

# Graduate Public Practice

**It was like a magnet, an art magnet.**

—Roberto Del Hoyo ('10) and David Russell (MFA candidate, '11)  
Mobile Mural Lab



**Los Angeles—global center of public practices by artists and collaborative groups—is the dynamic setting for Otis’ MFA in Public Practice with studio facilities in the historic 18th Street Art Center.**

Among working Los Angeles and international artists, students are encouraged to consider themselves as emerging professionals within the vast cultural and spatial geography of Southern California.

Suzanne Lacy, the renowned artist, educator, theorist of socially engaged public art and author of the influential *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, directs the Program. As the only program in the region dedicated exclusively to providing artists with advanced skills for working in the public sphere, the program focuses on both collaborative and individual art production.

“As a painter and visual artist, I was unsatisfied with what was happening within the gallery scene and the art community. I wanted to address a broader audience and redirect my practice into something more public.”

Roberto Del Hoyo ('10)



“I came to Otis to work with Suzanne Lacy, after running a non-profit organization in Canada. All of my skills have carried forward but the work has become less about my needing to express personal issues, and more about moving culture forward by providing venues and a platform for dialogues that can result in collective action. What I learned from Suzanne was experiential, focused on fieldwork with many other people.”

Jules Rochielle Sievert ('09)



Photo by Sandra de la Loza

## Entering students design a unique educational plan to fit their interests, with the latitude to experience both community and studio contexts.

Public practice—also called participatory art, community art, public art, situational art or social sculpture—can consist of a variety of media including video, performance, drawing, photography, sculpture and web-based projects. Our interdisciplinary students share varied backgrounds as they reinvent traditional media to produce their work.

Each participant's learning plan is developed with faculty advisors who meet regularly to develop a menu of learning opportunities, including classes in studio production, theories of public practice, and field internships. This self-defined curriculum provides opportunities for one-on-one independent studies with artists throughout Los Angeles.

In addition, students can take classes within Otis' graduate programs in writing, fine arts, and graphic design programs, and in other departments as well. The full range of Otis facilities, faculty, courses, and library is available for students' production.



“It was a real opportunity to create a public event for Andrea Bowers' important installation about people who died crossing the Mexico Border. We were framed as collaborating artists.”

Felicia Montes (MFA candidate, '11)



Otis MFA students lead conversation in Andrea Bowers' installation at Susanne Veilmetter Projects, 2010.



“As an artist in the program, you are able to make it your own. Suzanne asks the right questions, and knows how to develop each student's interests. Through Public Practice, you have the freedom to define what a community needs. Community members help you understand their needs and wants. When you become part of a partnership with a community, you develop a rich, meaningful collaboration.”

Michelle Glass ('10)

**In their first semester, students start with a collaborative project.**

Artists such as Andrea Bowers, S.A. Bachman (THINK AGAIN) and Rick Lowe, lead these projects which conclude with an exhibition or installation.

Students travel individually or as a group as part of their curriculum, exploring cultures in diverse locations such as Tijuana, a small farming town in California's San Joaquin Valley, or hurricane-ravaged New Orleans.

They meet and interact with recognized international artists such as Mel Chin, Martha Rosler and Sam Durant, and network with artists, critics, and curators from around the world. Connections formed here—with each other, their teachers, and international artists—support students' future plans in significant ways.

**In their second semester, students begin research on a thesis project.**

This project is their major work at Otis. From the beginning, they are encouraged to seek out public opportunities to lecture and exhibit. In the summer, they select a field internship with an artist and experience the installation or exhibition process, gaining professional insights and making professional connections.

**In the third, students work in a private studio.**

Working in their own Otis studios, students develop individual projects, with studio visits and feedback from faculty members. They have access to all of Otis' production facilities.

**In their fourth semester, students create and install a public exhibition.**

This exhibition, a final showcase of their individual thesis project, along with a publishable text on an aspect of public practice, are the milestones required for graduation. The student leaves with a portfolio, prepared for life as an artist.



**On completing the program, students benefit by connections formed during school.**

Some remain in the vibrant Los Angeles community, while others travel to develop their work. Students have pursued project management and teaching in Korea, participated in artist-in-residence positions in New Orleans and Chicago, joined art performances in Madrid and New York, and taught throughout Los Angeles. Graduates find work teaching; working in arts management including international projects; participating in residency programs, journalistic reporting, curating, and designing exhibitions.

