

art agenda

November 20, 2018

Detroit Roundup

By Rob Goyanes



Yesomi Umolu, Mark Pauline, Anicka Yi, and Eyal Weizman, "The Aesthetics Of Tomorrow" panel at the Senate Theater, Detroit, 2018. Image courtesy of the participants and Culture Lab Detroit. Photo by Trista Dymond.

In early October, I went to Detroit for the first time. I was invited on a press trip by Culture Lab Detroit. Positioning itself as a socially conscious arts organization, its annual conference hosts discussions at different sites throughout the city. This year's

summit was dubbed “The Crisis of Beauty,” which to me sounded like a hollow if catchy turn of phrase. While waiting for my Lyft at the airport, a huge Ford truck approached with a bright blue LED Uber sign in the windshield. The driver was a large white man wearing a camo Trump hat. It portended a weekend of strange, overlapping contradictions regarding the future of Detroit, the political fungibility of what is deemed beautiful, and who finds beauty where—especially within the industrial ruins of Midwestern American cities.

Much contemporary art operates on an axis of crisis capitalism, with the promise of revitalizing downtrodden places. The name Culture Lab is a bit sus, considering that Detroit has been revolutionizing culture for a long time. The first panel, “The Aesthetics of Tomorrow,” was held at the Senate Theater, in Southwest Detroit. With a burning-red marquis and rectangular art deco flourishes, the building is an old silent film theater from the 1920s, a curious setting for a conversation on tomorrows. It houses a giant Wurlitzer Opus pipe organ from 1953, and, on a wall at the back of the 800-seat house, there’s about a dozen images of players from the Detroit Theater Organ Society. The old photographs reminded me of a pre-reincarnation Jack Torrance smiling maniacally in the ballroom at the end of *The Shining* (1980).

“The Aesthetics of Tomorrow” started psychotically enough: Peter Weller, the star of *RoboCop* (1987) and a PhD in Italian Renaissance art history, shouted a short hyperactive lecture on why he loved Detroit. *RoboCop*’s premise was a prescient if outlandish one: a near-future Detroit is in ruins, municipal organs are sold to corporations, and a cyborg is plagued by its human memories. It’s not totally unlike Detroit’s bankruptcy in 2013—the largest municipal bankruptcy in US history—where power was given to an emergency manager so that debts could be settled and basic services restored, which came with the trimming of pensions and a significant influx of corporate cash and property.

“The Aesthetics of Tomorrow” included Mark Pauline of Survival Research Laboratories, artist Anicka Yi, and Eyal Weizman, the founder and director of Forensic Architecture. They talked with curator Yesomi Umolu, artistic director of the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial. Though a solid primer on the individual practices of the panelists, their talk followed the usual ritualized discourse: when it comes to the future, technology is both good and bad, and artistic practice is both critical and ineffectual.

The next day, Culture Lab brought us (the press) to Dabls MBAD African Bead Museum. The walls outside are festooned with colorful mosaics of broken mirror, wood, concrete, and other materials. Inside, a truly beautiful taxonomical galaxy:

countless varieties of beads dangling on necklaces or housed in vials, colors from red-earth to azure to bright banana. Olayami Dabls, who opened the museum in 1985, works to illustrate how beads don't only function as pure ornamentation, but have long been used in African material culture as means of communication. Outside the museum, there's several huge outdoor installations that employ the detritus of industry and urbanity to explore notions of difference ("Iron Teaching Rocks How to Rust"), the history of the slave trade, and African languages. Less a crisis of beauty, more beauty in the face of crisis. Dots, symbolizing ancestors, are a common motif throughout.

We were then led on a tour of Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, which sits on several city blocks in a residential neighborhood in Detroit's North End. Besides providing produce for the community, the group purchases homes lost to tax foreclosure, is turning an alleyway into a greenway, and organizes exhibitions and events to generate capital and joy. The farm—like Dabls's expansive space—is a reminder of the trope that's been driving the outside discussion of Detroit: there is plentiful cheap space, and the aesthetic of industrial ruin is in. These examples of local enfranchisement prove that no external savior is needed when it comes to economics or culture.

This sentiment rings clear through Detroit's history as well. In addition to Motown, the city is the progenitor of techno, and there's a nondescript house containing a museum dedicated to the genre and its vanguard group: Underground Resistance, formed by Jeff Mills, "Mad" Mike Banks, and Robert Hood. John Collins, a pivotal member of UR, graciously gave a two-hour tour of the museum. Humble vitrines trace techno's origins: the merging of Parliament's funk and Kraftwerk's electronics; the sci-fi trans-genre gospel of local radio enigma The Electrifying Mojo; and the politicized aesthetic of anti-commercial futurity espoused by Underground Resistance, an aesthetic and ethic that flies in the face of contemporary mainstream DJ culture.

Later that afternoon, in advance of Culture Lab's second panel, we went to filmmaker and critic dream hampton's apartment in Lafayette Park—located within the largest collection of buildings designed by Mies Van Der Rohe—just east of Downtown. dream later told me how Lafayette Park, which used to house mostly black residents, is now largely white. Regarding the so-called new Detroiters who have come back, dream said: "People love to tell you how their grandmother lived in Detroit in the 1950s, or some caveat about how they were born here. What would be more honest would be to talk about the moment when their families fled, and how, when they were growing up, they were told to never come to Detroit. It doesn't mean they or their parents are monsters, but it would be a more honest story about America."

After dream's we headed to the Church of the Messiah, a nontraditional episcopal church in Detroit's East Side. The panel, titled "Seeing and Being Seen," included dream, the artist, DJ, and writer Juliana Huxtable, and Jon Gray, the co-founder of Ghetto Gastro, a collective of chefs which he describes as a "Black Power kitchen." Moderated by Jazmine Hughes, associate editor of the New York Times Magazine, there was a discernible chemistry among the participants, a mix of humor and engrossing discourse, and reflections on the struggles—but also the triumphs—of black, trans, and female communities.

Huxtable observed that social justice causes have entered a sort of fashion cycle: a season for black lives, a season for trans lives, etc. This cyclicity—perhaps a reflection of neoliberalism's absorption of everything—can also be observed at the city level. For many who live outside the city, Detroit has been a metonym of danger and dystopia. Today the city is becoming synonymous with frontier, a place with ample cheap space waiting to be settled by non-resident entrepreneurs and artists. During the panel, Gray remarked how French people, upon hearing that he's from the Bronx, will say that something is "Le Bronx" when it's fucked up. Similarly, when dream says that she's from Detroit, people wince. Detroit is nearly 85 percent black. When some people talk about Detroit being a dystopia, there's an underlying white supremacist logic not being addressed, a history being smoothed over. The city was once the seat of Fordism, the pinnacle of standardized mass production. After deindustrialization, factories slid into ruin—so came the shadow of urban decay. Years of redlining and police violence led to the riots of 1967, accelerating "white flight" from the city, which, of course, translated to the flight of capital. But those who see Detroit as a no-man's land just waiting to be developed, should take heed of dream's words: This city is a place "with a black history, a black present, and a black future."

Later that evening and into the early morning, Huxtable DJed at Olympus Hall, which is part of Menjo's, the historic gay nightclub complex. Dancing into oblivion, I watched the red droplets of the disco ball on the floor, dots that recalled the ancestral beads at Dabls's museum. The next day, bleary eyed, I visited the Heidelberg Project, a stretch of vacant lots and abandoned houses in Detroit's East Side transformed into a series of massive installations by artist Tyree Guyton. Dots permeate this area too: There's a small boat painted with colorful dots and crosses, overflowing with stuffed animals; enchanting paintings of shoes and dots nailed to trees; dots large and small painted on houses, alongside repetitions of the word "YOU." Is this a universal addressee, or some group in particular?

In one lot, the foundation of a house is all that remains of the structure. Atop it, surrounding the chimney jutting toward the sky, there are countless objects strewn together: toy wheelbarrows and kids' cars, a jet ski with mannequin legs, a giant moose head—the flotsam of American existence, memories embodied in consumer goods, collected together at a home that no longer is, and yet, remains to be. As I walked around this truly public collection—in all senses of the word—my soul was stirred. The premise of “The Crisis of Beauty” begs the question. There is no crisis of beauty, just crisis.

<https://www.art-agenda.com/features/242162/detroit-roundup>

BUST

November 1, 2018

Juliana Huxtable On Her Genre-Crossing Art, Her "Hibernation" Creative Process, And Instagram Vs. Tumblr

By Erika Smith



Photo by Olivia Gilmore for Culture Lab Detroit

Juliana Huxtable is wearing blue lipstick, bright pink tights, a plaid miniskirt, and a floral top when she goes onstage at Detroit's Church of the Messiah—a 130-year-old

building that's home to a social justice-minded congregation—to speak about "Seeing and Being Seen." She's part of a panel on the subject as part of Culture Lab Detroit; later, she'll end the day with a 1 a.m. DJ set at the nightclub Olympus Hall.

This ability to be equally at home speaking on a panel at a church, lecturing in an art museum, and DJing at a nightclub—and to move seamlessly back and forth between creating visual art, performing, writing prose and poetry, DJing, and creating music—is "very natural" for her, Huxtable tells BUST, and not so unusual: "Some people have a day job and a night job and a side gig and a band with their friends. I think the difference with me is that all the things I do are highly visible."



Culture Lab Detroit's "Seeing And Being Seen" panel: moderator Jazmine Hughes; Juliana Huxtable; Ghetto Gastro founder Jon Gray; dream hampton. Photo by Olivia Gilmore for Culture Lab Detroit

Huxtable's work includes [self-portraiture](#), [music](#), [photography](#), [performance art](#), [poetry](#), [a sci-fi novel](#), the "[nightlife gender project](#)" [#SHOCKVALUE](#), and many, many other works. Huxtable is trans, she often uses her own body as her primary subject, exploring gender, race, queerness, and identity in her work, as well as art history, the internet, and science fiction.

I spoke with Huxtable ahead of her appearance on the Culture Lab Detroit panel; she talked about her "hibernation"-style creative process; how travel and place inform her work; and why Instagram can't rival the micro-communities of Tumblr back in 2010.

You work in a lot of different forms—visuals, music, performance, writing. How do you see them relating to each other?

