

THE HOUSE LIFE PROJECT

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Public opening of creative place-making project in Near Eastside

INDIANAPOLIS – The House Life Project (HLP), a local creative place-making collaborative, invites the public to the September 19th Open House of the project's first property in the Near Eastside of Indianapolis. The project is funded by a grant from the Efroymsen Family Fund and works in partnership with the City of Indianapolis, Renew Indianapolis* and the Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art (iMOCA).** The collaborative brings together artists, architects, and designers to discover the creative, civic, and social capital of individual vacant properties.

The opening of the first property at 804 Eastern Avenue in the St. Clair Place neighborhood aims to attract residents, community stakeholders and members of the public to offer new ways of seeing and experiencing vacant properties as community assets, rather than evidence of decay. The foursquare house includes art-based projects exploring the material potential of the house, historical narratives of the area, and future land use or rehabilitation of the property.

The HLP team, including Meredith Brickell, Brent Aldrich, Shelley Given, Katie Hudnall, Wes Janz, and Wil Marquez, invites the public to the Open House on Saturday September 19, from 10:00AM to 3:00PM. Visitors may come by from 10AM-12PM to interact with the artists and their projects and enjoy coffee and donuts. From noon-3PM, visitors may view the exhibits and join the artists for refreshments. For updated information about the opening, visit houselifeproject.org.

The House Life Project's opening weekend kicks off with a free talk at 7:00PM on Thursday, September 17 at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Join us that evening for a discussion of creative engagement with Mike Blockstein and Reanne Estrada of Public Matters, a social enterprise that uses public art to stimulate social and cultural conversations with diverse communities. More information about this event can be found at the IMA's website [here](#).

Meet the House Life Project team

Meredith Brickell

Meredith Brickell is the Project Leader for the House Life team. For her, the House Life Project is an opportunity to use art to engage in a dialogue about “collective memory, ownership and responsibility, and perceived value.” She explains,

“I have long been interested in places whose function is not clearly defined or that appear to be in some kind of slow transition. Examples include property that hovers between public and private ownership or spaces that contain material residue from former structures.”

Her previous work is rooted in place and memory as well, including her series ‘Construct’ which uses plant materials from the yards of vacant and boarded houses in the Near Eastside along with bentonite clay to re-shape the materials into nails. This series and other work explore the relationship of people to place and presence to absence.

Brickell also strives to create a public conversation with her art, inviting community members to experience place and space in new ways. Her recent project, the Cloud Observatory, is located on a vacant lot in the St. Clair Place neighborhood and partners with a local elementary school to provide learning opportunities.

Brickell is currently an Associate Professor of Art at DePauw University and has an upcoming solo exhibition at the Herron School of Art and Design at IUPUI from September 30 through October 22, 2015.

Brent Aldrich

Brent Aldrich has personal ties to the Near Eastside of Indianapolis, where he currently lives and has connections going a few generations back. He recalls,

“The HLP house was built by the Southern Lumber Company, the same suburban builders who built my sister's house in the early 1900s. The floorplan is identical to her house, just mirrored. Walking into it for the first time, I already knew it.”

Aldrich earned his MFA from the Herron School of Art and currently serves as a Board Member for the Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art (iMOCA). His work in community development as Project Manager for Great Places 2020 at Englewood Community Development Corporation lends a place-based view to his work with the House Life Project. He hopes to explore how memories and meaning are attached to places.

Through engagement with neighbors, Aldrich will investigate how similar homes in the area have been physically altered and socially and culturally shaped by their inhabitants.

Shelley Given

Shelley Given moved to Indianapolis two years ago from southwestern Kentucky. Her involvement in the House Life Project is linked to her desire to learn more about the city and her community. She says, “The House Life Project has been an opportunity to meet people in my community and become better acquainted with the city and its history, while making art.”

As a photographer, Given’s work has been exhibited in the United States and abroad, and she currently works as Visiting Assistant Professor of Photography at Indiana University in Bloomington. She hopes that the House Life Project will be a opportunity to “inspire wonder and curiosity” through her craft.