“As an avid volunteer and advocate for social justice-oriented community service, I brought my prior experiences of working with The Dolores Huerta Foundation and the migrant population in Lamont, California when I applied for this program. I was excited that my experience was relevant to our first-year project in Laton, a small farming town in central California.”

Nathalie Sanchez ('10)

“I took Rachel Rosenthal's DBD (Doing by Doing) workshop. It was an amazing experience working with one of the best artists in the field! This individualized experience is a unique feature of the program, and why I chose it.”

Andrea M. Dominguez ('10)

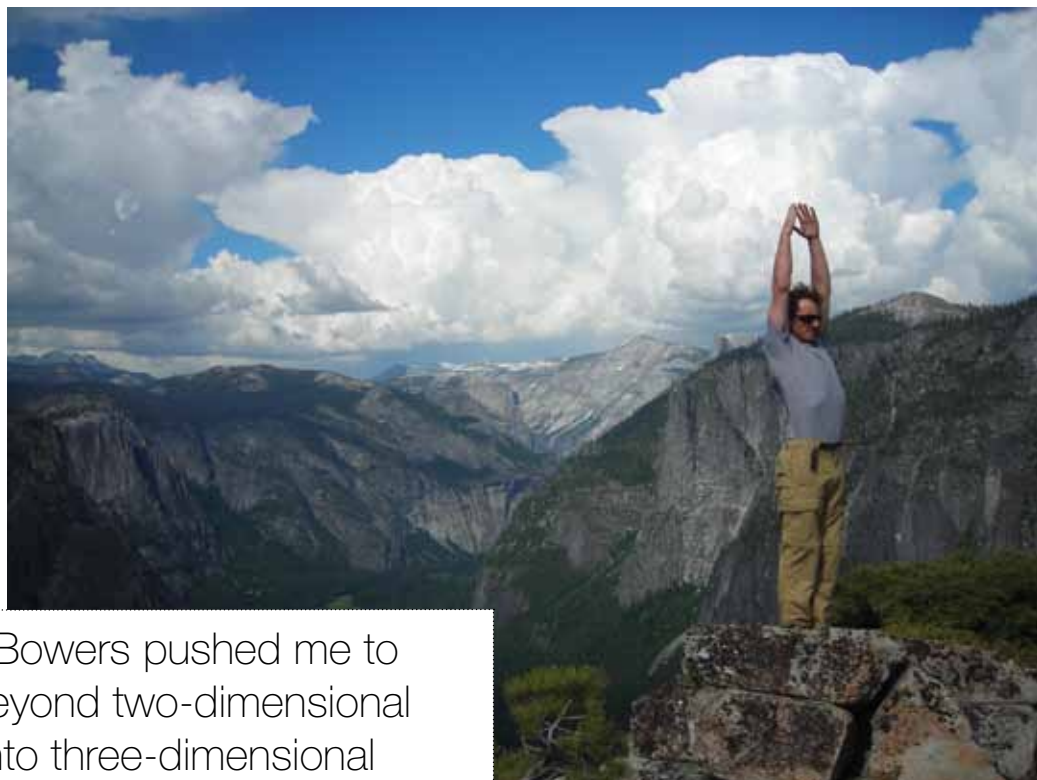
“It was great to see how the rubber meets the road with all the different guests that came in. We asked, “Can you help me sort this out? I am really interested in this but I have no idea if it is going to work.” We got to hang out with Urban Rangers, and with the curator of Documenta 11, Okwui Enwezor; a professional grant writer did workshops, and we went to Tijuana with Jennifer Flores Sterndad and Teddy Cruz.”

Andrew Manoushagian ('09)



Actions, Conversations, and Intersections, Install with Suzanne Lacy at Barnsdall Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles, 2010  
Photo by Raul Vega

# Public Practice Faculty



“Andrea Bowers pushed me to move beyond two-dimensional media into three-dimensional forms and installations. Her current project in Utah touched me personally, since I have been a sponsored rock climber in the area and know the remote terrain well. I served as a guide for her project inspired by Tim DeChristopher, also known as Bidder 70, who falsely bid on land parcels in a BLM auction and was tried for civil disobedience.

David Russell (MFA candidate, '11)

**Suzanne Lacy  
Chair**

MFA, Cal Arts; BA, UC Santa Barbara Internationally exhibited artist with contributions to feminist, performance, and public art. Author, Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art and Leaving Art: Performance, Politics and Publics. Focused on taking art out of the gallery and into the world to engage new audiences and galvanize a public discussion about race, poverty, and social justice.