Most people go to school, and they study painting, or they study sculpture, or they have a specific combination of things that's a result of a somewhat intentional relationship to education or training. But I came around to my practice sort of coincidentally—I wanted to be an artist since I was young, but I assumed that that wasn't something that I would be able to pursue. I came to what I was doing through a series of coincidences: a situation presents itself, or I have the impulse to express myself in a certain way. There's a freedom I feel relating to genre that has resulted in a practice that is multidisciplinary. I don't really think so much about how they all relate to each other. Sometimes I'm drawn to figurative work, sometime I'm drawn to textual work, sometimes I'm drawn to a video or a text piece. Sometimes something that I plan as a text piece will end up as a video, because it feels inappropriate in that format.

How about [social media](#)? Do you see an Instagram post as being a form of art, or having the possibility to be a form of art?

I think it has the possibility to be, but I don't see it as that for me. For some artists, the motifs and formal constraints of something like Instagram or Twitter is an interesting way for them to interrogate their practice itself, so there are artists where that is their primary medium, or the stage on which their work plays out. I don't think that's necessarily true for me. I think at one point, something like Tumblr was the closest thing I had to a direct relationship between what I wanted to say artistically, and how it existed as a product of social media. But that's changed for me. I sort of enjoy the fact that, although obviously my work is documented on social media, how I interact with social media—enjoy social media, even thrive—is not in that context.

Tumblr in the time that you were active there seemed like such an interesting, thriving community, and is now not so much that—I don't know if there are other social media platforms that are like that now, or if it's just that I'm older and don't know about them.

I joined Tumblr in, I think, spring of 2010, through maybe 2015 was when I was really active. And then my work started to move in a different direction, and my relationship to social media changed from something that was part of a micro-community to

something that felt more generally visible. It doesn't feel like the place where experimentation is happening for me. Both of my parents were techie people, so I had a Xanga, I had a Geocities, I had an Angelfire, I had a Livejournal, I had a Blogspot, I've done MySpace, LastFM. You name it, I've done it. So I don't think for me it is a product of age.

I think the cycles by which social media platforms become outmoded can no longer keep up with demand. At one point, the idea of a social media platform itself was a somewhat novel social phenomenon. So Tumblr was a self-segregating audience with a particular set of interests. But something like Instagram changed what that meant, because it set out to be a really, really wide, net-reach mentality, almost a universal. In the way that gmail is to email, Instagram sought to be to a certain kind of visual social media. I think that platforms that announce themselves as wanting to be the universal standard almost function as some sort of institution. And I think when Tumblr was purchased by Yahoo, that happened—not that it was less corporate before, but I do think that when it was purchased by Yahoo, Yahoo changed the algorithms, it changed the search results, because they wanted to make Tumblr competitive as a wide-reach social media platform. I think the idea of an audience-specific, socially novel form of social media is maybe...I don't know what that looks like right now, maybe it does exist, maybe I'll find it.

When people write about to you, they often tie you and your work to New York. Do you think that being in New York is something that's a big part of your art?

I think my work is informed by New York, just because I've lived there—I've lived in or directly adjacent to New York since I was 18, which is 12 years of a certain mentality. But I feel like at this point, New York always informs, and I thrive there and I love New York, but—not that I want to move somewhere else—there's a certain flexibility with my work that I feel by how much time I spend in other places. There was a solid three to five years where I didn't leave New York at all; the longest I left was maybe three days. And during that period, my work directly reflected my immersion in New York, and also the financial constraints and things like that that New York places on you.

Now, as my work progresses, it's also in conversation with other things. Even just the fantasy of being somewhere else, or the experience of being in another city for a while, or a different way to relating to a place racially—that changes how I understand what a different aspect of my work represents. Spending six weeks in China will affect how I see different aspects of my work and what they signify culturally. I came to Detroit from New York, but I was only in New York for like four days before coming here; I was in

Berlin before that. I won't be back in New York for 12 days, and then I'll be back for 4 days, and then I'm going to Brazil, and then Baltimore.

How do you take care of yourself, and how do you keep creating, when you're traveling so often, moving through time zones, and working so much?

I have to be intentional about carving out space. I also find that generally, the way my year goes is that by the end of fall I'm overworked, and then winter through spring is my hibernation where I get a lot of my [creative] work done. I'm on the wildlife schedule. Also, my schedule is very regimented, so I work really, really hard summer and fall. This year, maybe a little too much. It allows me to take like five months and just work and be around my friends and go out and dance.

Could you share anything about what you're currently working on?

I am currently working on a new body of work, and I'm working on music. That's really one of my main focuses, because I'm releasing music next year. A lot of my performances have become more musically oriented, because it's become a way for me to experiment with what I'm working on.

When you do something like your DJ performance later tonight—how do you prepare for that?

I'm glad you remind me of that, because I lost my USB, so I have to find a USB before I play tonight—I need to find a CVS or something.

<https://bust.com/arts/195362-juliana-huxtable-interview.html>

Artspace

November 2, 2018

How to Get Away With Stealing Military-Grade Technology: An Interview With Survival Research Labs' Mark Pauline

By Shannon Lee



Mark Pauline with the Spine Robot (2014). Courtesy of Survival Research Laboratories

Mark Pauline is an undisputed mastermind when it comes to sticking it to the man. For the past thirty years, he's been mesmerizing audiences and machinophiles around the world with his terrifying and satirical machine-based performances. Offering an alternative outlet for would-be war machines and their engineers, Pauline's Survival

Research Laboratories (SRL) is a performance art group that re-appropriates these tools of weaponized industry into objects of pure entertainment. Their shows are a cacophonous melee of fast spinning parts, large projectiles, and explosions... did we mention the flame hurricane? They made a flame hurricane.

Rooted in Pauline's unbending impulse to resist authority whenever possible, SRL is relentlessly tongue-in-cheek. Their performances are often given elaborate bureaucratic titles, a satirical nod to those generated in academic research papers. *The Unexpected Destruction of Elaborately Engineered Artifacts, Survival Research Laboratories Contemplates a Million Inconsiderate Experiments* is a particularly procedural example.

This past January, after spending the past several decades as a self-made art-world outlaw, Pauline exhibited his first project within the institutional art world, showcasing his Pitching Machine (a gargantuan projectile that hurls wooden planks up to 200 miles per hour into a bulletproof container). The show received rave reviews and marked an exciting new territory for Pauline's work. Here, Artspace's Shannon Lee discusses the history of SRL and learns how to get away with stealing military-grade technology with Pauline at Culture Lab Detroit, where Pauline spoke on a panel with [Anicka Yi](#) and Eyal Weizman on the Aesthetics of the Future. Introduced by the actor Peter Weller (aka: Robocop), one couldn't find a more fitting place to be talking about machine re-appropriation than motor city itself.



How did SRL get started?

It's fairly straight forward. I wanted to learn some trades because I wanted to be an artist as a teenager. I didn't want to become an engineer in any typical sense because I knew that would mean I'd be a tool of the man. I made a conscious decision and decided to take sociology and psychology courses instead of advanced mathematics during my last years of high school. I also wanted to figure out how to make money as an artist; I'd known other people in the field and they just never had any money and had shitty jobs and I thought, "I'm not gonna do that." And so I learned a trade and was able to get a job.

What was your first job?

My first job was at an ironworks. Pretty soon I was making these massive crane booms and went on to build much bigger robots than I do now outside of Eglin Airforce base. I was building these massive thirty-ton target robots. I loved the tools! The more I got into it, the more I got to appreciate how powerful those machines were. At the time, mechanical technology was what was happening.

Still, when I was working at factories, I never really liked that I was making a bunch of stuff that nobody needs, or making trucks to bring the stuff that nobody needs to

places nobody needs to go, or making stuff that's part of a killing economy. I was a foreman by the time I was nineteen, worked in the oil fields in Santa Barbara welding the high pressure pipes... they were difficult jobs. After all that, I went to art school for four years and when I graduated, everyone was encouraging me to move to New York to be a part of that whole art scene. It was mostly people from the punk circle like Exene from the band X and Arto Lindsay from DNA. But there were also people who'd wanted me to move to San Francisco—and that's where I ended up.

Sounds fairly happenstance.

It was! I was on my way to becoming a successful artist—the work I was doing in college was pretty well received (I'd gone to a small liberal arts school called Eckert College down in Florida). But I ended up in San Francisco doing marginally legal stuff. There was this show that I'd wanted to do where I'd take photos of these billboards that I would modify to say what they were really saying. The gallery I pitched this to was not having it. The owner asked if I was getting permission to modify them—of course not! They would also come with threats that said that they couldn't come to remove them for two weeks or we'd destroy all of their billboards. Really kind of proto-terrorist actions. But the idea for SRL came to me after two weeks of sitting down and brainstorming.



Mark Pauline and Matt Heckert operating the *Inchworm*, *Inspector*, and *Big Walker* at the old SRL yard.

I'd been breaking into abandoned factories and saw all the resources that were there and thought, "You know what? I could use these!" And so SRL was born out of this idea that you could take these commercial or military technologies and re-engineer them so that they became completely impractical entertainment vehicles that would retain the power that made them useful in the first place, but without any of the baggage. That's when I came up with this system for our shows and formed it as a company. I actually stole the name from a right wing magazine.

No kidding!

There was an ad in *Soldier of Fortune* magazine for Survival Research Labs. It looked so fake! It looked like they'd cut and pasted a bunch of stuff to make this thing.

What was the original right wing SRL?

Sites for your M-16... that sort of thing. But I thought man, what a cool name! The next month, the editor of the magazine wrote an article about how they'd been defrauded by a bunch of fake advertisers and were clamping down. It was so fitting for me to steal

from the right to make SRL. I got a licensed brand in San Francisco and a business license. I figured that I needed to be able to get away with a lot of stuff and the only way I could do that was by becoming a company—those are the entities that can really get away with anything. And it worked!

It grew to have an audience of thousands of people. Nobody had really seen anything like it; shows with machines. At that time in San Francisco, the punk scene was what was really happening and when I started telling my friends about SRL, they said, "that's insane! You're never going to be able to do that!" But then I did a couple and proved them all wrong. There's also no real art scene in San Francisco—the one that's there is super ossified and traditional. There were a lot of people out there that just wanted to do and see something different. I started assembling this really brilliant team with myself as the director. There were really brilliant tech people involved and we were able to build really complicated things—and for years, most of our materials were stolen! I could've gone to prison a thousand times over with all of my transgressions.

And they still haven't gotten you. Where do you get your materials now?

