STAYING POWER

What is your staying power in this neighborhood?

What is your staying power in a city and world that are rapidly changing?

STAYING POWER

FAIRHILL - HARTRANFT | PHILADELPHIA

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ENVISIONING LEGACY

Monument Lab Curatorial Statement

Staying Power is an outdoor art exhibition and program series in the Fairhill-Hartranft neighborhood of Philadelphia. Staying Power asks artists, residents of the neighborhood, and visitors: What is your staying power in this neighborhood? What is your staying power in a city and world that are rapidly changing? Staying Power seeks to understand, amplify, and invest in the staying power of Fairhill-Hartranft’s neighborhood residents.

Hosted by The Village of Arts and Humanities and curated with Monument Lab, Staying Power will feature prototype monuments by artists Sadie Barnette (Oakland), Black Quantum Futurism (Philadelphia), Courtney Bowles and Mark Strandquist (Philadelphia), Ebony G. Patterson (Chicago/Kingston), and Deborah Willis (New York City) that each respond to the curatorial prompts of the project. The resulting exhibition will include monumental outdoor sculpture, photographic installations, storefront activations, and research and performance engagements, presented alongside The Village’s existing public collection of legacy artworks on the Germantown Avenue corridor of North Central Philadelphia.

Leading up to and through the exhibition, Monument Lab was invited to be in residence at The Village to collaborate with a cohort of paid Fairhill-Hartranft Neighborhood Curatorial Fellows, (Continued on Pg. 02)

STAYING POWER AT A GLANCE

MAY 1 - JULY 10, 2021

01 Outdoor Art Exhibition and Program Series Featuring Artists Sadie Barnette, Black Quantum Futurism, Courtney Bowles and Mark Strandquist, Ebony G. Patterson, and Deborah Willis

02 Performances and Programs Hosted with Fairhill-Hartranft Neighborhood Curatorial Fellows

03 Available for In-Person Socially-Distanced Viewing and Online Options to Engage from Anywhere

Online Preview Event: April 22, 2021, 7PM

Ebony G. Patterson (Chicago/Kingston), and Deborah Willis (New York City) that each respond to the curatorial prompts of the project. The resulting exhibition will include monumental outdoor sculpture, photographic installations, storefront activations, and research and performance engagements, presented alongside The Village’s existing public collection of legacy artworks on the Germantown Avenue corridor of North Central Philadelphia.

Leading up to and through the exhibition, Monument Lab was invited to be in residence at The Village to collaborate with a cohort of paid Fairhill-Hartranft Neighborhood Curatorial Fellows, (Continued on Pg. 02)
and work together through various methods of public artistic and research engagement. The project acknowledges and celebrates community residents as curators, thought leaders, and makers. Throughout Staying Power, together with this group, we will also collect public responses to our central questions. This process of listening and learning will inform a final publication on the ideas, structural forces, and relationships that nourish or undercut staying power.

Across our work, Monument Lab defines monuments as “statements of power and presence in public.” This definition encompasses conventional statues made of bronze and marble, as well as the other ways people imprint their stories in public – whether through visual art, music, dance, projection, and protest. We shaped this definition in conversation with hundreds of thousands of participants through projects in public spaces in Philadelphia, Newark, St. Louis, among other cities. We consistently find that if you have the time, money, and sanctioned power, you build a monument to what is important to you, in a location that supports your presence. If you don't have the time, money, or sanctioned power, you gather around existing monuments, or you build your own, as a way to acknowledge your own presence and power in public.

As co-organizers of this exhibition, we have discussed “staying power” in related but distinct terms. Staying power can also be understood in personal, local, and systemic ways. One’s staying power is often overdetermined by larger structures of investment and disinvestment; racial/gendered access and inequity; resource allocations that are split between social programs of uplift and hyper-policing; and other unjust inheritances and conditions. But staying power can be enabled through beauty and resistance. It can radiate through modes of self expression, storytelling, care, and memory making. Staying power can be aided by one’s ability to reinvent the ways we receive, pass down, and access cultural, physical, and relational assets between generations.