**S.A. Bachman  
Senior Lecturer**

MFA, Tyler School of Art; BFA, Arizona State Univ. Socially engaged artist, educator and Co-Founder of THINK AGAIN collaborative. Her photo-text works investigate conformity, hegemony and sexism. THINK AGAIN recruits art in the service of public address and interrogates undocumented labor, queer memory, political brutality, and media-culture. Co-Author: A Brief History of Outrage.

**Andrea Bowers  
Senior Lecturer**

MFA, Cal Arts; BFA, Bowling Green State Univ. Exploring the intersection between political activism and art, focuses on the role of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience in the lives of women. Using photorealistic drawings, videos, and/or performance, contextualizes historical events (such as the struggle for reproductive rights) in relation to the overall contemporary situation.

**Krista Caballero  
Lecturer**

MFA, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; BA, Westmont College New media artist and sculptor exploring alternative ecological and social landscapes. Her current project, “MAPPING MEANING,” brings together artists, scientists and scholars to engage topics of the environment through interdisciplinary exchange.

**Sara Daleiden  
Lecturer**

MPAS, University of Southern California; BA, Univ. Notre Dame Artist, educator and organizer focusing on participant experience through identity systems and interpretive services. Core member of Los Angeles Urban Rangers with projects at International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Museum de Paviljoens, and self-initiated “Public Access 101” series in Malibu and Downtown Los Angeles.

**Dana Duff  
Professor**

MFA, Cal Arts; BFA, Cranbrook Academy of Art Filmmaker and sculptor. Films shown at International Film Festival Rotterdam and Biennale de l’Image en Mouvement, Geneva. Lives and works in L.A. and Mexico. Recent projects include three films on the economic pressures in rural areas in California; Baja, Mexico; and Wisconsin.

**Malik Gaines  
Lecturer**

Ph.D. Candidate, UCLA; MFA, Cal Arts; BA, UCLA; Writer and performer and cofounder of My Barbarian, performing at Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the New Museum, New York; The Power Plant, Toronto; Museo El Eco, Mexico City; De Appel, Amsterdam; El Matadero, Madrid; the Townhouse Gallery, Cairo; and several worldwide biennials. Gaines curates for LAXART and is a published critic.

**Kate Johnson  
Adjunct Associate  
Professor**

Filmmaker, editor, video and performance artist whose work has been exhibited at Cannes Film Festival, Museum of Modern Art, Institute of Contemporary Art, London.

**Bill Kelley Jr.  
Lecturer**

Ph.D Candidate, UC San Diego; MA, University of New Mexico Educator, independent writer, curator, and theorist who specializes in the globalized and shifting considerations in the fields of Latin American and Latino art. Former director and current Editorial Advisor of the journal LatinArt.com; creator of “Proyecto Cívico: Diálogos y Interrogantes” in Tijuana; and curator for the 2011 Encuentro Internacional de Medellín.

**Sandra de la Loza  
Lecturer**

MFA, California State Univ. Long Beach; BA, UC Berkeley Founder of the Pocho Research Society (PRS), an on-going collaborative project dedicated to the systematic investigation of place and memory through archival and curatorial projects and public interventions. Works with artists and activists to create spaces for practice and critical dialogue at community centers, conferences and art events including “Transitorio Publico” (2007).

**Karen Moss  
Senior Lecturer**

BA, MA, PhD, University of Southern California Art historian and educator whose curatorial work includes “Disorderly Conduct: Recent Art in Tumultuous Times” at the Orange County Museum of Art, where she has been since 2004. Produces artist projects, exhibitions, and educational public programming.

**Renee Petropoulos  
Professor**

BA, MFA, UCLA Exhibits throughout the U.S and internationally, represented by Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica, including the San Francisco Jewish Museum; Blaffer Museum; Occidental College Weingart Gallery; and Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna. Numerous national public site commissions.

**Claude Willey  
Senior Lecturer**

BA, Columbia College, Chicago; MFA, UC Irvine Co-coordinator of MOISTURE, a multi-year water research project in the Mojave Desert. Merged ecology, environmental history, renewable-energy technologies, and urban transportation/landscape history.

**Consuelo Velasco  
Montoya  
Lecturer**

MA, University of Southern California; BA, UC Santa Cruz Focusing on arts administration, digital media, photography and art in rural contexts, she has worked at the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Metro Art where she was extensively involved in the public art component of the Expo Light Rail line. Coordinator of the MFA Public Practice program.



