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Graham would like to acknowledge
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Group Portrait Journey

Amy Wollins / Elaine Knobloch / Christina Scaduto / Shobana Ramachandran
Susan Main / Alice Nappy / Laurie Buck / Laura Groat
Rachel Martin / Sonya Gross / Rachel / Priya Ramdas
Anderson Toledo / Nate Prati / Mydee Talon / George Fraser
Alan Thompson
Justina, Jason and Senlove Rostedt

Taking it To the Rooftop

Valerie Smallwood, Ann and Ray Richards, Bob Justis, Gwen Bausmith, Diane Herndon, Anita Boyd, Rebecca Eynon and Jerad Minnick, Tamara Kivitko



VisArts is a non-profit organization whose mission is to engage the community in the arts through educational programming, gallery exhibitions and a studio artist program.

Gallery Hours

Wednesday 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Thursday 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Friday 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Saturday 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Sunday 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM

All events are free and open to the public

(come Back To) **ROCKVILLE!**



Naoko Wowsugi, Taking It to the Rooftop, 2015, Video still



(come Back TO) ROCKVILLE!

Naoko Wowsugi and Graham Coreil-Allen

Kaplan Gallery

September 2 - October 18, 2015

Yes, the title *(come Back TO) ROCKVILLE!* is a direct response to REM's 1984 hit song (Don't Go Back To) Rockville, which does actually refer to Rockville, Maryland, and includes the dispiriting refrain: "Don't go back to Rockville/ And waste another year." Artists Naoko Wowsugi and Graham Coreil-Allen thought Rockville deserved better than this downer imperative. Their participatory public art projects have, in fact, revealed Rockville as a far more interesting place than first imagined. Historically it is the county seat, a center of Civil War contestation, a literary pilgrimage site, an "urban redevelopment," and recently, a Confederate monument hotspot. It is a city where thousands of people connect or don't connect daily. To borrow the terms of French anthropologist, Marc Augé, Rockville has evolved from a "place" with historical authenticity to a transient, seemingly anonymous "non-place." These artist projects, commissioned for VisArts, attempt to put the place back in Rockville.

Naoko Wowsugi uses VisArts as the embarkation point for her *Group Portrait Journey: Rockville, Maryland*. Beginning with a formal group portrait of people associated with the arts center, from board members to educators and interns, taken with an analog large-format camera, Wowsugi uses this document as a springboard for social interaction. She asks each of the subjects to introduce her to another group that he or she belongs to; visits and records the secondary groups, and then continues to a third or fourth tier of social connections. Her journey of meeting new acquaintances becomes the work of art. The record of her journey, an interwoven web of connections, enhanced with group portraits contributed by the subjects, becomes a revelatory portrait of "invisible" communities ranging from a sign shop, a hookah group, a women's lacrosse league, an Indian dance



Naoko Wowsugi, *Group Portrait Journey*, 2015

class, a club of Cambridge University alumni and so on.

In her role as artist-archivist, Wowsugi is inspired by the systematic documentation of the German people by photographer August Sander (1876-1964). Sander's famous book *Antlitz der Zeit* (*Faces of Our Time*, 1929) was a typology of portraits, identifying the sitters not as individuals, but by their occupations, professions, social classes or political parties. The Nazis destroyed his archive of over 40,000 plates and negatives, though his work was rediscovered by such influential photographers as Bernd and Hilla Becher after World War II. His nonhierarchical leveling of all members of society was extremely threatening. The homeless man is depicted the same way as the banker. We are what we do and whom we associate with, but everyone is equally human. Wowsugi reveals the complex identity of the diverse VisArts microcosm by assembling these many parts.



Naoko Wowsugi, *Group Portrait Journey: Rockville, MD*, 2015, Archival Inkjet Print

Graham Coreil-Allen

Graham Coreil-Allen is a Baltimore-based interventionist public artist who explores the constructs and contradictions of the everyday built environment through videos, maps, public installations, writing and walking tours. The public artist studied at Tulane School of Architecture, completed his BA at New College of Florida and received his MFA from Maryland Institute College of Art's Mount Royal School of Art. Coreil-Allen has staged projects for numerous spaces, places and events both nationally and abroad, including the The Deitch/Creative Time Art Parade, Eyebeam, openhouseNY, Washington Project for the Arts, Arlington Art Center, and Artscape.

