Schalliol is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago and the Visiting Assistant Professor of Social Sciences at the Illinois Institute of Technology. He has received numerous grants, fellowships and awards, including for his contribution to "Out My Window," an interactive documentary that won the 2011 International Digital Emmy for Non-Fiction. His writings and photographs have been widely published. www.davidschalliol.com

Leliani Wertens received her MFA in Photography from Columbia College Chicago. She has exhibited at the Next Art Fair in Art Chicago and other venues in the Midwest. www.leilaniwertens.com

Hyde ParkARTCENTER

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 www.hydeparkart.org

No Place Like Home is generously supported by the David C. and Sarajeen Ruttenberg Arts Foundation.