## Visitors and Mentors

### Ala Plastica

**Steve Appleton**

**Edgar Arceneaux**  
Watts House Project

**Ava Bromberg**

**BULBO**

**Nao Bustamante**

**Jeff Cain**

**Teddy Cruz**  
UC San Diego

**Matt Coolidge**  
Center for Land Use Interpretation

**Jessica Cusick**  
City of Santa Monica  
Department of Cultural Affairs

**Dorit Cypis**  
Foreign Exchanges

**Abdelali Dahrouch**

**Joshua Decter**  
Master in Public Art Studies, University of Southern California

**Sam Durant**

**Peter Eleey**  
Walker Art Museum

**Greg Esser**  
Director of Civic Art,  
Los Angeles County Arts Commission

### Future Farmers

**Jennifer Flores Sterndad**

**Bronya Galef**

**Mariam Ghani**

**Gronk**

**Fritz Haeg**

**Nav Haq**

**Janna Shaddock Hernandez**

**Willie Herrón**

**Dolores Huerta**

**Fran Illich**

**Luis Ituarte**  
Founder, Casa Del Tunnels

**Maria Rosario Jackson**  
Urban Institute

**Journal of Aesthetics and Protest**

**Philipp Kaiser**  
Museum of Contemporary Art,  
Los Angeles

**Grant Kester**  
Visual Arts Department,  
UC San Diego

**Olga Koumoundoros**

**Lucy Lippard**

**Rick Lowe**

**Karen Mack**  
LA Commons

**Richard Montoya**  
Culture Clash

**Nobuho Nagasawa**  
Site InSight, Inc.

**Tone Olaf Nielsen**

**Linda Pollack**

**Ted Purves**  
California College of the Arts

**John Quigly**

**Rachel Rosenthal**

**Martha Rosler**

**Pilar Riaño-Alcalá**

**Carol Stakenas**  
Los Angeles Contemporary Art Exhibitions

**Jennifer Flores Sterndad**

**Sally Tallant**  
Serpentine Gallery,  
London

**Temporary Services**

**Linda Vallejo**

**Mario Ybarra Jr.**

**Tirdad Zolghadr**



“I worked with Kim Abeles who taught me that if you have an idea, you can accomplish anything with help from people whom we can ask, “I need to weld this thing. I have this idea for a structure and I don’t know how to build it.”

Michelle Glass ('10)



“I went to London in 2009 with Mario Ybarra Jr. I painted a frame on one of these tarps, folded it, and took it to London. I thought it would be cool if I could capture some of the graffiti that we export and re-import it to the U.S. to see what that would look like. I installed a tarp close to the London Eye underneath a bridge, where I saw a lot of graffiti but little blank space. After several had been painted, I sent one to San Antonio and Chicago, one to Thailand.”

Roberto Del Hoyo ('10)



“When I applied to Public Practice, I really had no idea what to expect, except that, at least in terms of my own expectations, I knew that grad school was a safe place to try new ideas. I had the responsibility to push myself to develop ideas and work that I wouldn’t have been able to do had I not gone to grad school. I have to pay for it. I hate to bring it down to concrete terms like that. I wanted to get my money’s worth, so I felt I needed to get out and do as many different things as possible and talk to people and really push myself.”

Andrew Manoushagian ('09)

# New Orleans



This first semester gave students a first-hand experience of an artist project in the field. Public practice artists must be able to work in communities around the world. It started in Los Angeles, where students interviewed displaced New Orleans residents, and continued with trips to New Orleans. Under the leadership of Transforma—an arts and development project founded in New Orleans by artists Rick Lowe and Sam Durant and Santa Monica Director of Cultural Affairs Jessica Cusick—students partnered with the local Crescent City Peach Alliance who wanted to create a park commemorating civil rights activist Homer Plessy.



On June 7, 2007, students worked on the site where Homer Plessy was thrown off the train in 1892 after announcing, in a planned act of civil disobedience, that he was of negro origin. Otis Public Practice students organized Plessy Day to inaugurate a future park, with a local group of musicians and 40 students from The New Orleans Center for Creative Arts. Students covered improvised chalkboards with their responses to questions that included: "What does it mean for a school to be public?" and, "What are YOU willing to be thrown off the train for?"



"New Orleans After the Floods was a hands-on study through which I learned about the importance of schedule, building relationships, and developing community. Even more important to me was the time I spent working on Mel Chin's Fundred/Paydirt Project, also developed in New Orleans. I worked with Mel building the armored truck, and then I got behind the wheel for five months. Being involved in such a massive project has been a graduate-level education on its own. I drove the truck to over a hundred schools where I spoke with children about the project. It was fascinating to see first-hand how to get people to donate 350,000 drawings toward our goal, and how to do outreach across an entire nation.

