

HEART OF THE CITY

516 ARTS

516 CENTRAL AVENUE SW, ALBUQUERQUE

HEART OF THE CITY POSITS THE URBAN CORE AS A CENTRAL, VITAL ORGAN

of the city as a whole. It takes the health and potential growth and development of the city's heart as inspiration for creative projects to comment on, be critical of, and to imagine alternative realities for the downtown of Albuquerque. In the exhibition catalogue, executive director Suzanne Sbarge asks, "How can Downtown revitalization bring our whole community together as active citizens interested in addressing the public good?"

Following this line of inquiry into the city center, 516 Arts gathered a collection of professional artists and youth apprentices to collaborate and initiate interactive creative projects. These projects materialized at 516 Arts as a series of mini-installations, and elsewhere in Albuquerque as murals and various ongoing public programs throughout the length of the exhibition, which closes in May. Each collaboration uses creativity to experiment with alternatives and to pose interventions by applying the artists' unique perspectives. Each group of artists re-envision urban space and asks viewers to contemplate how the visual forms of downtown inform the identity of the communities inhabiting that space, and what elements are crucial for potential change. While it is impossible to touch on each of these complex and nuanced installations, there are several that exemplify the program's strengths.

Several projects deal specifically with architectural space and aesthetics. *Constellations of the City* is a project by the University of New Mexico International Collaborative Art Program in which the artists took long-exposure photographs of L.E.D.-equipped drones flying through abandoned locations. The resulting images appear like painted light, suggestive of futuristic, non-destructive, and temporary graffiti. While the photographs are on view in the gallery, the locations play host to localized radio broadcasts that issue suggestions for alternate uses for the abandoned spaces.

Rutas: Routing Roots is a series of works by lead artist Celia Alvarez Muñoz and Working Classroom, a collective of artists with a commitment to serving diverse voices in the arts. Their installation involves street signs from the historic, working class neighborhood Barelás, and features Spanish names alongside Anglicized mis-articulations

(compare Martínez and Marteenes), highlighting the slippage in identity formation that occurs at the crossroads of cultures.

Cycles of Expression, an installation of sculpture by Randall Wilson and students from the University of New Mexico's Advanced Sculpture class, is a series of imaginative, sometimes nonsensical bicycles. The elusive functionality of these mysterious machines asks viewers to linger and analyze their viability, reflecting a concern for infrastructure, environmentally friendly modes of transportation, and healthy community habits.

Several other installations shift focus from the physical environment to the communities that interact with and within the city center. These projects shared reliance upon community participation to incite dialogue and initiate inclusiveness to create their works. ACE Barbershop owner and artist Gabriel Jaureguiberry installed a temporary barbershop at 516 Arts, where he will be giving haircuts, mixed with music and art components, celebrating the local barbershop as a venue for community interaction and public discourse.

The Vecinos Artist Collective visited locations throughout the city prior to the exhibition and invited locals to create simple paper flowers. Accessible and aesthetically inviting objects, these flowers, generated from visits to laundromats, parks, and offices, are

installed at 516 Arts as *Flores Vecinos* along with materials for gallery visitors to contribute to the community-gathering activity.

A curious and colorful installation, *Atrapado y Retorcido* is a collaboration between Redline artist Amber Cobb and students of Amy Biehl High School. Colored latex-covered trinkets and urban detritus come together to create a Freudian psychiatric office and seems to propose that psychoanalysis of the downtown may probe underlying issues that create challenges and obstacles in urban life.

Taken in its entirety, *Heart of the City* is somewhat overwhelming. With so many complex installations, many of which could stand on their own and be spoken about at length, and with so many collaborating artist teams, the exhibition is a lot to tackle in a single viewing. However, with so much activity, the gallery space is filled with a rich, eclectic energy and vibrancy. The exhibition asks what impact art might have on the individual's and community's quality of life, and the resulting installations affirm that art can serve as a lens for discovering what can revitalize, nourish, and encourage collective ownership of the city's source of lifeblood.

—LAUREN TRESP

Zoe Patterson, *Bicycle Plow*, steel, bicycle parts, urethane plastic, 91" x 27" x 56", 2013

