

L&S 25: Public Art and Belonging

Playing the B-sides :

A Public Art Proposal for the UC Berkeley Campus



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“Art makes us travel while staying place and allows us to imagine the unimaginable, like exchanging seats with our enemies and learning from their spiritual power without feeling threatened. This is not to say that the role of the arts is to make us think or act immediately: the arts, merely trace fragmentary ideas and images in our minds that prepare us to expect the unpredictable and to tremble with the trembling of others.”

Diawara, Manthia “Catalog Essay” for Soft Power exhibition at SFMOMA
2019-2020

Playing the B-sides : a public artwork for the UC Berkeley campus

We propose a sound art Installation and archival art project in various satellite locations across UC Berkeley Campus in form of kiosk constructions. Our work utilizes sound as a medium to broadcast the polyvocal and simultaneous phenomenon of history. This project highlights select groups whose relationships to Berkeley have been historically marginalized through genocide, lack of visibility, and institutional pressure.

Precedents



Emeka Ogboh featuring Ursula Rucker *Logan Squared: Ode to Philly*
Monument Lab, 2017



Michelle Angel Ortiz, Flores de Libertad (Flowers of Freedom/Liberty), in conjunction with Seguímos Caminando (We Keep Walking), City Hall, Monument Lab, 2017.

Context:

The history of UC Berkeley's development on Ohlone land and the colonial legacies of academic disciplines has throughout the 20th century intersected and clashed simultaneously with "Other" histories that become effaced over the decades.

We were interested in activating the fraught and complicated relationship history has to the present by proposing an artwork that resists memorializing a single event, person, or group. Instead we aspired to complicate the medium of the monument by providing an artwork that celebrates multiplicity and refrains from direct figurative modes of representation.



Groups Commemorated

Disability Rights Movement

Groups Commemorated: Disability Rights Movement

- Movement focused on allowing those with disabilities to live independently and freely
- Early history with Ed Roberts and his leadership in the creation of the Cowell Residence Program
- Hale Zukas along with other disability advocates led the creation of the first Center for Independent Living
- Served as the basis for similar centers around the nation
- Berkeley is home to the “first planned, wheelchair-accessible route in the United States”



Groups Commemorated



COLA 4 ALL

THIS IS A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

Students

COLA NOW OR NOT IT'S YOURS

COLA NOW

THE UC SPENDS \$300K/DAY ON POLICE TO BREAK THIS STRIKE
DEMILITARIZE NOW

FUCK ID WE NEED FOOD+HOUSING NOT COPS

UNDERGRADS 4 COLA

UC DON'T YELL TO HEAR THE PEOPLE STINK

DEFUND COPS

Anthropology Strike-Ready

ANTHROPOLOGY STRIKE-READY

REGENTS COLA

REVISION STRIKE COLA!

FUCK YOU

Groups Commemorated: COLA 4 ALL



COLA movement developed from the organization of a wildcat strike by graduate students at UCSB. Their organizing began in November 2019 and spread across the UC System to include a movement consisting of intercampus networks of solidarity.

UC Berkeley announced graduate students would participate in a full strike on March 16th with the support of several departments. Their demands:

- Cost of Living Adjustment for UC Graduate student workers,
- Reinstating the 82 students fired at UC Santa Cruz
- Defunding and demilitarization of UC Police Departments.



Groups Commemorated

Ohlone People

Groups Commemorated: Ohlone People



Vincent Medina, co-Founder of
Cafe Ohlone

Territories stretched along the coast from Salinas Valley up to the Bay Area. Groups in these areas date all the way back to 4000 BCE.

Spanish colonizers constructed missions and the California state government perpetrated genocide against the Ohlone People. Both of these actions lead to their lands being stolen by colonizers and the state.

Currently, the Ohlone People are working to decolonize and strip away their imposed identity through projects such as Cafe Ohlone and cultural and political advocacy

Our Public Art Proposal: Archival Production + Sourcing

Student-led oversight committee will work to bridge connections with organizations that represent different members in the historically marginalized groups we aim to represent. Through those connections they will work with leaders in those groups to source, select, and collect oral histories for the archive.