Tory Tepp ('09)



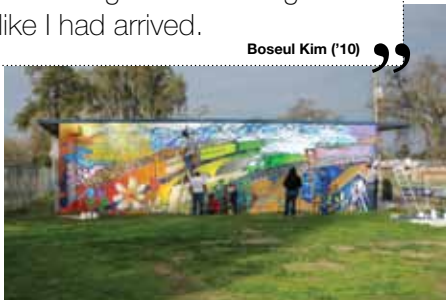
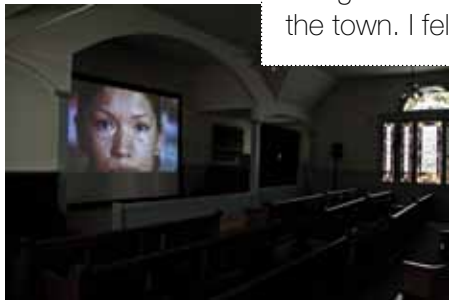


“ I met many ethnic groups there from China, Mexico, and Portugal, but I think I might have been the first Korean who stepped into the town of Laton. It wasn't like the “America” I learned from media and commercials in Korea; I thought I was seeing this culture's true colors. The teacher and students welcomed me into the high school metal shop, where we designed and built a large welcome sign for the town. I felt like I had arrived.

Boseul Kim ('10)

“ The little CA town that served as muse... The residents of Laton got to see themselves through the eyes of a dedicated group of (Otis) outsiders, and those outsiders got to see the effect of their work on their adopted town.

Susan Emerling for the Los Angeles Times



In 2008, Graduate Public Practice students developed a project in California's San Joaquin Valley, in the small farming town of Laton. With a planning grant from the Ford Foundation, they focused on environmental problems, poverty, the economics of food production, school dropout rates, and rapidly disappearing farmland. Despite this troubled regional picture, Laton presented an opportunity for students to engage with a small town culture rich with mutual support, strong families, and a great sense of civic responsibility.

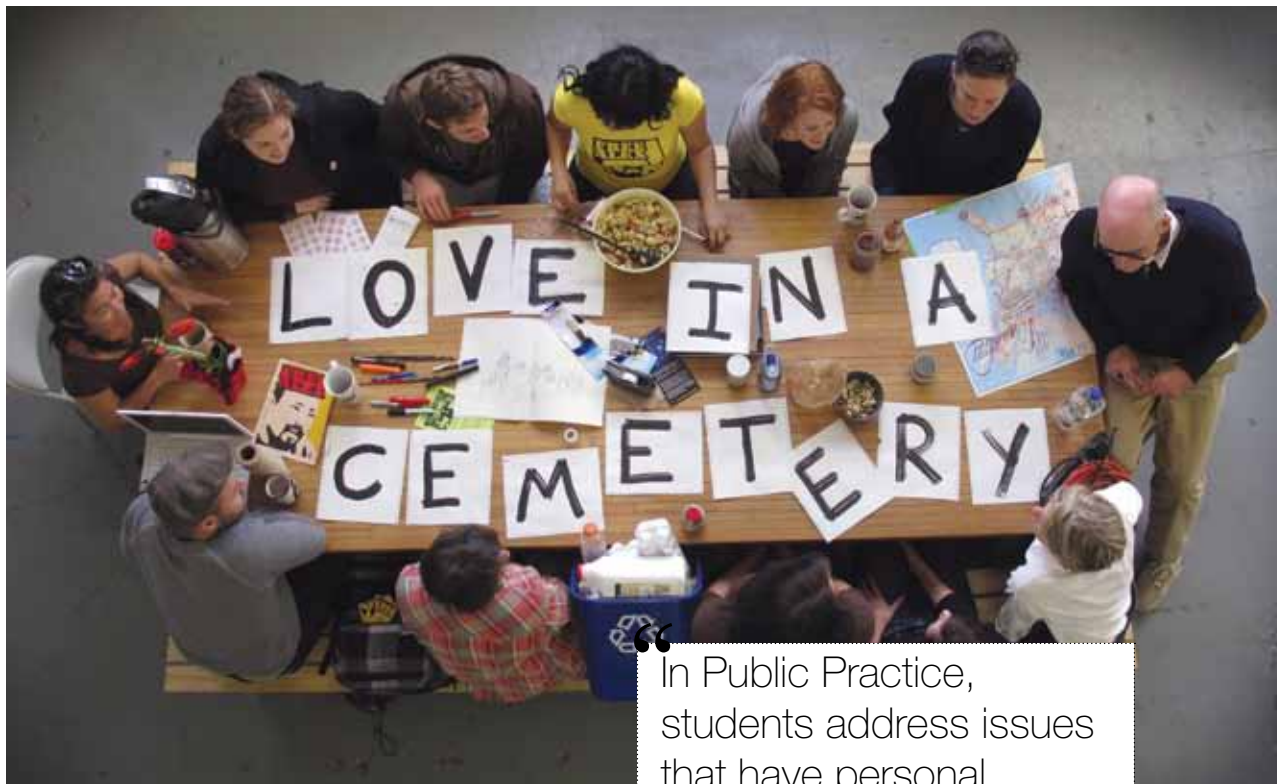
After several months of field work, students created several different projects on Main Street, including storefront painting, a free store, a new sign/gate to welcome visitors, an evening of musical performance and video installations, freshly painted buildings, a contest and mural with elementary students, and free portraits for over 50 families.