www.newpublicsites.org

Naoko Wowsugi

Naoko Wowsugi, an artist of Korean-Japanese descent, works with photography, video, and performance as forms of communication. She received her MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University and her BFA from both the Kansas City Art Institute and Osaka University of the Art in Japan. Notable recent exhibitions include "Hands On" at Capital One Art Program in Richmond, VA (2014), and "Make Believe" at The Black Iris Gallery in Richmond, VA (2013). Wowsugi was a Trawick Prize finalist in 2014 and received a Mellon Fund Research Grant through American University. She lives and works in Washington, DC.

www.wowsugi.com

Schedule of Events

(come Back TO) ROCKVILLE Opening Reception

Kaplan Gallery

Friday, September 4
7:00 - 9:00 PM

(come Back TO) ROCKVILLE! Closing Party

Celebrate On the Rooftop

Saturday, October 17
6:00 - 9:00 PM



New Public Sites: *The Ragged Edge of Rockville*

Graham Coreil-Allen
Artist-guided Walking Tours

Saturday, September 5
2:00 - 4:00 PM

Sunday, September 27
3:00 - 5:00 PM

Saturday, October 17
4:00 - 6:00 PM



Taking It to the Rooftop

Naoko Wowsugi
Rooftop sound installation

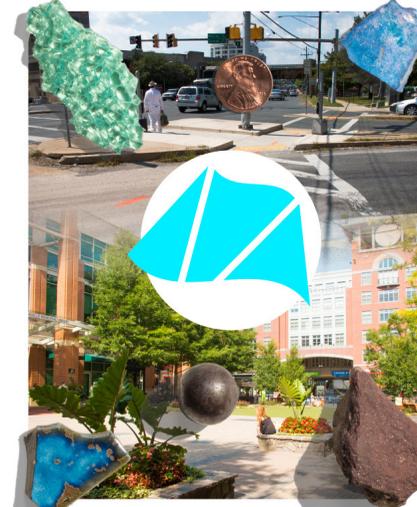
Friday, September 4
7:00 - 9:00 PM

Sunday, September 27
11:30 AM and 2:30 PM

Sunday, October 17
4:00 PM

Taking it to the Rooftop is Wowsugi's effort to put a human face on the anonymous interactions among people living and working within sight of VisArts' rooftop. Her interviews with ten Rockvillagers are edited into an impressionistic collage of observations and experiences. She describes the resulting video and sound work as a cross between Alfred Hitchcock's theme of neighborhood surveillance in *Rear Window*, Wim Wender's observant angels in the mythopoeic film *Wings of Desire*, and the banal type of encounters that occur daily in the town square.

New Public Sites



The Ragged Edge of ROCKVILLE

Graham Coreil-Allen, *New Public Sites: The Ragged Edge of Rockville*, 2015

The Ragged Edge of Rockville forms a new chapter in Graham Coreil-Allen's series of New Public Sites: "radical" walking tours, which are dedicated to investigating and activating invisible public spaces. After extensive research, he concludes that Rockville turns out to be rich terrain for parsing "sub/urban ambiguity." His participatory walking tours and displays ask the questions: What is place? Where is the authenticity in Rockville?

Coreil-Allen's project extends beyond the gallery walls to the nearby public library and the streets of Rockville. Either self-guided or artist-guided, participants are encouraged to take a map, tracing paper and crayon on their own exploratory tours of Rockville. Following the tour, participants' collected rubbings and "shards of site" may be added to the accumulating display in the gallery.

Somewhere between Baudelaire's 19th century flâneur, a mid-century Situationist and a modern tour guide, Coreil-Allen follows in a long tradition of activating public space by walking. Contemporary art examples include solitary and communal walks by Richard Long, Hamish Fulton and Francis Alÿs, in which the conceptual action rather than an object becomes the work of art. Coreil-Allen is interested in the European Situationist (1957-1972) movement's concepts of *dérive*, *détournement* and psycho-geography. Marxist critic Guy Debord articulated the primary concepts of this Dadaist collective in his book *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), which

was a critique of capitalist control of public space and commodification of culture. Through *dérive*, a drifting through urban space, artists used acts of *détournement* to turn around or disrupt sign systems to create new meaning. Coreil-Allen applies his analysis of the sub/urban environment to reveal the contradictory nature of Rockville's development, such as widespread ignorance of its historic significance and the centrality of "privately-owned public space."