As the resources that became available without taking too much risk started to disappear, during the transition to a tech economy, I became aware of these companies that were handling all the assets for tech companies like Hewlett Packard. I actually broke into one of those buildings and thought, "Wow! Look at all this cool stuff!" And then it crossed my mind that instead of breaking the law, I could just try talking to them. It turns out that one of the people that ran this company knew me from the Exploratorium. I had done shows there and they all loved SRL. So I started getting equipment from there. Over the years, SRL became this go-to place for corporations to get rid of a whole company or laboratory full of high-tech stuff. They'd call me up and say things like, "none of the scientists here know what any of this stuff is and we need someone to figure out what's still worth saving" and so I'd just go in and buy all the things they were dumping. I'd get calls from military people, Google...



Mark Pauline and the *Running Machine* (1992).

In a weird way, you're a bit of a tech archivist.

It's more that I'm picking the pockets of billionaires. I get to pick all the valuable stuff, repair it, and resell it. That's how I can afford to do SRL. It became way too expensive in the '90s. Also being in San Francisco after the tech boom was impossible. You'd have to make an executive salary to live there and I didn't have a trust fund. All the artists I know that do bigger projects are either rich or have trust funds.

We're in Detroit right now for Culture Lab and so much of the discussion here has been around afrocentricity and black representation. Given the context of our interview, I can't help but wonder if you've given much thought to privilege and the fact that you were able to establish a bonafide career of sorts by way of illegal actions.

I've always been one to fight the power and to me, I always felt that it was a fundamental injustice that things like creative pursuits weren't considered as seriously as practical lifestyles. I didn't want to go into the fine art gallery world and have to kiss people's asses—that just felt like such a humiliating thing to do. So I decided to do things on my own and had to do what I had to do to make it happen. It was also much

easier to get away with things back then. It was before security cameras were everywhere. Now you could never do something like that. It'd be virtually impossible. Back then, it was a pretty smart bet! Not only was there no infrastructure but the police in San Francisco had a really different view of what's important in terms of maintaining public order. They would catch me red-handed doing all this stuff and they'd just say, "Oh, you should probably get out of here. This is your stuff, right?"

Send you off with a warning.

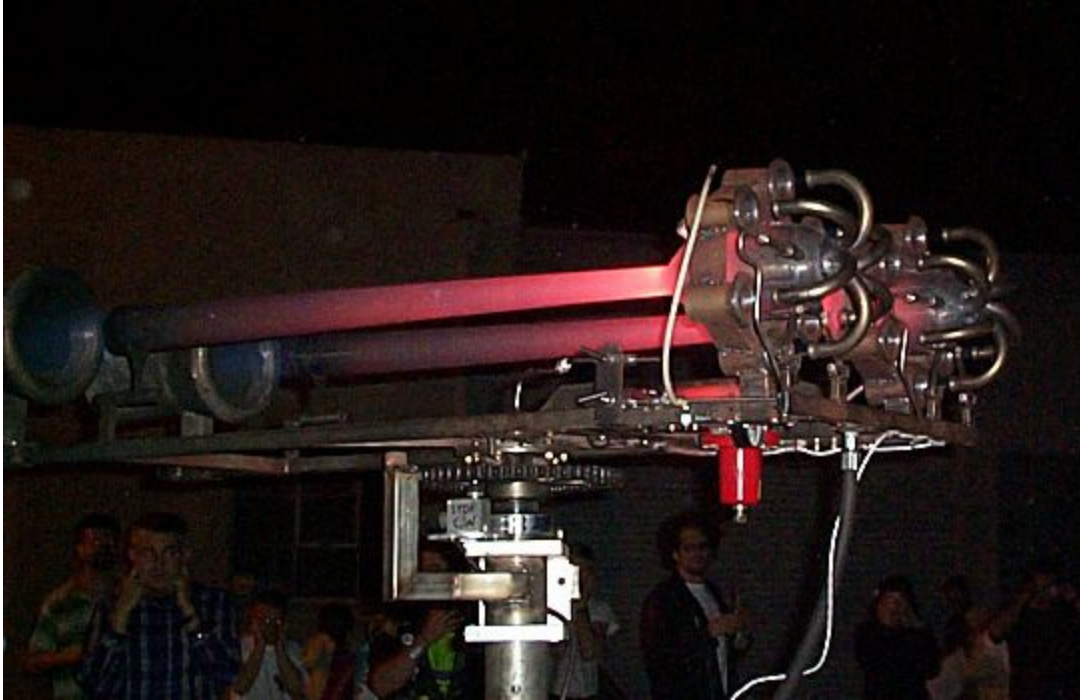
I can't tell you how many times that happened. And when SRL got bigger in San Francisco, we'd be in the middle of doing something shady and they'd just go, "it's you guys! We love your show, do you have any posters?" We became a sort of weird, protected entity. People really appreciated us taking those risks.

I guess what I'm asking is whether you've considered how privilege might've factored into the early foundations of SRL. Like if you had been some brilliant kid creating, as you said, "proto-terrorist" works, but your skin happened to be brown, do you think you would've gotten away with as much?

I could've made any kind of career choice being a white guy. I decided at a very young age that I wasn't going to take advantage of those so-called opportunities because I didn't believe in that world and didn't want to be a part of it. I felt that to be responsible and to be able to live with myself, I needed to do something where I didn't take advantage of any of that stuff.

What I also saw was that a lot of people that didn't go that route didn't know how to do anything. They were basically ignorant in a way because they never really got involved enough in the processes that make money. They didn't understand how the power centers of the world ran. I really wanted to understand that language even though I didn't want to be part of that world.

I wanted to prove that you didn't have to be a pawn in these systems just to participate and that you could be an antipo while still accomplishing things. I wanted to create a space where men and women could work with really extreme things and professional tools and deep logistics but not have it be about any of that other crap. SRL is still that way. We take it as far as we can without hurting people. That's the bottom line.



The Hovercraft: "The loudest robot in the world at 150 decibels. Louder than a cruise missile until it blows up."

Has the transformation of San Francisco in the last twenty years affected your work at all?

Well, I was actually banned from there by the fire department in 1995. I was still able to do a few shows after that because the mayor Willie Brown really liked us. I think he just liked to fight the other parts of the government. So when we'd contact him for a show, we'd say, "we can't do this because the fire department won't let us," to which he'd respond, "fuck that!" He did it a few times when he was mayor. But the fire department got so pissed that he forced them to allow these shows and forced it down their throats—so once he was gone, they just said "no way."

I moved up to Petaluma which is about thirty miles north but I was able to hold on until 2009. I'd found a place up there that was thirty-six cents a foot. There's a lot of vacant commercial property out there because of the previous dot com boom. I was able to expand and advance our capabilities a lot out there.

San Francisco's panicking now because they're realizing that all the artists are gone and they know that the tech economy will go through a recession soon—as soon as this year probably. It'll deflate much slower than say the real estate bubble because there's still a lot of real stuff there but the excesses are just orders of magnitude more in the previous dot com era. It's unbelievable the things you see out there. Google Projects

has hundreds of people working in giant warehouses spending hundreds of millions of dollars on projects that are pretty impractical. It's all on a knife-edge and they're going to have to cut all that stuff loose which means there will be a lot of jobs on the line.

I wanted to do a show in San Francisco in 2016. My wife had met a lot of people working in the city and it turns out there are a lot of SRL fans working fairly high up in the government. I was going to do these renegade pop-up shows over there and she just said, "Why don't you just go ask someone from the film or art commission out there?" and I was like, "Really? You think they'll go for this?" So I called them up and they let me rent a whole city block for \$1,200 for a whole day. They had the police there for security and even the fire department. They just made us promise that we weren't going to kill anybody, that we weren't going to burn anything outside our performance area, and that we'd show them escape routes if people start to panic. It was like the old days! Back then, I never needed permits because the police would let us. In some ways, they're just desperate for things to happen in the city. They don't want it to just turn into drone city. People are just scared that when the clouds roll in, they won't be ready for it.

Has your work adapted or evolved over time to reflect different attitudes towards technology?

The main thing is that every success we have is a black mark on my record. Every time we do a really kick-ass show, people are like, "fuck, that's insane." People do love it and nobody's ever gotten hurt, but it does scare people. It scares people who we work with! And it's hard to work on your own.

I have to ask, given how close your work is thematically and the fact that you're both rooted in San Francisco—do you have any ties to the burning man community?

No. They're a little too peace-and-love, hippie-dippy for me.



All images courtesy of Survival Research Laboratories.

https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/qa/how-to-get-away-with-stealing-military-grade-technology-an-interview-with-survival-research-labs-55730

COOL HUNTING

October 26, 2018

Art as Action: Forensic Architecture

Part activism, Part Research Agency, Part Creative Endeavor

By Evan Malachosky

In contemporary society, the intersection between cities and battlegrounds is blurred—perhaps more than ever in nations suffering through conflicts. But as technology becomes more accessible and affordable (and internet more widely available), crime and conflict are documented from hundreds and thousands of angles, perspectives and positions. Forensic Architecture, helmed by Eyal Weizman at Goldsmiths University of London, is an independent research agency working to gather and transfer this archival evidence into architectural renderings and use it in cases against human rights violations and war crimes and in instances where scene recreation is vital to finding the truth.



A trained architect, Weizman leads the group in traditional, learned-in-school architectural work. But instead of building, they're dissecting and reassembling the pre-existing.

His idea for Forensic Architecture is to put the tools into the hands of society—to defend themselves against state misdirection, to be a

documenter of these instances and to have someone working to use (or at least look at) evidence.



The work teeters somewhere between action, art and architecture. Their team is not just architects, but is made up of artists, software developers, journalists, archaeologists, lawyers, scientists and beyond. Their findings have been used as evidence in court, truth commissions, and more. It's almost uncategorizable.

Weizman, while speaking with us at this year's Culture Lab Detroit, explains, "I don't feel that I need to locate my work in a single discipline. What organizes our work and our thinking is the problem. [We] will compose a kind of stack or an intersection of various people with different sensibilities and knowledges."



"I think that the kind of investigative practice we are involved in, to a certain extent, is one that brings the capacity to undertake investigation to civil society," Weizman says. "The work itself, the problem, creates common space. In which different communities, different players come together, but also different media—different forms of articulation."



Forensic Architecture's work is exhibited in the permanent collections of some of the world's most recognizable art galleries. Exhibition at these places becomes, for many, consumption of top-tier art but, for others, it's a display of activism and representation.

"The idea of the common is creating, not in a communitarian way (as in a neighborhood or a village), a common engagement with a problem, which comes simultaneously by way of a community experiencing trauma or violence—and it is generated not geographically but through lines of solidarity," Weizman says.