Students presented this project in Los Angeles at Farm Lab, at a conference in Portland, Oregon, and at The Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery at Barnsdall Park in the exhibition “Actions, Conversations, and Intersections.”

“ I wanted to give something back because the community had been so generous with us, cooking us dinner, inviting us into their homes. I asked the hard-working families—farmers, workers, and merchants—to take time out and to sit in an improvised studio with me. Almost 90 family portraits turned into a single Laton Family Portrait.

Shatto Light ('10)





The Importance of Culture to Los Angeles Communities  
(Collaborative Project, 2009)

## Love in a Cemetery

The group project, *Love in a Cemetery*, led by L.A. based visual artist Andrea Bowers and curator Robert Sain, partnered students with community organizations from throughout Los Angeles to explore aesthetics, pedagogy, and cultural politics through issues as diverse as gang intervention, teen homelessness, ocean pollution, health care, and prisoner education.

The project presented a perspective on art as examination, as investigation into the future of cultural organizations, through projects between students and collaborators sited in the field and represented in an exhibition at the 18th Street Arts Center. The gallery became a laboratory and classroom space for civic engagement, experimentation, presentation and discourse.

Students created an exhibition in partnership with an organization and two months of extensive programming, from speak-outs to film screenings. Guest speakers and artists included Sally Tallant from the Serpentine Gallery in London, artists Rick Lowe and Martha Rosler, guest artist Olga Koumoundouros, spokespersons from collaborating partners, and representatives of Los Angeles' major cultural organizations. The exhibit was featured in the *Los Angeles Times*.

“In Public Practice, students address issues that have personal significance, as a way to bring greater understanding to issues. Working in the health care community to address “lack of access” offered the possibility to collectively discuss the repercussions of health care reform, and ways of finding personal agency.”

Jamie Crooke (MFA candidate, '11)



“I would like to highlight the professors that have made the biggest impact on my own practice. Rick Lowe and Abdelali Dahrouch taught me how to understand and analyze the relationships that develop through this kind of art practice. Another professor, Bill Kelley Jr., who is a theorist, philosopher, and art historian, has helped me understand the function of art and the aesthetic experience, and how it can make a positive impact on society, Andrea Bowers showed me how to get things done. As a producer, she has helped me conceptualize my artwork based on social and political issues, and turn it into a physical form that can be represented in the art world.”

David Russell (MFA candidate, '11)