Working now with The Village, the artists, and the Neighborhood Curatorial Fellows, we are honored and inspired to explore the pressing issues at the heart of this project. Together, we imagined Staying Power as an exhibition designed to explore the legacies and creative practices that connect or disconnect people from place. We know from experience that collective voice makes room for itself. We dream that in gathering a multitude of responses to the questions driving this project, neighborhood residents, contributors, and visitors to Staying Power will determine what is next for the neighborhood, our city, and beyond.

- MONUMENT LAB

Continued from Pg. 01

Clockwise from top-left: Obatala Mural at The Village, Designed by Lily Yeh; Ladies Night at People’s Paper Co-op; SPACES Artist Residency, “People and Places of Power”; Village Table Dinner in Meditation Park (Photos Courtesy of The Village).
We are The Village of Arts and Humanities, an arts-based community development organization that has served the Fairhill-Hartranft neighborhood since 1986. We use art to build our community’s social, economic and political power. Art helps us see, think, and act creatively. Our predecessor organization, the Ile Ife Black Humanitarian Center, transformed an abandoned furniture warehouse into a dance studio — home and catalyst to the Black Arts Movement in Philadelphia. In the 1980s and ’90s, our co-founders Lily Yeh and James Maxton turned abandoned properties and vacant land into programs buildings and its unique art parks that transformed the landscape of our neighborhood. Today, we offer excellent free arts programming to young people, steward equitable economic development on and around the Germantown Avenue Commercial Corridor, and cultivate people power through media and education.

Our neighborhood — the community in which we live, serve, work, and love — is powerful and beautiful. It is home to remarkable organizing achievements and everyday growth and survival in the face of decades of racist disinvestment. Gardens grow produce, local designers offer new styles, poetry is in motion in dance, athletics, a family walking down the street together after school. Staying power is everywhere, rooting us down.

Our neighborhood is also deeply challenged — mass incarceration, racist housing policies, and other extractive practices have resulted in deep poverty and multi-generational trauma, intensified by COVID-19. Staying power doesn’t mean only good things. The systemic issues that Ile Ife and The Village were born to address are still in play, causing intergenerational harm and trauma. This is intolerable, and we stand alongside our neighbors to demand and create change.

Our neighborhood is fighting back: organizing to end cash bail, re-open our local rec center, demand affordable housing, respond urgently to COVID-19. We see staying power in action, evolving to meet the needs and opportunities of the moment.

So why — in this moment of crisis, change, urgency — are we choosing to invest time, money, and trust into making an outdoor art and history exhibition about staying power? To make a mark asserts and shifts power. Connecting to spirit helps us find the direction in which we must move. In crisis, art matters. These are founding beliefs of both Ile Ife and The Village.

Money matters too. Art projects like this can drive investment. The Village already works with community partners to vet and attract investments in our community, but we want to grow our coalition and amplify neighborhood voices in this process. We hope this art project will help us do both, because:

Art helps us connect in new ways, outside of old dynamics and stories. Our 2018 project, “Home Court,” used art to bring together neighbors who cared for the courts. They founded the Hartranft Playground Alliance, now a key partner of The Village.

Art makes room for new answers. This project has an explicit research component, asking for community voices and visions (see page 8 to share yours!)

To our neighbors: this is for you. We are committed to making this an exhibit that you and your families can enjoy, that you see yourselves in, and that makes space for you to share ideas, opinions, and enjoyment that matter. We can’t wait to hear what you share in this exhibition, and to act on these ideas together.

To our visitors: you are walking on sacred ground. We invite you to come, receive, and share yourselves authentically and with self-awareness. We are all connected, even if red lines and racist historical narratives make us think otherwise. Come back and see how you’ve benefited from this place without knowing, how you can give back, how you can be enriched by this communion.

And to ourselves, we promise to remember: we are tasked with carrying on the legacy of our founders, celebrating Black art and creating portals to connection and spiritual growth, and of the community members who made our growth and survival possible through their gifts of time, care, and creativity. We have stayed and they stay with us. We will do our best to honor the gift of working in service to the families of this neighborhood.

We look forward to sharing this exhibition with you, and to all we will learn together along the way.