The student-led committee will be conducting interviews with participants, interspersed by music, and poems and sounds submitted by participants and their communities. These archives will be used in a sound installations and through a downloadable database.

Our project hopes to grow the archive by including additional oral histories of groups that are interesting in participating.

Our Public Art Proposal: Downloadable Digital Archive

An archive would be one component of the sound art project.

This archive would feature original interviews, stories, music, and recorded videos to suture together alternative fabrications of these groups' experiences.

These recorded projects would can be heard from sound kiosks with audio jacks (iPhone and Android compatible) or through a downloadable archive with Spotify QR codes.

Our Public Art Proposal: Sound Installation

The sound installation take shape in the form of kiosks that play soundscapes comprised of the archival material. These kiosks include multi-directional speakers which emit the three unique “soundscapes” at low frequencies producing largely indiscernible sound.

The kiosk would be small scale and allow limited seating with headjack access to the all 3 archives either inside the kiosk or through listening stations placed outside them. The soundscapes would play on a rotating basis and include additional archival material from contributions added throughout the life of the project.

Corresponding with each bell toll ringing from the campanile our sound installations would tremble to function as form of “call and response”

Questions of Publics and Agency

Determining who forms a “public” is a complicated and thorny task, especially when diverse people have complex relationships to campus and Berkeley’s history. Art including public artworks necessitate audiences and these persons are constituted from a willing public.

The ability to disambiguate the sources of these sounds is available if people choose to “plug in” and participate in learning more about the histories that belong to the storytellers of the soundscapes. Listening to the archive remains ever-present yet optional.

In order to dignify the legacies and contribution of the groups, the work is open and flexible to those who are willing to be present, listen, learn, and hold these stories in all their difficulty and richness.

Site Specificity: Locations

In order to avoid isolating the artwork to a single area of campus we selected locations around campus that are both avenues for high foot traffic as well as sites near and around administrative office.



Campanile



Sproul Plaza

Memorial Glade





Miner's Circle

North Gate





Chancellor's House

California Hall





Faculty Glade

Kroeber Hall/Hearst Museum



Reference Artworks

Thrash Softly from Afar
Cevdet Erek, 2019
SFMOMA



Reference Artworks



Borg el Amal (Tower of Hope)
Lara Baladi, 2008

Reference Artworks

Kara Crombie, *Sample Philly* 2017
Franklin Square, Philadelphia, PA



Potential Kiosk Designs



Potential Kiosk Designs



NuMu (Nuevo Museo de Arte Contemporáneo), 2017, courtesy of the artists, installation view in A Universal History of Infamy, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Potential Kiosk Designs



Funding + Management:

In conjunction with this archival project and sound art installation work, we intend that this project is funded by Creative Discovery Grants and the Haas School of Business.

Our project is designed around an ethos of solidarity and inclusion and we would like to see inter-departmental graduate and undergraduate involvement from Art Practice, Ethnic Studies, African American Studies, and Sociology, and any other interested departments.

In order to ensure best practices over long-term management and care of the project we hope to create a committee involving potential representation from the Othering and Belonging Institute, the Art Research Center, the Multicultural Center, community members from the Ohlone community of Alameda County, Disability Rights organizations.

Summary:

In closing, these sound works do not aim to make the loudest sound, instead they serve to produce resonance which relates to our bodies somatically. The voices, experiences, accolades, and cultures of these groups produce the resonances which relate to various publics on the level of the body. We hope that at this level the body receives and responds to the trembling produced by these stories. By interfacing at these intimate frequencies, we hope to recall that the body is the original archive where stories are made recorded, indexed, remembered, and eventually offered through various retellings. Through sound we hope to keep memory alive and history animate.

“ ‘Trembling thought wells up from everywhere’ and ‘protects us from system-thinking and systematic thinking’: because it deliberately aims to give up all systematic, long-range perspectives... and linear thinking’; ‘trembling plunges us into an intimate understanding of depths.’ ”

-Edouard Glissant from A Poetics of Resistance