Katie Hudnall

Katie Hudnall teaches Furniture Design at the Herron School of Art & Design at IUPUI. As a woodworker, she describes her work as “somewhere between furniture and sculpture.” In the past, Hudnall has been the recipient of a Virginia Museum of Fine Art Fellowship, the Windgate Wood Residency at the University of Madison, Wisconsin, an Anderson Ranch Residency, a Peter S. Reed Foundation Fellowship, and most recently a Center for Art in Wood ITE Residency for the summer of 2016.

Hudnall’s involvement in the House Life Project is an extension of her previous work using old and worn materials. She explains, “I am interested in using some reclaimed materials to try and show the public the beauty and potential in old materials—I think it will be a nice metaphor for the house itself.”

Wes Janz

For Wes Janz, the House Life Project is an extension of his architectural work, which often transforms found or abandoned items into materials with architectural value. At Ball State University’s College of Architecture and Planning, Janz involves students in projects that explore the potential of curbside waste using items such as pallets, mattresses, TV consoles, computer server boxes, bar stools, couches, and overstuffed chairs. By using these solid waste objects, Janz and his students challenge ideas of value and potential in the built environment.

Janz has also been involved in land banking for over ten years, starting with his work as a consultant for the Genesee County Lank Bank in Flint, Michigan. His experiences visiting former industrial centers throughout the Midwest and East Coast of the United States have led him to question the past and future potential of vacant properties. He asks,

“How do we recalibrate our lenses, think differently about what and who remains? What and who do we look for to build upon, to stabilize, to imagine a new future alongside? We have to make such a shift—our standard ideas have little or no bearing in the Rust Belt.”

For the House Life Project, Janz will work with the forgotten remains of a garage and a vacant lot behind the house. Instead of an absence, he imagines the vacant lot to be a valued backyard space for 804 Eastern Avenue. The concrete slabs where the garage used to be are an “ideal staging area,” where he will use foundation mattresses as building materials. While some might question the value of leftover concrete slabs or an empty lot, Janz says, “They are not awful. They are an asset.”

Wil Marquez

Wil Marquez’s work uses innovative design principles to probe ideas of public space and equity. He is particularly enthusiastic about enacting conversations about the problems caused by vacancy, creating a momentum of work around ideas for change.

“I am impressed by our team and their commitment to examine this home, street, and neighborhood. Issues and ideologies related to vacancy are always complex. I personally can't imagine the daily misperceptions this home must shoulder. Neglect invites nothings of value. The corner will for sure feel lighter in the coming days.”

Marquez’s project at 804 Eastern Avenue will involve salvaging and collecting home keys from neighbors and the public to invoke the experience of owning a first home. Describing the meaning of his work, he argues, “This level of pride and joy belongs to and deserves to be part of St. Clair Place neighborhood.”

Wil Marquez is the founder of w/purpose, an alternative practice in Urban and Public Design, and co-founder of Design Bank, a design cooperative and 3D printing makerspace.

**Renew Indianapolis exists to return vacant and abandoned property to productive use. More information can be found at: renewindianapolis.org*

***iMOCA's mission is to bring contemporary exhibitions and programs to the Indianapolis community to stimulate minds, inspire new discoveries and demonstrate the vital connections between visual culture and life. Learn more about iMOCA at: indymoca.org.*

House Life Project Open House

House Tours from 10AM-3PM
Art activities, coffee and donuts from 10AM-12PM

Refreshments with the artists from noon-3PM

Saturday, September 19, 2015

804 Eastern Avenue

Indianapolis, IN 46201

free and open to the public

Talk by Mike Blockstein and Reanne Estrada of Public Matters

"Creative Mischief in the Service of Public Benefit"

7:00PM Thursday, September 17, 2015

Indianapolis Museum of Art

4000 Michigan Road

Indianapolis, IN 46208

free and open to the public