– THE VILLAGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

VILLAGE OPPORTUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

PAID TEEN CREATIVE INTERNSHIPS WITH VILLAGE INDUSTRIES
Our award-winning youth arts program offers paid arts internships for youth 14-18, in disciplines such as music production, event design, and fashion design and merchandising. The program is currently run online, but summer session will be held in person. To sign up, e-mail Senior Program Manager TJ Dean at tj@villagearts.org

GET BUSINESS RESOURCES FROM OUR COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM
Did you know? We clean, green, and steward development of the 2500-2800 blocks of the Germantown Avenue Commercial Corridor, and Lehigh Ave between 11th and Hutchinson streets. Contact Jamar Bordley at jamar@villagearts.org to learn about city resources for your business or property.
MEET THE STAYING POWER ARTISTS

Each of these Staying Power artists was invited to participate because of the ways they respond and interact with place, history, and power.

Get to know their work here. Stay tuned for later this spring for the public announcement of their prototype monument projects.

SADIE BARNETTE

Multi-Media Artist
Pronouns: she
@sadiebarnette

Sadie Barnette (b. 1984, Oakland, CA. Based in Oakland, CA) is a multimedia artist. Employing concepts of photography (framing, the edit) to drawing, installation and found object experiments, her modular and iterative practice holds the poetics, and politics, of The Living Room. Barnette's work deals in collective and familial histories, in earthly acts of celebration and resistance, but is also tethered to the other-worldly, offering glittering speculative spaces. Recent projects include the reclamation of a 500 page FBI surveillance amassed on her father during his time with the Black Panther Party and her interactive reimagining of his bar — San Francisco’s first Black-owned gay bar. Born and raised in Oakland, California, she earned her BFA from CalArts and her MFA from the University of California, San Diego. Her work has been exhibited throughout the United States and internationally and is in the permanent collections of museums such as LACMA, Studio Museum in Harlem (where she was also Artist-in-Residence), Brooklyn Museum and the Guggenheim.

BLACK QUANTUM FUTURISM

(Camae Ayewa and Rasheedah Phillips)

Interdisciplinary Artists
Pronouns: Camae Ayewa (she) and Rasheedah Phillips (she or they)
@blackquantumfuturism @afrofuturaffair

Black Quantum Futurism Based in Philadelphia, PA) is an interdisciplinary creative practice between Camae Ayewa (b. Aberdeen, MD) and Rasheedah Phillips (b. 1984, Trenton, NJ) that weaves quantum physics, afrofuturism, and Afrodiasporic concepts of time, ritual, text, and sound to present innovative works and tools offering practical ways to escape negative temporal loops, oppression vortexes, and the digital matrix. BQF has created a number of community-based projects, performances, experimental music projects, installations, workshops, books, short films, zines, including the award-winning Community Futures Lab. BQF Collective is a 2018 Velocity Fund Grantee, 2018 Solitude x ZKM Web Resident, 2017 Center for Emerging Visual Artists Fellow, 2017 Pew Fellow, 2016 A Blade of Grass Fellow, and a 2015 artist-in-residence at West Philadelphia Neighborhood Time Exchange. The Collective has presented, exhibited, and performed at Red Bull Arts NY, Serpentine Gallery, Philadelphia Art Museum, Open Engagement, MoMA PS1, Bergen Kunsthall, Le Gaite Lyrique, ICA London, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and more.
Invisible Presence: Bling Memories, Untitled
Miami Beach, 2014
(Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago).

Carrie in EuroSalon, Eatonville, 2009
(Courtesy of the artist).