Forensic Architecture's work is on display now at numerous galleries. Archaeology of the Present: Memory, Media, Matter is on exhibition at White Box Project Space in Friedrichshafen, Germany until 1 December. République Géniale: A Cooperation of Kunstmuseum Bern and Dampfzentrale Bern is on in Bern through 11 November. Beazley Designs of the Year 2018, featuring Forensic Architecture, is on in London through 6 January, 2019.

Images courtesy of Forensic Architecture

<https://coolhunting.com/culture/forensic-architecture/>

BUST

October 15, 2018

"Detroit Is Not A Blank Canvas": Art And Activism At Culture Lab Detroit 2018

By Erika Smith



Church of the Messiah with Culture Lab signage outside; photo by Gabriela Baginski

Take it from activist, filmmaker, and writer dream hampton: your conception of Detroit's "rebirth" is probably wrong. "People don't want to talk about race," hampton tells me. "There's this idea that has been given to a whole generation that to talk about race is racism, which is nuts. So they don't want to talk about the idea that a 'rejuvenation' or a 'Renaissance' is couched in this idea that white people are finally

moving back to Detroit—spoken or unspoken. Black people have always been here, always been creative, always been creating, and it never stopped. It didn't stop in '08. It didn't stop with the collapse of the auto industry."

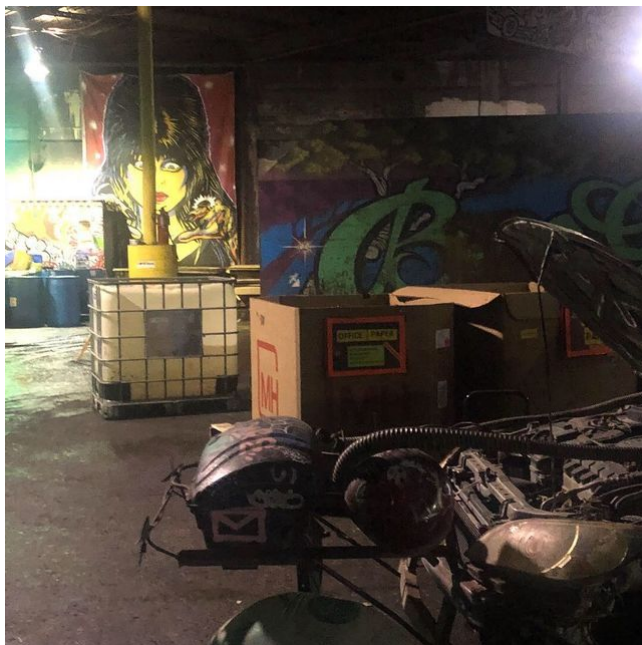
hampton tells me this in a small sacistry at Detroit's Church of the Messiah, minutes before she takes part in a panel discussion on the subject of "Seeing And Being Seen" with artist Juliana Huxtable and Ghetto Gastro founder Jon Gray, moderated by the New York Times Magazine editor Jazmine Hughes. The panel is part of three days of events put on by Culture Lab Detroit, a nonprofit organization formed by Jane Schulak in 2012 with the mission of "aid[ing] Detroit in becoming a city that prioritizes the arts as a mean for community investment, sustainable neighborhood development and social change." This year's theme: the Crisis of Beauty. Along with holding panels (and a screening of Robocop) open to the public, Culture Lab Detroit took visiting artists and journalists, along with local artists and organizers, on a whirlwind tour of the city's arts and cultural spaces. We were led by Ingrid LaFleur, an Afrofuturist artist, activist, and former Detroit mayoral candidate who works with cryptocurrency; and Bryce Detroit, an Afrofuturist storyteller, Entertainment Justice activist, and Detroit Recordings Company founder. The experience ran counter to the mainstream narrative that, as hampton puts it, "There's this idea that Detroit was a blank canvas. And it's not that."



Culture Lab Detroit's "Seeing And Being Seen" panel: moderator Jazmine Hughes; Juliana Huxtable; Ghetto Gastro founder Jon Gray; dream hampton. Photo by Olivia Gilmore for Culture Lab Detroit

I grew up in a small town about an hour from Detroit, which meant I'd that seen more of Detroit than most of the other national journalists invited to cover Culture Lab. Growing up, my experience of Detroit was class trips to the Detroit Institute of Arts; family trips to the Motown Museum; concerts at the Fillmore as a college student home for the summer; the Detroit Auto Show. But Michigan is intensely segregated: my hometown, Hartland, is 97% white despite being less than sixty miles from Detroit, which is 80% black. I'm white. I'd been to Detroit before, but I hadn't seen Detroit like this before. It was a tremendous experience to get a glimpse of the vibrant art community that thrives, and has always thrived, in the city.

After a visit to Mirage Detroit—a site-specific mirrored house installation by L.A. artist Doug Aitken in the old People's State Bank—we spent some time at Recycle Here! / Make Art Work, an art space that's part of Detroit's Recycle Here! recycling center. The recycling center was formed in 2005 to meet a community need—and it keeps community a focus, both with residents who drop off their recyclables, and with the artists who visit, hang out, and collaborate there, often reusing recycling pieces. A highlight was a giant, plastic elephant that could be wheeled around the space by remote control—playfully joining circles of people chatting and drinking Motor City Brewing Works' GhettoBlaster and orange Faygo. Colorful murals—including one of Elvira—cover the walls, and a neon sign reading simply "BUTTS" shines red outside.



The next day began with a visit to Submerge Records' techno museum. Many people think that techno began in Berlin—nope, it's Detroit. International DJ, Underground Resistance member and Manager of Submerge John Collins walked us through us a brief history of techno, describing the genre's connection to social justice and a push for political change. Afterward the tour, Anishinaabe and African diasporic artists and activists including Efe Bes, Sacramento Knoxx, Onyx Ashanti, and Christy Bieber discussed music and language.



A display on techno history at Submerge Records; photo by Erika W. Smith

We moved from music to visual art with a visit to the remarkable C.A.N. Art Handworks, home to metalsmith Carl Nielbock's windmills, architectural and ornamental metalwork, historic reproductions, and stunning collection of African art. Born in Germany to a white German mother and black American G.I. father, Nielbock moved to Detroit in the 1980s and has lived and worked there ever since. As he gave us the tour, Nielbock stressed that you don't need to be formally trained to create art.



outside C.A.N. Handworks, photo by Erika W. Smith



a few pieces in Nielbock's collection; photo by Erika W. Smith

Held in the Senate Theater, a historic 1920s movie house, the first panel topic was "The Aesthetics Of Tomorrow." After an performance of "Sweet Grass" by Sacramento Knox, Giizhigad, Kaz, and Hadassah GreenSky highlighting the indigenous community in Detroit—and an introduction by RoboCop actor Dr. Peter Weller—who has a PhD in art history—moderator Yesomi Umolu (Artistic Director of the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial) led artists Anicka Yi, Mark Pauline, and Eyal Weizman in a discussion the role of technology in shaping the future.



Sacramento Knox; photo by Gabriela Baginski



"The Aesthetics Of Tomorrow" panel, from L to R: Yesomi Umolu, Mark Pauline, Anicka Yi, Eyal Weizman

The final day began with a visit to Dabls' MBAD African Bead Museum. A must-see if you're in Detroit, the museum was founded by artist Olayami Dabls—known to most as simply Dabls—and it's a work of art in every way. The inside of the museum houses an extensive, historic bead gallery; the outside of the building is covered in murals and mirrors; and nearby, there's an large-scale outdoor art installation, the mural-covered N'kisi House, and the African Language Wall painted in various characters. Dabls walked us through the installation, explaining a metaphor in stone and iron, wood and mirror.



outside Dabls'; photo by Erika W. Smith



inside Dabls'; photo by Erika W. Smith



one of Dabls' outdoor art installations, with N'kisi House in the background; photo by Erika W. Smith



Dabls' African Language Wall; photo by Erika W. Smith

Next, a break from visual art: Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, a fast-growing urban farm and nonprofit, community-based organization. Director Jerry Hebron gave us a tour, sharing plans for expansion (the farm has absorbed foreclosed land in the neighborhood) and hosting a lunch and a discussion with Detroit artists including writer Marsha Music and activist Uri House, who uses mesh technology to bring WiFi to the 40% of Detroiters who need it.



Oakland Avenue Urban Farm plans; photo by Erika W. Smith



lunch at Oakland Avenue Urban Farm; I'm on the far right listening to Ingrid LaFleur. Photo by Gabriela Baginski

Drinks at dream hampton's beautiful apartment, the aforementioned panel on "Seeing And Being Seen" panel, and we were done—Culture Lab Detroit ended with attendance at the Detroit Museum of Contemporary Art's gala, currently displaying Tyree Guyton's Heidelberg retrospective exhibit, a rumination on the 30 years of the Heidelberg Project—a large-scale public art installation that Guyton began on Heidelberg street on Detroit's East Side in the 1980s.



the MOCAD gala; photo by Erika W. Smith

I'm immensely grateful that I was welcomed with such generosity by Detroit's artists and activists—I can't wait to go back, and I urge you all to do the same. When you do, make sure you go beyond the headlines and seek out the thriving Detroit art scene that's always been there, and always will be.

<https://bust.com/arts/195309-culture-lab-detroit-2018.html>

Artspace

October 19, 2018

"Bronx to the World, World to the Bronx": The Artist/Chefs of Ghetto Gastro on Feeding the Culture at Home and Abroad

By Shannon Lee



Lester, Pierre, Malcolm, and Jon (left to right) of Ghetto Gastro. Image via Beats by Dre.

I recently met Ghetto Gastro co-founder Jon Gray in Detroit's historic Church of the Messiah where he was speaking on a panel with performance artist Juliana Huxtable and cultural critic/filmmaker Dream Hampton. Assembled by Culture Lab Detroit, the discussion that night was about representation—"seeing and being seen." Four Bronx

natives—Gray and his collaborators Pierre Serrao, Lester Walker, and Malcolm Livingston II—represent their borough in everything they do. Immutable to expectations of what culture is or isn't, Ghetto Gastro brings identity to the fore of their culinary collaborations, compromising nothing, and willing and able to bring their vision to every sphere of culture, be it art, music, fashion, film, design, or activism. Their vision is one of inclusivity that requires seats at the table for them to represent and create dialogue about blackness and the African diaspora in what are (let's face it, art people) predominantly privileged spaces.