Historically, Rockville was one of the earliest crossroads in rural Maryland, a slave-owning, pro-Union border zone during the Civil War, the final resting place for one of America's greatest authors, F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda, and the first city to use urban renewal funds to destroy its own town center. Coreil-Allen focuses on the new urbanist Rockville Square, the circa-1815 Beall-Dawson house, the recently contested Confederate soldier monument, and the Fitzgerald gravesite as the touchstones in his mapping of Rockville.

All four sites have fascinating histories. The Rockville Square stands as a prime example of "sub/urban ambiguity," the result of decades of master planning by Montgomery County. Privately-owned, suburban mall-like space blends into a traditional square of public commons. Coreil-Allen examines the enigma of such public/private boundaries and the way they are architecturally masked.

During the Civil War, Union General McClelland slept a night at the Beall-Dawson House. Dr. Stonestreet was in charge of the hospital for Union soldiers, set up in the nearby courthouse. Confederate General



Graham Coreil-Allen, New Public Sites: Rockville Map, 2015

J.E.B. Stuart's looting and loitering in Rockville caused his army to arrive two days late at Gettysburg. Maryland was a border state, surrounding three sides of the Federal Capitol, that did not secede from the Union, but was divided in loyalty. Both armies traversed Rockville on the way to epic battles such as Antietam and Gettysburg. In 1913, the United Daughters of the Confederacy erected a memorial statue near the courthouse, which was scarcely noticed for decades, but has recently been rediscovered in the midst of our national reevaluation of Confederate symbols and shifting narrative on the Civil War. In mid-July, in a rare outcropping of political dissent in Montgomery County, the statue was tagged with the slogan "Black Lives Matter." The County response was spray-washing and partially encasing the offending soldier in a plywood box. A semiotic bonanza to decipher!

The case of Fitzgerald's internment is also a story of conflicting beliefs. Daughter Scottie's initial desire to bury the renowned writer in the Fitzgerald family plot at St. Mary's Church, when he died in 1940, was denied by the Catholic Church. Both F. Scott and wife Zelda, when she died in 1948, were buried in nearby Rockville Union Cemetery, despite generations of family ties to the local church, now unfortunately stranded by eight lanes of noisy commuter traffic. Finally in 1975, Scottie prevailed over the archdiocese's ruling, and both bodies were moved to St. Mary's. Their gravestone, beautifully inscribed with the last line of *The Great Gatsby*, is visited somewhat furtively by literary pilgrims, who leave offerings such as spare change, bottles of gin and pens. Scottie was later buried at their feet. Discoveries such as these were part of Coreil-Allen's process in creating *The Ragged Edge of Rockville*, a title inspired by narrator Nick Carraway's line in *The Great Gatsby*: "Instead of being the warm center of the world the middle-west now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe." Ultimately, the purpose of the project is not to impart a history lesson, but to reignite a relationship with the past and to examine how it reflects on the present.



Graham Coreil-Allen, New Public Sites: Crossing the Highway to Nowhere, 2014

Both artists redefine public art as a participatory act. Rather than erecting another monument, they are intent on engaging the public. That engagement, the social connections made, and the discoveries about one's own community becomes the work of art.

Laura Roulet
Mentoring Curator for the 2015 VisArts Emerging Curator Program

About the Curator

Laura Roulet is an independent curator and writer, specializing in contemporary and Latin American art. She was one of five international curators chosen for the citywide public art project, 5 x 5, a major initiative sponsored by the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities in 2012. She has organized exhibitions in Mexico, Puerto Rico and the U.S. including at the Art Museum of the Americas, the Mexican Cultural Institute, Artisphere, Hillyer Art Space, Project 4, Fusebox and the DC Art Center. Recent exhibits include the *National Drawing Invitational* (Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, AR), *CSA: 40 Years of Community-Sourced Art* (Arlington Arts Center, VA), *Frances Gallardo: Meteorology* (Target Gallery), *Sculpting Outside the Lines*, an outdoor sculpture exhibit in Foggy Bottom and *Medios y ambientes* in Mexico City.

Her publications include many catalogue essays, encyclopedia entries, articles in *American Art*, *Art Journal*, *Art Nexus*, *Sculpture*, and the book *Contemporary Puerto Rican Installation Art, the Guagua Aerea, the Trojan Horse and the Termite*. She worked on the Ana Mendieta retrospective, organized by the Hirshhorn Museum in 2004, and contributed to that catalogue.