Without my record I am free to be… (Courtesy of the People’s Paper Co-op)

Deb Willis (b. Philadelphia, PA. Based in New York, NY) is University Professor and Chair of the Department of Photography & Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. She received the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship and a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship. Willis is also the author of Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present, and co-author of The Black Female Body A Photographic History; Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery; and Michelle Obama: The First Lady in Photographs (both titles a NAACP Image Award Winner). Professor Willis’s curated exhibitions include: “In Pursuit of Beauty” at Express Newark; “Let Your Motto Be Resistance: African American Portraits” at the International Center of Photography and “Reframing Beauty: Intimate Moments” at Indiana University. Since 2006 she has co-organized thematic conferences exploring imaging the black body in the West such as the conference titled Black Portraiture[s] which was held in Johannesburg in 2016. She has appeared and consulted on media projects including documentary films such as Through A Lens Darkly and Question Bridge: Black Males, a transmedia project, which received the ICP Infinity Award 2015, and American Photography, PBS Documentary.

Courtney Bowles and Mark Strandquist
Cultural Organizers
Pronouns: Courtney Bowles (she) and Mark Strandquist (he)
@markstrandquist @peoplespaperco_op

Courtney Bowles (b. 1974, Richmond, VA) and Mark Strandquist (b. 1985, Washington D.C.) have spent years using art to amplify, celebrate, and power social justice movements. The media campaigns and immersive exhibitions they lead have helped advocates close a prison, pass laws, raise over $120,000 to free people in jail, and connect the dreams and demands of communities impacted by the criminal justice system with tens of thousands of people. They have received multiple awards, fellowships, national residencies, and reached wide audiences through the New York Times, Guardian, Washington Post, NPR, PBS NewsHour, and VICE. They currently co-direct the People’s Paper Co-op in Philadelphia, PA, at the Village of Arts and Humanities. and building on a fellowship from A Blade of Grass and Open Societies Foundation they began The Reentry Think Tank. Mark founded and co-directs Performing Statistics in Richmond, VA, and the covid-19 rapid response project Fill The Walls With Hope, Rage, Resources, and Dreams.

Deborah Willis
Photographer and Scholar
Pronouns: she
@debwillisphoto

EBONY G. PATTERSON
Multidisciplinary Artist
Pronouns: she
@ebonygpatterson @moniquemeloche

Meet the Neighborhood Curatorial Fellows

The Neighborhood Curatorial Fellows help to shape neighbors’ and visitors’ experience of the exhibition. Each Fellow will design a unique public program that interprets the question of “staying power,” making it relevant to this neighborhood and this moment. Fellows will also collect audience responses and act as guides and interpreters for the exhibition.

My name is Aisha Shaquell Chambliss. I come from great-hearted, loving and selfless people — my mother, Lorraine Jamison, and my father, Lee Chambliss, who I am named after. I am an experienced youth worker, specializing in supporting children with intellectual and physical disabilities. Over the years I have formed a dance company and mentoring program for young/ladies in the community to build confidence and self esteem all while dancing.

My name is Natasha Mosley, or Tasha. My grandmother, Diane Bridges, is a community-oriented Ward representative, and I have resided in North Philadelphia all my life. Over the years I have contributed to this place through community events, political debates and events, and working with and attending The Village as a student and intern.

My name is Mylisa L. Thompson. I am a filmmaker, photographer, rap artist and songwriter, and a community activist. My work is rooted in the culture and history of the community. I am an experienced youth worker, specializing in supporting children with intellectual and physical disabilities. Over the years I have contributed to this place through community events, political debates and events, and working with and attending The Village as a student and intern.

My name is Jeanette Lloyd (Project Management Consultant), Naomieh Jovin (Photography), and Daniel Jackson (Documentation). Follow @TheVillagePhilly.

ABOUT THE VILLAGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

The Village values art as its most powerful and effective tool for catalyzing healthy and sustainable societal change. Art, in this context, is creativity in thinking, in methodology, and in implementation. Our 36-year legacy is anchored in artist-facilitated community building beginning with the work of Arthur Hall and the Ile Ife Black Humanitarian Center (predecessor to The Village) and Village Founder, Lily Yeh. Today, The Village remains a community-rooted, anchor institution, comprising 15 art parks and 12 programs buildings, annually serving 1200 individuals, and engaging 350 teens that attend The Village’s after-school and summer programs. Our seven core programs work at the intersection of art, education and social justice to amplify the creative power of our community, build bridges across race, class, age and expertise, question and replace unjust and ineffective systems, activate passion and enhance skills present in community youth/adults, and construct new avenues towards civic engagement. The Village’s work on Staying Power is led by organizational leadership and staff with Jeanette Lloyd (Project Management Consultant), Naomieh Jovin (Photography), and Daniel Jackson (Documentation). Follow @TheVillagePhilly.