Since their inception in 2012, the collective has hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for fashion designer Rick Owens and collaborated with conceptual artist Hank Willis Thomas to create their now-legendary Black Lives Matter-inspired apple pie ("It's about as American as killing black men," explains Serrao in a recent profile in *Wired*). They've hosted dinners with Martha Stewart and were commissioned to develop a "Taste of Wakanda" menu for the premier of the film, *Black Panther* ("Bringing the Vibranium to your cranium," Gray notes in a behind-the-scenes interview). They even appeared on *Rachel Ray* to make curried lamb. When I'd spoken with Gray, he'd just gotten back from a collaboration with London's Serpentine Galleries where they hosted "Radical Kitchen," dissecting colonialism through the legacy of yams.

Even prior to Ghetto Gastro, Serrao, Livingston, and Walker had worked as chefs at some of the world's undisputed best restaurants, including Copenhagen's legendary Noma and Chelsea's Rouge Tomate, and had been private chefs to clients like Diddy, Jay Z, and the Beckhams. Still, no matter how far they've flown, what remains true to the heart of Ghetto Gastro is bringing that visibility and activist spirit back to the community and creating opportunities that expand beyond themselves. In the following interview, I speak with cofounder Jon Gray about the collective's past, present, and future.



Let's start at the beginning for those who don't know—how did Ghetto Gastro get started?

We started Ghetto Gastro about six years ago just feeling like we wanted to really express our voices and our backgrounds in a way that was different in space—that space being art, entertainment, fashion... Food was always going to be the medium but we had a specific point of view and felt that we could merge all of the genres into a thing. When I think about Ghetto Gastro, it's the food, it's the aesthetic, it's the feeling, it's the vibe, the music... it's really all of those in conversation.

If it's possible, what would you say is the two-sentence mission of Ghetto Gastro?

Bronx to the world, world to the Bronx. Thinking about what that means in terms of a feeling, a spirit. It's about reducing the brain drain in the Bronx and also working and collaborating with people from outside to reimagine things in an interesting way.

Can you talk about how food plays into your own identity? How did you start cooking personally?

I don't cook professionally. I'm a decent home cook but my partners are some of the best in the world. It's kind of like playing basketball and having Kobe Bryant on your

team. So like... I don't actually play ball. But food has always been my happy place. It's how my mother and I bonded. She was a single parent studying late so she didn't really have much time to cook but she was always a big arbiter and appreciator of cuisine so we used to go out to eat at different restaurants. We were living in Spanish Harlem at the time and we'd go up to the Upper East Side and eat at all these different spots—Indian, Chinese, Italian, Fuddruckers back in the day when they had those gooey chocolate chip cookies. I used to study all those menus and think about food with deep analysis. I would look at all the ingredients outside of the main descriptors of the dish and ended up becoming the one responsible for ordering for the table because I guess I made good picks.

That's a lot of trust.

A lot of pressure too!



Ghetto Gastro on the Rachel Ray Show. Image via Rachel Ray Show.

How many people are on the team for Ghetto Gastro?

I have three partners—my buddy Lester who I grew up with, Malcolm, and Pierre. I also have my creative assistant, Carly and my operations assistant, Jose. We've got Diana who's our executive sous here and Maria out in Europe. We form like Voltron—our core team works every day but everyone else joins in when necessary.

That seems to reflect a kind of trend in the food/art world. I was speaking to DeVonn Francis recently about his events with Yardy.

Oh yeah, he's the homie. It's funny, we did a cooking show recently and DeVonn was part of the food stylist/prep team. He's super cool, I like that kid a lot.

He's so articulate about what he's bringing to this dialogue about food and art, diaspora and identity. Speaking of which, how did you formulate this project? Was it conceived of organically?

All organic. Towards the beginning, I'd made a document of what I thought Ghetto Gastro could be and as we've been plugging away over the years, we've just been seeing it get closer to being that. We don't really pitch ever so every opportunity is incoming, which is exciting. It lets us decide whether or not we want to spend time doing any certain project. From that perspective, it's kind of what keeps us true and keeps us enjoying what we do.



The Ghetto Gastro kitchen. Image via xhbtr.

Why was it important for you to work with food within an arts context?

I think it kind of happened naturally. We didn't go into it thinking we needed to court galleries. From the onset, we thought about what we were doing as art. It's social sculpture and performance. It's an artistic service and a labor of love.

Completely. I'm really in love with this current movement that's been revitalizing the language of '90s Relational Aesthetics to talk about authenticity and identity and community building. How aware is the Bronx community of the work your doing?

I want to do more in the community. We've been on the road so much and in all honesty, when you're not grounded, it's hard to touch the people in a way that's real. Right now it's like we pop in, they see us on Instagram, and they love it when they see us. But right now we're trying to root ourselves more in our community and do projects. For example, we're working on a community garden and education initiative that's—no pun intended—in its seed stages. Just thinking about what that looks like and how we can make it interesting and who to partner with operationally. We've been talking to the botanical garden and Sweetgreen. We've just been trying to leverage our "cool currency" to really make it matter. Like how can we create more opportunities and continue to scale it?

https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews/features/meet_the_artist/bronx-to-the-world-world-to-the-bronx-ghetto-gastro-on-feeding-the-culture-at-home-and-abroad-5706



October 17, 2018

Culture Lab creates space for dialogue and beauty in Detroit

Without a brick & mortar space, Culture Lab hosts essential dialogues around the city

By Christine Hildebrand



Photo by Gabriela Baginski courtesy of Culture Lab Detroit

What is beauty, how do we define it, and how does art alter—or enhance—our perception of what beauty is?

In addition to being ethereal questions to answers, all three were posed to a diverse, well-articulated panel during Culture Lab Detroit’s most recent duo of dialogues.

Thursday night’s dialogue intended to discuss the interaction of technology and beauty, and to see where they meet and where they don’t. The dialogue took place at the Senate Theater in Southwest Detroit. “It was meant to be a conversation where one could close their eyes and listen to topics that affect us all on the level of the universe,” says Culture Lab Detroit founder Jane Schulak.



(L) From *The Aesthetics of Tomorrow* Photo by Trista Dymond (R) From *Seeing and Being Seen* Photo by Olivia Gilmore

Friday evening’s dialogue, at The Church of the Messiah in Islandview, took a different approach and addressed the theme of “Seeing and Being Seen.”

“We looked at this topic in terms of gentrification. It was equally a conversation about the color of your skin—a topic that is so relevant to today. It was very much a black space, but a very open space simultaneously. Instead of keeping one’s eyes closed and listening, it was meant for everyone to keep their eyes wide-open,” says Schulak.

Seven years ago Schulak began working in Detroit’s art scene. She noted most of Detroit’s neighborhoods felt separate from one another. In her own words, “It felt as though there was very little physically connecting the various pockets within the city. It was hard to know what each community was doing.” Hence, Culture Lab Detroit was born.

Schulak says that CLD focuses on the social practices that occur in the Detroit community. Most importantly, CLD highlights Detroit's cultural production for the world to witness. "When CLD was born, I loved the idea of presenting dialogues in neighborhoods where people wouldn't normally have access to such talks. Culture Lab Detroit brings sophisticated conversations to unlikely places. Culture Lab Detroit simply doesn't exist without the village behind behind it."

What started out as design conversations has quickly grown into conversations concerning the lives of those who live in Detroit. In this moment, Culture Lab Detroit is naturally flexible and open. It's not an institution with bricks and mortar. It's a mobile, social practice that can ultimately land anywhere. "We have leaders and activists helping from all over so that their Detroit neighborhoods are represented," says Schulak.

"These dialogues are, in their own way, performance pieces," Schulak says of the events themselves. "The audience is very much a part of the performance as well. I'll admit, sometimes the chemistry between speakers is better than others. The strongest feedback we've received so far was given on Friday night. Attendees of the event were given the opportunity to talk about how they really felt within their current positions and frustrations."

When I asked Schulak what's next for CLD, she said, "to be honest, it's a little secretive. I promised myself not to think about the next set of dialogues all last week, and to simply enjoy the moment. However, our brains rarely do what we tell them to."

Although it's unknown as to what's next for Culture Lab Detroit, there's little time for rest. "I'll admit, you really don't know how everything is going to go. It's live, it's scary, but that's the fun of it and the point. Culture Lab Detroit is built to just go. We're all involved in creating the canvas together."

<https://detroit.curbed.com/2018/10/17/17990398/culture-lab-detroit-space-dialogue-beauty>

COOL HUNTING

October 16, 2018

The Pulse of the City: Culture Lab Detroit 2018

Insight into the Motor City's future with consideration for the past

By Evan Malachosky

This past week signaled the onset of Culture Lab Detroit—the annual series of events that magnify the pulse of the city. Organized by Jane Schulak, the organization's director, and led by community-engagement specialists Ingrid LaFleur (former mayoral candidate and current artist and activist) and Bryce Detroit (entertainment justice activist and founder of Detroit Recordings Company), guests—including life-long Detroiters, visitors, artists, musicians and press alike—converge on the places Culture Lab deems most noteworthy. Whether it be a panel discussion at the Senate Theater, a guided tour of the Oakland Avenue Urban Farm or a visit to Dabls' African Bead Museum, these spots thrive in the nooks and crannies of the city—not the lavish new sports stadiums or the ritzier city-funded projects but passion-driven destinations that make Detroit's cultural resurgence so exciting.



Oakland Avenue Urban Farm

The Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, headed by Jerry Hebron and her husband, is a community-oriented farm just blocks from the city's Eastern Market. The farm—with a good-hearted seal of approval from the city—has acquired foreclosed land in the neighborhood with the intention of developing the space into a formidable source of healthy foods, economic development and sustainability. With the help of Detroit-based design and architecture firm Akoaki, this plan has been mocked up as proof of concept for further development and funding. The farm, at its full-scale size, would service thousands—with demand-style farming (in which crops are grown based on the community's culinary habits)—and create a handful of jobs for nearby residents.



C.A.N. Art Handworks

The award winning design studio, led by German-born master craftsman Carlos Nielbock, specializes in architectural and functional metalwork. But, summing the work Nielbock does as merely design work undermines his efforts; he's using discarded material and infrastructure from Detroit's collapse to prove that adaptive reuse is an applicable technique for city-building. His largest proof of concept is his windmill—a wind-catching device made from trashed satellite dishes, the hub and axle of an old car and a few other left-for-scrap parts. Since moving to Detroit in 1984, Nielbock has worked on the Fox Theatre, the Spirit of Detroit Statue and the Hurlbut Memorial Gate—but, in his studio space the Culture Lab team gained us access to, he's future-focused and sustainable (and hoping to make landmarks that generate power next).



Make Art Work, Destroy Compound and Recycle Here!