Original “Free Alex” graphic and text by Amitis Motevalli

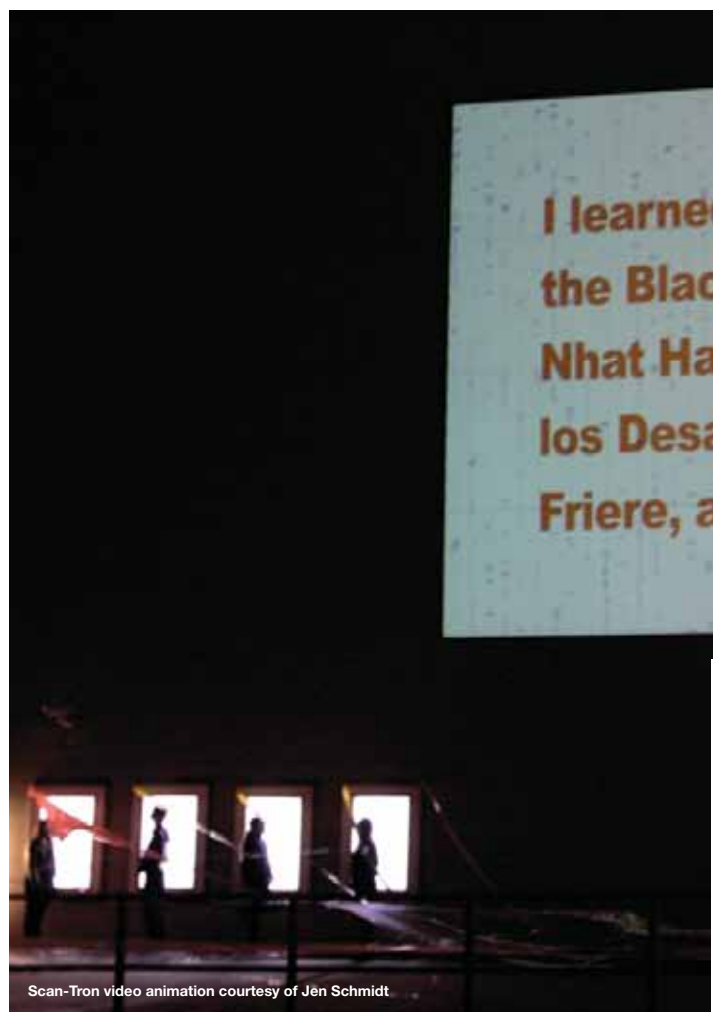
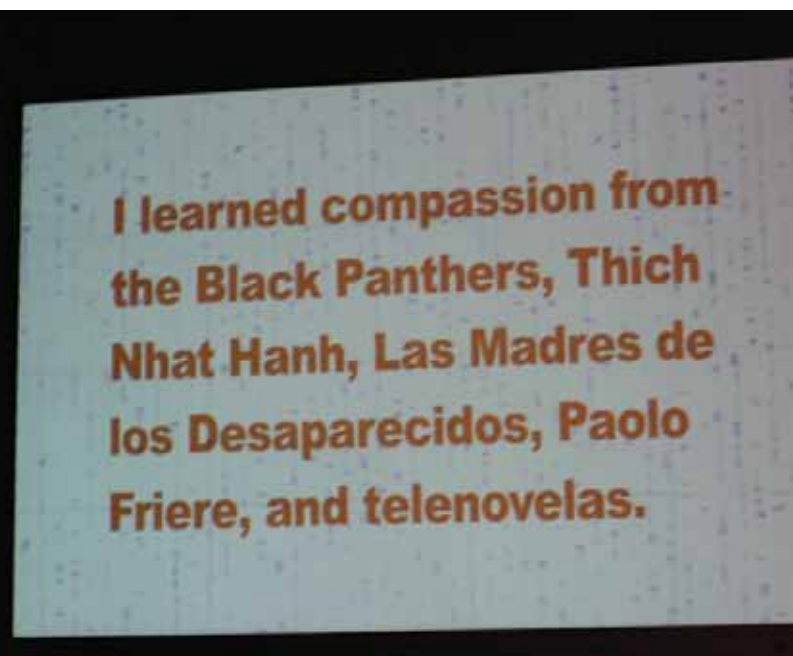
# Dismantled

DISMANTLED employs outdoor projection and performance to frame key issues such as the severe cutbacks in funding, charter schools, students and families burdened by debt, financial aid, and access to education. Highlighting populations the government and media often ignore, DISMANTLED integrates interviews from a cross-section of Californians with provocative visual analysis. In addition, images of blowing bubble gum and superhero school uniforms, along with historical footage from *Brown vs The Board of Education* are used to raise awareness and incite questions.

Audience members can participate in the project's ongoing interviews as well as contribute to the creation of a site-specific installation. Projection sites serve as gathering spaces for sidewalk conversations and run the gamut from neighborhood store-fronts to museums, colleges and libraries.

California educators including Peter McLaren, Gilda Haas, Janna Shaddock Hernandez and Ricardo Dominguez have informed this project.

In 2010/2011, MFA Public Practice students worked with artists S.A. Bachman and Krista Caballero to present DISMANTLED, an innovative visual arts collaboration. As students across California faced tuition hikes, emerging artists from Otis participated in an exploration of public education, critical pedagogy, and the privatization of our school system. This statewide project acknowledges California's unique history while simultaneously questioning what the future holds if our institutions of learning are no longer shaped by the core principles of accessible and affordable education for all.