ABOUT MONUMENT LAB

Monument Lab is a public art and history studio based in Philadelphia. Monument Lab works with artists, students, educators, activists, municipal agencies, and cultural institutions on participatory approaches to public engagement and collective memory. Founded by Paul Farber and Ken Lum in 2012, Monument Lab cultivates and facilitates critical conversations around the past, present, and future of monuments. As a studio and curatorial team, we collaborate to make generational change in the ways art and history live in public. Our approaches include producing citywide art exhibitions, site-specific commissions, and participatory research initiatives. We aim to inform the processes of public art, as well as the permanent collections of cities, museums, libraries, and open data repositories. Through exhibitions, research programs, editorial platforms, and fellowships, we have connected with hundreds of thousands of people in person and millions online. Monument Lab critically engages our inherited symbols in order to unearth the next generation of monuments that elevate stories of resistance and hope. Monument Lab’s work on Staying Power is led by Arielle Julia Brown (Co-Curator), Paul Farber (Co-Curator), and Kristen Giannantonio (Director of Curatorial Operations), with Laurie Allen, Karyninsola Anifowoshe, Veronica Brown, Il-Hary Leatham, Patricia Kim, and Dina Paola Rodriguez. Follow @Monument_Lab.

NEIGHBORHOOD HIGHLIGHTS

Have a resource, project, or program you want to feature in the next Staying Power newspaper? E-mail ikunn@villagearts.org

HARTRANFT PLAYGROUND ALLIANCE

This intergenerational neighborhood coalition is dedicated to supporting local families with safe, fun activities, cleanups, and distribution of food and other necessities. Find them at facebook.com/hartranft.playgroundalliance or contact Kathy Barnes at hartranftplaygroundalliance@gmail.com

37TH WARD LEADERS

The 37th Ward committee people stay informed on community events, Registered Community Organizations, and resources. Visit them at facebook.com/37thWard/ for updates. To let them know about an upcoming event or need, contact deniselaurielanderson@gmail.com.

NEW PATHWAYS PROJECT

New Pathways is a sanctuary space for community members in recovery, and welcoming to LGBTQ individuals, elders, and young adults. NPP offers social services, resource referral, and lunch as possible within COVID regulations, 9-5, M-F. 2539 Germantown Avenue. (215) 225-5800
SPACES ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM SPARKS COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN ARTISTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS, 2013-2017
The nationally-recognized SPACES residency program paired artists from around the world with neighbors to create projects in response to community challenges. One project, the People’s Paper Co-op (PPC), responded to the needs of formerly incarcerated women in the neighborhood, and became a permanent program of The Village.

HARTRANFT BASKETBALL COURT IS RENOVATED; VILLAGE PRESENTS EXHIBIT “HOME COURT: THE HARTRANFT BASKETBALL COURT REVIVAL,” AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS ESTABLISH THE HARTRANFT PLAYGROUND ALLIANCE, 2018

YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS NAMES VILLAGE TO THE YBCA 100, 2018
The Village shared the honor with inspiring figures such as Tarana Burke, Amanda Gorman, and Janelle Monae.

VILLAGE AND HARTRANFT PLAYGROUND ALLIANCE HOST FOOD DISTRIBUTION SITE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC, 2020
The Village worked with the Playground Alliance and Philabundance to hand out food twice a week and post message boards with updated access to resources around the neighborhood. The Village’s Emergency Gap Fund For Black Working Artists distributed $80,000 directly to Black artists in Philly to meet immediate needs.

Timeline

ILE IFE BLACK HUMANITARIAN CENTER OPENS, 1968
In 1968, master choreographer Arthur Hall and his friends opened the Ile Ife Black Humanitarian Center in what is now The Village’s main programming building. Ile Ife means “House of Love” or “House of Creation” in the Yoruba language.