What began as the city of Detroit's first recycling compound has turned into Make Art Work, the Lincoln Street Art Park and Destroy Compound. The three exist on the site of a former auto factory—a fitting home for a band of adaptive artists and metalworkers. The Recycle Center and Make Art Work, both overseen by Matt Naimi (in collaboration with many), are home to a rotating collection of art. Highlighted by pops of color on painted tires, walls, remote-controlled elephants made from scrap material and more, the complex is a second home for unwanted material. Items claimed from the drop-offs and donations then become art.



Mirage by Doug Aitken (inside the State Savings Bank)

Doug Aitken's "Mirage" has found a new home in the grand hall of the old State Savings Bank Building—with safe still intact. The building has not been open in decades—and this exhibition acts as bait for potential investors. The project is a collaboration between Aitken and lighting-designer Andi Watson and will be on exhibition for at least four months, the set-up team mentioned. It's hard not to see "Mirage" as metaphor; it's a futuristic rebuild—this cultural resurgence—inside a pre-existing, history-rich structure—Detroit.



“The Aesthetics of Tomorrow” Panel

The Culture Lab-hosted panel comprised of moderator Yesomi Umolu, Survival Research Labs founder Mark Pauline, Forensic Architecture head Eyal Weizman and artist Anicka Yi, focused on how the future will look. The talk was introduced by Robocop himself, Peter Weller, as he spoke on the “crisis of beauty.” That thread continued throughout the night as panelists discussed how art will exist when technology and science are the primary pillars of expression, whether or not AI will even care about art and whether art can kickstart environmental or activism efforts. “Would AI have any interest in art?” Yi asks. “My inclination is no,” she continues. Later, she divulges her most-feared theory on the extinction of both art and the human species: “Are homosapiens just here to usher in the next superior species? Is there mortality in our art then?”



Dabls' Bead Museum

Olayami Dabls has been at the forefront of Detroit's cultural renaissance as long as there has been one—though the marker for that transition is flexible. But, Dabls' impact on black communities—specifically those engaged with art and activism in the city—isn't. He's become a sort of "O.G." figure for the likes of Bryce Detroit, Ingrid LaFleur, Uri House (who is using mesh technology to provide WiFi to the 40% of Detroit without internet), Jerry Hebrun and Tiff Massey—among many others. All of these figures are vital to Detroit's future. That said, as we toured Dabls' space, his lessons and his guidance resonated with visitors just as much as the people he sees every day.

Images by Evan Malachosky

<https://coolhunting.com/culture/the-pulse-of-the-city-culture-lab-detroit-2018/>



October 9, 2018

Culture Lab Detroit 2018 to explore the Crisis of Beauty

Dialogues and RoboCop are on deck

By Robin Runyan



The Church of Messiah will be the site of Friday evening's talk Courtesy of Culture Lab Detroit

How does a screening of the 1987 classic RoboCop fit in with the overall theme of the Crisis of Beauty? Culture Lab Detroit returns this week with panels of artists, inventors, filmmakers, architects, and more to tackle these themes.

According to a release, the Crisis of Beauty programs, “will explore how beauty intersects with multiculturalism, the intricacies of gentrification, gender politics, and unbounded assimilation of technology to offer novel or previously suppressed perspectives.”

Free to the public are two panel discussions and a film screening. RoboCop will show at the Senate Theater Wednesday, October 10 at 8 p.m. The following day, a panel discussion on the Aesthetics of Tomorrow asks “how is technology shaping the future and what is the role of beauty in those processes?”

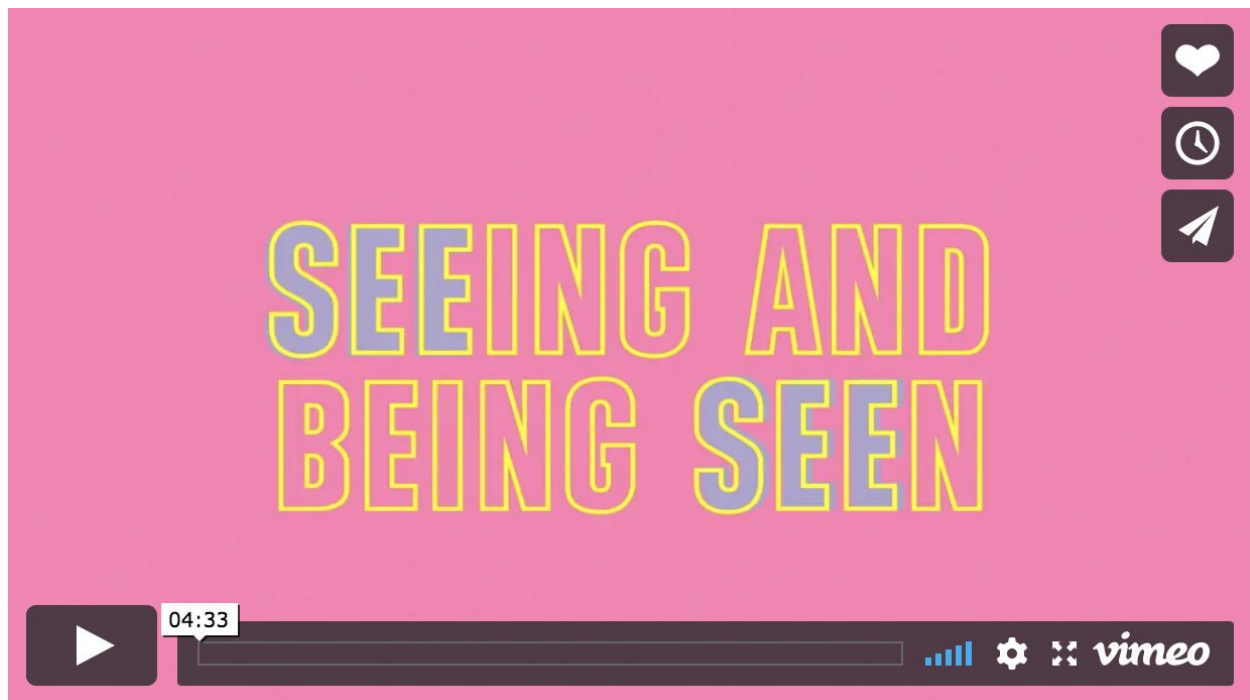
The discussion will feature Dr. Peter Weller, art historian and star of RoboCop; plus Mark Pauline, performance artist and founder and inventor of Survival Research Laboratories; Eyal Weizman, architect and director of Forensic Architecture; and conceptual artist Anicka Yi. The panel will be moderated by Yesomi Umolu, artistic director of the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial.



Friday evening, a dialogue on Seeing and Being Seen features three noted artists “whose work shows how identity is both formed and performed, and how this process can be obscured, embraced, and exalted to create a culture of possibility.”

The panel will feature painter Amy Sherald, who most notably painted Michelle Obama’s official portrait; filmmaker, writer, and organizer dream Hampton; and conceptual artist, writer, performer, and musician Juliana Huxtable. The dialogue will be moderated by New York Times Magazine associate editor Jazmine Hughes, with Reverend Barry Randolph as a special guest.

Seeing and Being Seen will take place at the Church of the Messiah, 231 East Grand Boulevard starting at 6 p.m.



This is the sixth year for Culture Lab Detroit, which aims at connecting local artists with global artists and thinkers through dialogues and creative partnerships. Many of its programs go outside the typical cultural center of Detroit and reaching into the neighborhoods.

<https://detroit.curbed.com/2018/10/9/17951242/culture-lab-detroit-2018-the-crisis-of-beauty-robocop-discussion>



October 6, 2018

The Actor Behind 'Robocop' On Detroit And Art History

As heard on Weekend Edition Saturday

NPR's Scott Simon asks Peter Weller about his career in art, from playing the titular character in 1987's RoboCop to getting a doctorate in art history.

SCOTT SIMON, HOST:

He's part-man, part-machine - all cop.

(SOUNDBITE OF FILM, "ROBOCOP")

PETER WELLER: (As RoboCop) Let the woman go. You are under arrest.

UNIDENTIFIED ACTOR: (As Creep's Friend) You better back up, pal.

(SOUNDBITE OF GUNSHOT)

WILLIAM SHOCKLEY: (As creep, screaming).

WELLER: (As RoboCop) Your move, creep.

SIMON: 1987's "RoboCop" is a cult movie classic set in a dystopian Detroit before dystopian became a word used by seventh-graders.

WELLER: (Laughter).

SIMON: Peter Weller played RoboCop. And today Peter Weller acts, directs and produces. But over the years, he's also become a Ph.D. in Italian Renaissance art history. Next week, he will return to Detroit to be a featured speaker at the annual art conference Culture Lab Detroit. Dr. Peter Weller joins us now from Hawaii Public Radio in Honolulu.

Thanks so much for being with us.

WELLER: Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

SIMON: So what made you go back to school to study art at the age of 57? You could have been making a lot of money while you sat in the classroom.

WELLER: It all goes back to a dear friend Ali MacGraw, who most people know as a big film star in the '60s and '70s. And she's the person who took me by the hand when the "Guernica" was going back to Spain because Picasso wanted to go back to Spain. And she walked me through Picasso from his early days of realism all the way through his life - cubism, what have you. So when you read about Picasso, you can walk yourself back in time through Western art. When you get to the Renaissance, it's politics, and it's economics, and it's poetry, and it's a change of the look at the way the world looked at Roman classics. As a matter of fact, the Renaissance starts with a reinvention of classical literature - Cicero, Martial, Livy, Plutarch, what have you. So I had to take classes in that, so now I'm really hooked.

SIMON: As I understand it, your talk is entitled "The Aesthetics Of Tomorrow." Can you give us a preview?

WELLER: Well, I don't know who entitled it that. I was just talking about the crisis of beauty because Detroit is really a city that was hitting the skids and is really turning around its downtown area dramatically. And the crisis of beauty addressed by the Cultural Lab of Detroit (ph) is what, who and how we define is beautiful. And if it's put in the power of the wrong hands, beautiful things - i.e., art - will be destroyed or cursed or blackened by somebody's opinion. I mean, someone can make some categorical pronouncement or judgment on what he or she thinks is beautiful. That's a crisis to me.

SIMON: What will it be like for you to be back in Detroit?