Scan-Tron video animation courtesy of Jen Schmidt

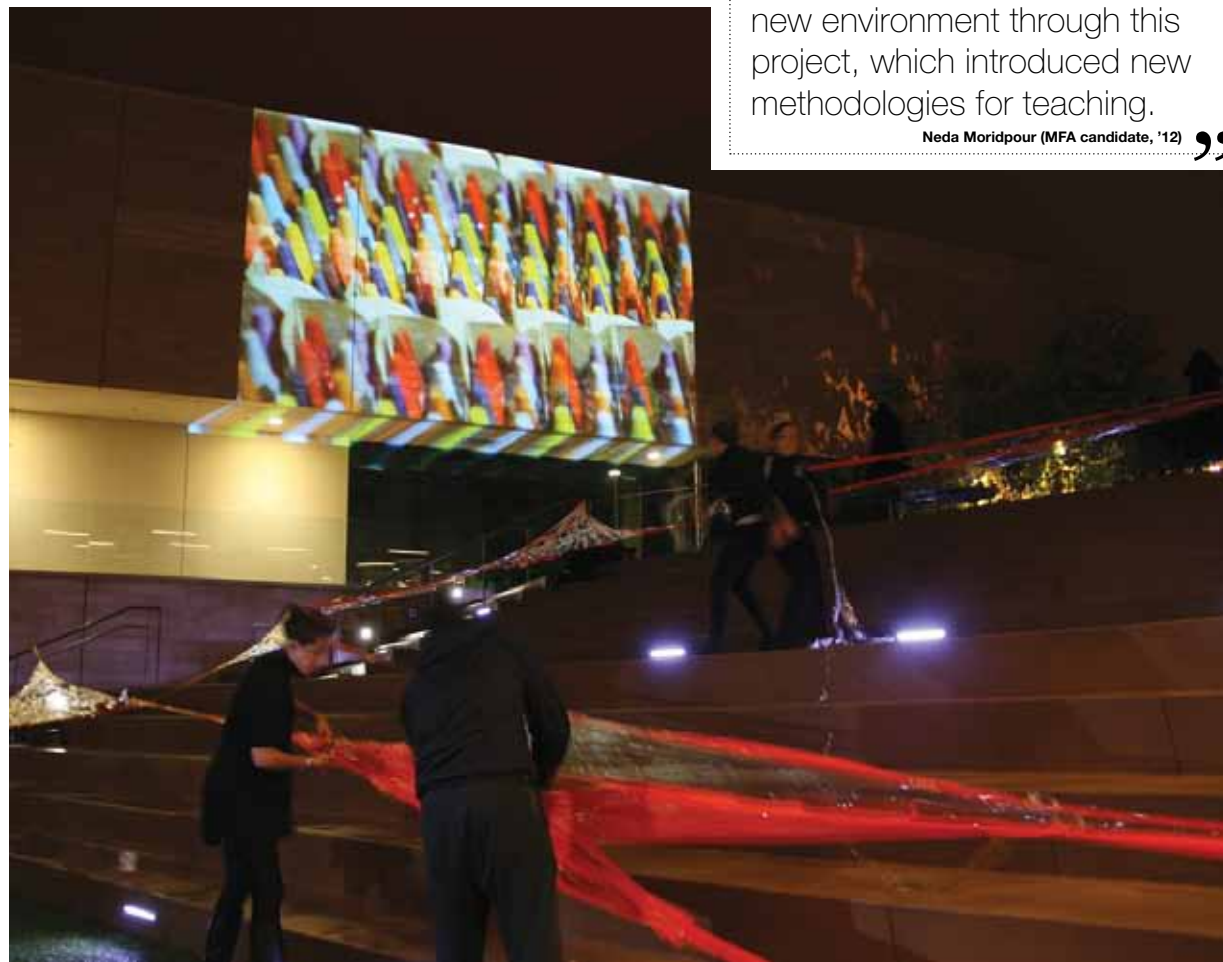
“DISMANTLED opened my eyes to different issues affecting public education in California and how systems of power can block access for all. I learned that taking action is imperative. As an immigrant, I launched my education in a new environment through this project, which introduced new methodologies for teaching.”

Neda Moridpour (MFA candidate, '12)



“It was important to bring *Dismantled* to Fresno, CA because of the struggle for public education in the Central Valley. By projecting onto the city's vacant Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Dismantled* not only brought this struggle to light, but also called for action from every person on the street.”

Teresa Flores (MFA candidate, '12)



Otis College of Art and Design

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