ILE IFE AND THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT, 1970S
Ile Ife became a groundbreaking organization in the Black Arts Movement, traveling internationally to perform. During the turbulent ’60s and ’70s, Ile Ife filled a deep need in a community weathered by sustained disinvestment and systemic racism.

LILY INVITED TO NEIGHBORHOOD, CREATES ILE IFE PARK WITH JOJO WILLIAMS, 1986-1989
In 1986, Arthur hired a young Chinese artist named Lily Yeh to help transform the vacant lots that bordered Ile Ife’s building. His friend JoJo Williams, a local mason and handyman, worked with her to build Ile Ife Park, complete with a mural and sculptures to represent the trees they planted there and hoped would grow tall one day. They soon were joined by James “Big Man” Maxton, a friend of JoJo’s. Big Man blossomed into a skilled mosaic artist, craftsman and teacher, and Operations Director for The Village.

THE VILLAGE IS BORN, 1989
In 1988, Arthur Hall left Ile Ife to return to teaching. With Big Man and JoJo, Lily created a new organization that honored Ile Ife’s legacy and widened its mission to include arts-based neighborhood revitalization: The Village of Arts and Humanities.

THE VILLAGE EXPANDS ITS FOOTPRINT, 1989 - 2004
Under the guidance of Lily and Big Man, the Village community construction crew built over 20 parks and gardens. Park elements are inspired by West African sacred art and building traditions, neighborhood aesthetics, and art from around the world. Lily stepped down in 2004 to share The Village’s park-making techniques around the world.

VILLAGE WORKS WITH CITY TO KNOCK DOWN DANGEROUS VACANT HOUSES AND BUILD PERMACULTURE FARM AND PROGRAM PHILLYEARTH, 2011

PHILLY PAINTING PROJECT WITH MURAL ARTS PROJECT ENFOLDS GERMANTOWN AVENUE, 2010-2012
The Village hosted Dutch artists Dre Urhahn and Jeroen Koolhaas and connected community members to project as paid painting assistants.

VILLAGE BECOMES CORRIDOR MANAGER FOR 2500-2900 BLOCKS OF GERMANTOWN AVENUE, 2012

FREE LIBRARY COMPUTER LAB OPENS AT THE VILLAGE, WELCOMES 7,000 VISITS IN ITS FIRST YEAR, 2013
Guardian Angel Park (The Village).
STAYING POWER RESEARCH

CONTRIBUTE YOUR IDEAS!

WHAT IS STAYING POWER IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD? WHAT IS STAYING POWER IN A CITY AND WORLD THAT ARE RAPIDLY CHANGING?

How do you identify? (Optional):
- Age:
- Zip Code:
- Year, grade, and/or Hesitance:
- Research ID:

What is Staying Power in this neighborhood and online during the exhibition?

WHERE IS MY STAYING POWER RESEARCH FORM GOING?

Each form shared through the project will be:
- Scanned, transcribed, and read by our Staying Power team
- Exhibited on a community bulletin board and on the project’s website
- Donated to The Village for archiving, historical keeping, and ongoing advocacy for the neighborhood
- This process of listening and learning will inform a final publication on the ideas, structural forces, and relationships that nourish or undercut staying power.

PROJECT GOALS

To present a must-see outdoor art exhibition and program series in the Fairhill-Hartranft neighborhood that are engaging and accessible to neighborhood residents and visitors from around the city, country, and world.

To commission prototype monuments from renowned contemporary artists that respond to the history of the neighborhood and spark connections around the concept of staying power.

To actively involve and employ community members in the research, presentation, and interpretation of Staying Power projects.

To provide a high-quality visitor experience (in-person and online) that deepens meaningful, respectful connections with neighborhood residents and organizations.

To collect, discuss, and reflect on the responses to our exhibition’s central questions in order to build more staying power with neighborhood residents.

SUPPORT FOR STAYING POWER

Major support for the Staying Power exhibition has been provided to The Village of Arts and Humanities by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.

The views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage or The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Additional support for The Village of Arts and Humanities and Staying Power has been provided by William Penn Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Kresge Foundation, and National Endowment for The Arts.