WELLER: It'll be fun, man. The first time I went to Detroit, I have to say - you know, I went to New York in 1971, and it was dangerous. And it was bad. It was lethal, and I embraced that. And it was gorgeous, and it was exciting. First time I went to Detroit, I saw it in, I think, 1982, '83 - something like that. And it was the same way. You couldn't go out of a hotel at night. And I thought - oh, my God - get me out of here, man. And then I went back, and I saw the progression and the improvement of it. And I can't believe the transformation of what the downtown is because what I see is what I get right away. And when I see a beautiful city, I see the restructuring of the life downtown, that people walk in the street. Look; it happened in Chicago. It happened to New York. It's happening in Detroit. I feel, I don't know, joined at the hip to Detroit simply because of "RoboCop." We didn't even shoot in "RoboCop" but because we talked Detroit and Detroit is so, like, the ground of being of America in so many ways, that I feel connected to it, man.

SIMON: I'm told there's a RoboCop statue that's going to be unveiled.

WELLER: I keep hearing about it. I don't want to get into it. If they do it, it's fantastic. I have a huge ego and a fragile one at that. But I certainly don't want to endorse, like, this statuary of my own images. But I certainly endorse, like, Martha Reeves up there, man or, you know...

SIMON: Yeah.

WELLER: ...Or Aretha - Aretha, for crying out loud, man. You don't have a statue of Aretha in that city.

SIMON: Yeah.

WELLER: My gosh, they've got to have a statue to her.

SIMON: Peter Weller, part-actor, part-art historian - all Renaissance man.

Thanks so much for being with us.

WELLER: It was my pleasure. Thank you so much for having me.

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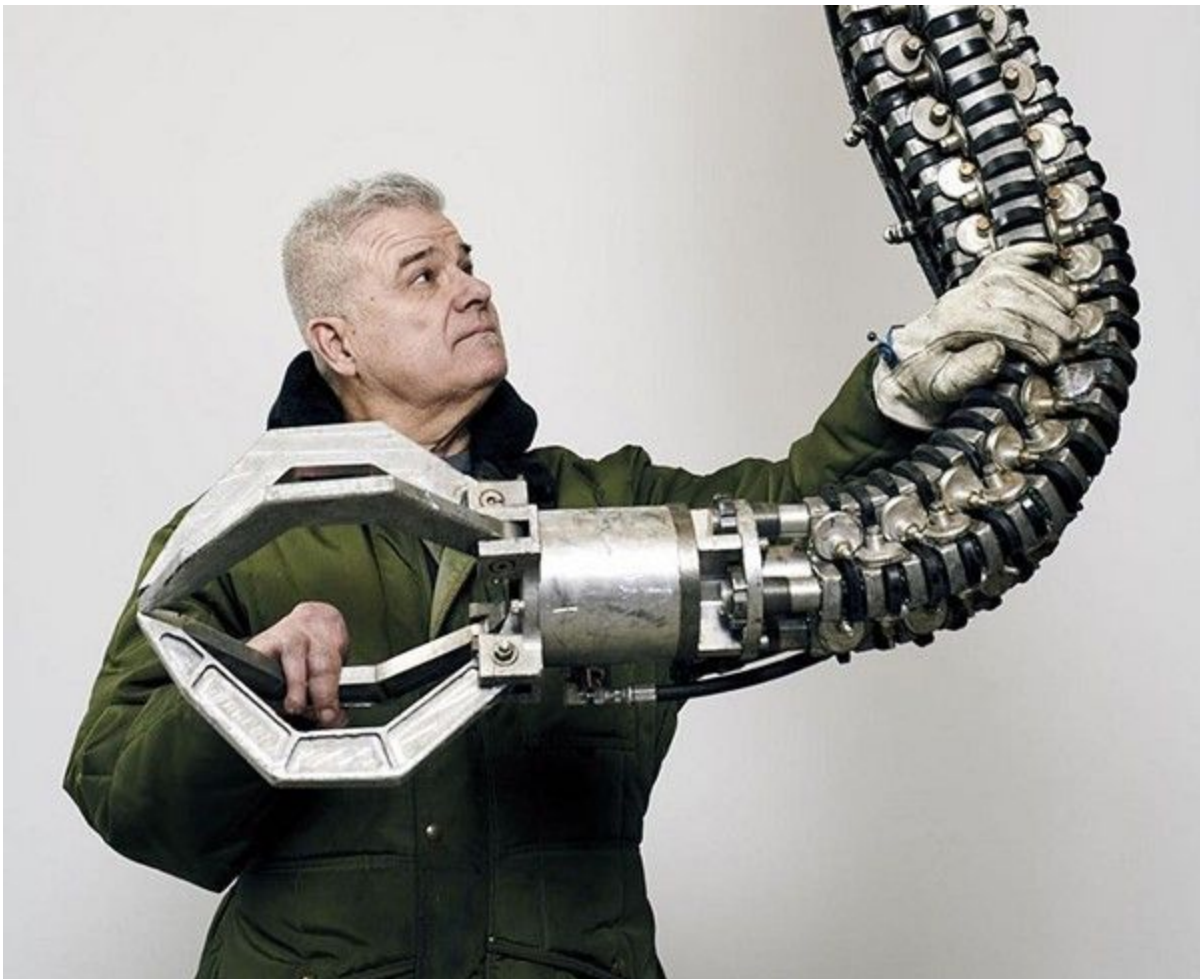
DETROIT

METROTIMES

September 9, 2018

How Mark Pauline critiques corporate power with an army of otherworldly machines

By Lee DeVito



Mark Pauline and a friend. Courtesy of the artist

Mark Pauline wanted to be a rebel — so he created his own corporation.

"I figured I'd form a company because those are the entities that really got away with anything," he says. "Basically, I saw that corporations got away with anything, murder and everything on down. So I thought I was going to call it a company because that's who the true outlaws are — corporations."

However, Pauline's Survival Research Laboratories isn't a typical corporation. It doesn't make any sort of commercially available product, nor does it serve any real, practical purpose. And while the Bay Area-based Pauline is fond of using the word "disrupt" to describe his work, he's not aiming to do it in the Silicon Valley tech-startup sense of the word.

Instead, SRL delivers "dangerous and disturbing mechanical presentations since 1979," according to the company line. A cross between sculptural art and theatrical performances, SRL builds truly terrifying multi-ton massive machines that Pauline wheels into public spaces, where they'll do anything from shoot flamethrowers or destroy each other with giant claws.

"It's taking commercial technology and finding the entertainment value in it," Pauline says. "We're just doing it because it aggravates the people we don't like."

Pauline says the project grew out of a fascination with using "corporate-level tools, tools that an individual wouldn't have — big, huge machine tools." After high school, he worked as a machinist, served stints as a welder in the Santa Barbara oil fields and working for subcontractor that developed target robots for an Air Force base. However, he says the fascination made way for a growing unease following the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill and the continued carnage of the Vietnam War.

"I was like, 'I'm contributing to the problem,'" he says. "And so I just decided I loved the technology, but I really didn't like the military aspect, and I didn't like the commercial aspect. I found I just didn't believe in any of the reasons why people said these things were getting built."

Instead, Pauline went to college to study visual arts, and eventually found his way to 1970s San Francisco, where he started SRL. Since then, Pauline and a fluid collective of volunteers have created and deployed SRL's army of robots, which they've used in dozens of performances around the world.

"Essentially, the shows are an illustration of something impossible on some level," Pauline says. "That's the goal, is to have [the machine] like it landed on the planet from another dimension, and it shouldn't be there, but it is and it's functioning."

SRL garnered a following thanks to the shows' sense of danger and gleeful carnage, and Pauline earned a reputation for his willingness to push boundaries. (In 1982, he lost most of his right hand during an explosion while experimenting with rocket fuel.) Andy Warhol was reportedly a fan, as is former Mythbusters host and professional pyromaniac Adam Savage.

That's why Pauline will be in Detroit next month. He's not bringing his giant machines, but he is set to speak on a panel on Thursday, Oct. 11 as part of Culture Lab Detroit's programming at the Senate Theater. The theme of the panel is "The Aesthetics of Tomorrow," where Pauline will be joined by other forward-thinking artists and designers, like architect Eyal Weizman and conceptual artist Anicka Yi. (Peter Weller, art historian and lead actor of 1987 Detroit sci-fi classic RoboCop, will also be on hand; the theater will host a free screening of the film at 8 p.m. the previous day.) The event will be moderated by Chicago-based curator Yesomi Umolu.

"I'd always been kind of an adherent of futurism, even when I was a teenager," Pauline says. "I was always kind of in that zone, always trying to be ahead of my curve."

"The Aesthetics of Tomorrow" panel is on Thursday, Oct. 11 at the Senate Theater; 6424 Michigan Ave., Detroit; 313-894-0850; culturelabdetroit.org; Reception starts at 6 p.m.; dialogue starts at 6:30 p.m.; Free with RSVP.

Get our top picks for the best events in Detroit every Thursday morning. Sign up for our events newsletter.

<https://www.metrotimes.com/detroit/how-mark-pauline-critiques-corporate-power-with-an-army-of-otherworldly-machines/Content?oid=15711765>

BLOUINARTINFO

August 16, 2018

Culture Lab Detroit Returns with “The Crisis of Beauty”



Deana Haggag, Hilton Als, Coco Fusco and Mel Chin at Culture Lab Detroit's 2017 Program Post-Truth
(Courtesy: Culture Lab Detroit)

Featuring forensic architecture, dream hampton, Juliana Huxtable, Amy Sberald, Survival Research Labs, Peter Weller, and Anicka Yi, Culture Lab Detroit returns in 2018 to engage internationally reputed artists, inventors and filmmakers on the theme of “The Crisis of Beauty.”

“It is a new edition of the acclaimed cultural program, which will explore how beauty intersects with multiculturalism. The theme explores the intricacies of gentrification,

gender politics, and unbounded assimilation of technology to offer novel or previously suppressed perspectives,” says the release.

“Detroit has a history of exploring the connections between culture and social progress,” says Jane Schulak, Founder of Culture Lab. “We’re thrilled to bring some of today’s most compelling voices to Detroit to contribute to this vital conversation,” she adds.

Culture Lab Detroit’s two-night discussion series will take place on October 11 and 12, 2018. On October 11, Culture Lab Detroit will host the discussion at The Senate Theater, a historic 800-seat Art Deco theater. The second dialogue will be hosted on October 12 at The Church of the Messiah, a 142-year-old non-traditional Episcopal church in Detroit’s East Side. These locations speak to the cultural history and vibrancy of Detroit’s diverse neighborhoods.

Earlier Culture Lab Detroit has brought cultural luminaries including Hilton Als, Elizabeth Diller, Coco Fusco, Adam Pendleton, Alice Waters, and many more to Detroit for free public conversations in historic venues, as well as staged public art projects by artists such as Gary Simmons and Matthew Angelo Harrison.

Culture Lab Detroit says, “We use our visionary abilities to imagine, design, and create a better world. Historically, art has been defined by its allegiance to and rebellion from classical ideals of beauty, often in pursuit of mythology, structure, and pleasure. As we navigate an era where virtual reality challenges our concepts of authenticity, artificial intelligence calls into question what it means to be human, political and ecological systems place the body in a state of crisis, and the disavowal of science continues — we have to ask: how is technology shaping the future and what is the role of beauty in those processes?”

“In ‘Seeing and Being Seen’ the allocation of power, formation of communities, and the shape of our individual identities exemplify the unquestionable force of aesthetics. Taking into consideration the potential energy intrinsic to aesthetics of representation, especially as those notions serve to define a set of ‘ideals,’ the artists to a global community of artists, writers, and cultural critics to visualize and redefine modes of recognition and social engagement — to help us see new ways of being in the world,” the release says.

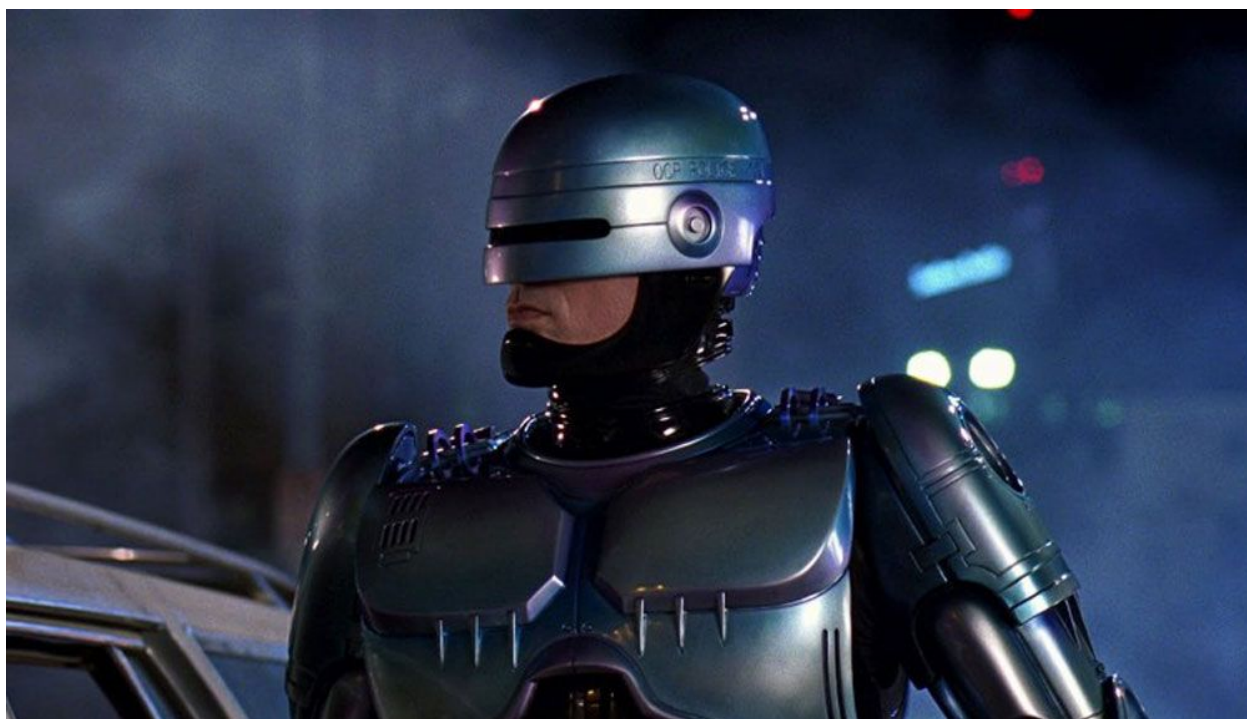
<https://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/3210655/culture-lab-detroit-returns-with-the-crisis-of-beauty>

August 14, 2018

The Actor Who Played Robocop Is Now an Art Historian, and He's Returning to Detroit to Face a New Threat: 'The Crisis of Beauty'

Actor and art historian Peter Weller is participating in this fall's Culture Lab Detroit conference with Amy Sherald, Anicka Yi, and others.

By: Taylor Dafoe

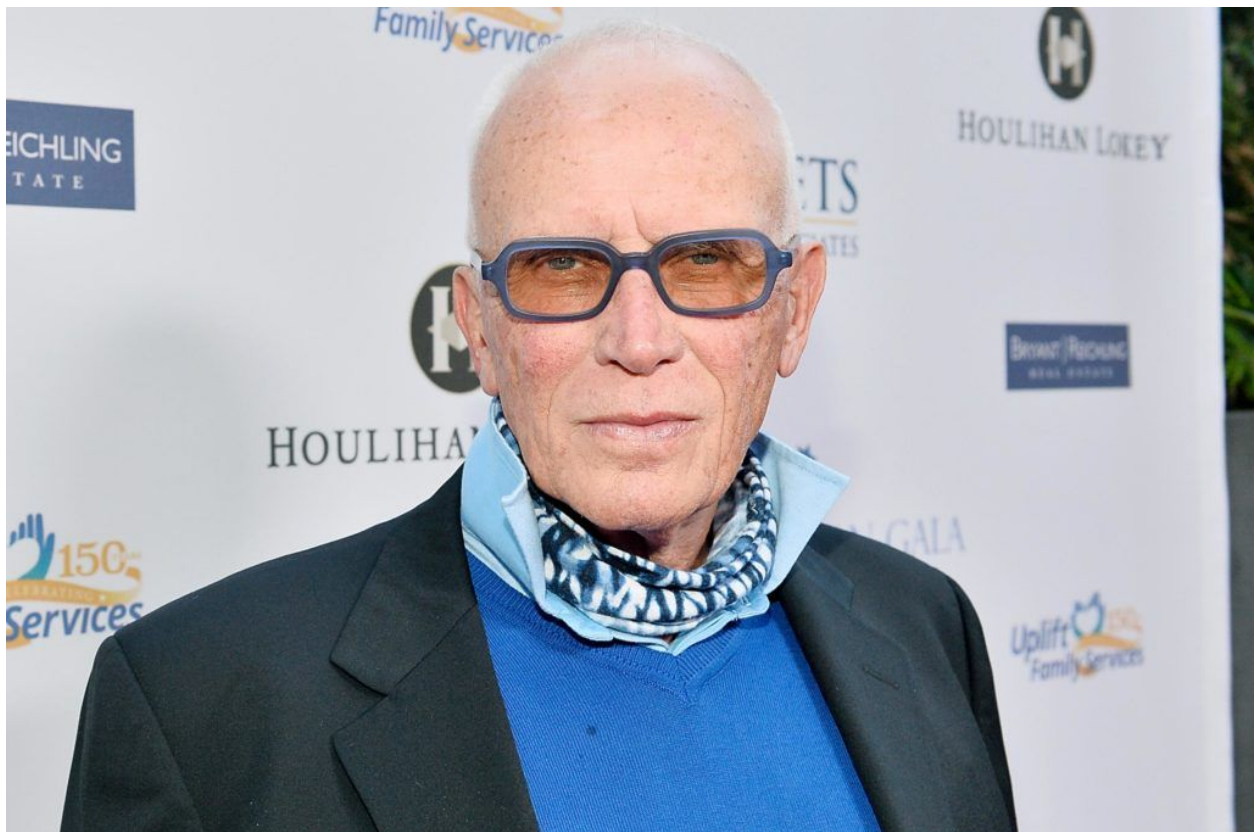


Still from *Robocop*, 1987.

The 1987 sci-fi thriller Robocop tells the story of a miraculous resurrection of a slain police officer who turns into a crime-fighting cyborg. But few know that behind the story of Robocop is another professional reincarnation that's almost as surprising.

It turns out that Peter Weller, the actor who played Robocop, has become an art historian. He went back to school in 2004, at age 57, and earned a Master's degree in Roman and Renaissance Art at Syracuse University, followed by a PhD in Italian Renaissance art history at UCLA in 2013. Since then, he's split his time between acting, producing, and art history. (He has also appeared in David Cronenberg's 1991 adaptation Naked Lunch and the 1984 cult classic The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension.)

This fall, Weller will return to Detroit, the setting of Robocop, in his new role. His mission? To introduce the first night of the Culture Lab Detroit conference with a presentation on beauty in Renaissance art.



Peter Weller, 2017. Photo by Stefanie Keenan/Getty Images for Uplift Family Services.

"Crisis of Beauty" is the theme of this year's conference, an annual event that brings together artists and thinkers for a weekend of projects and public discussions on October 11 and 12.

As in previous years, this edition's theme was selected for its "relevance to the headlines," Jane Schulak, founder of Culture Lab Detroit, tells artnet News in an email. Previous conferences have focused on topics such as the "post-truth" era and the institutional "walls" that define our daily lives. Hilton Als, Coco Fusco, Trevor Paglen, and Theaster Gates have been among past participants.

"We chose this year's theme because we notice that there is a radical reevaluation of the standards and definition of beauty happening in art and storytelling," Schulak says. "Who determines what beauty is? It's a question you see playing out in art, tech, politics, Hollywood, and so on."



The crowd at Culture Lab Detroit in 2015. Courtesy of Culture Lab Detroit.

The first night will include a panel on "The Aesthetics of Tomorrow," and will feature Mark Pauline, an artist and founder of Survival Research Laboratories; architect Eyal

Weizman; and artist Anicka Yi. Yesomi Umolu, a curator at the University of Chicago and director of the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial, will moderate.

The second night of the conference features panel on the formation and performance of identity titled “Seeing and Being Seen” with critic and filmmaker dream Hampton, artist and musician Juliana Huxtable, and painter Amy Sherald. It will be moderated by Jazmine Hughes, an associate editor for *The New York Times Magazine*.



From left: Eyal Weizman, Anicka Yi, and Mark Pauline. Courtesy of Culture Lab Detroit.

This is the sixth edition of Schulak’s conference. “The main thing that has changed over the years, besides the theme, has been the city itself,” she says. “There are still many challenges, but new solutions and voices have risen up. We have witnessed a shift in the narrative about Detroit. In many ways, it’s a story about the beauty of resilience—and it’s a story that many people have fought hard to tell.”



L to R: Amy Serrano, Juliana Huxtable, and dream Hampton. Courtesy of Culture Lab Detroit.

Indeed, the book on Detroit is still being written—and it looks like the city won't be needing cyborg officers anytime soon.

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/robocop-actor-now-art-historian-1332608>