

Susan Alta Martin, Cullowhee, *Mainstreets*

Mainstreets is about the history of the intersection between global economic shifts and the effects they have on the socioeconomic situation of the rural towns in the region of the Southern Appalachian Mountains where Martin lives.

35 artists out of 55 with strong NC ties

LOCAL HISTORIES



LOCAL HISTORIES : The Ground We Walk On

curated by elin o'Hara slavick + Carol Magee

January 28 - April 29, 2011

Opening Reception: Friday, February 11, 5-9pm

Hours: Tuesday - Friday, 2-7pm + Saturday, 12-7pm
closed Sunday + Monday

Please visit the exhibition website for scheduled events throughout the show and for related information : localhistories.wordpress.com

523 East Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

for more information, please contact elin o'Hara slavick : eoslavic@gmail.com or 919-923-4550

Alexis Bravos	Jordan Essoe	Cathy McLaurin	Cici Stevens
Lauren F. Adams	Ashley Florence	Morgan Muhs	Mary Carter Taub
Sophia Allison	Matthew Garcia	Shaw Osha	Julie Thomson
Dave Alsobrooks	Gail Goers	Lillian Outterbridge	Montana Torrey
Patricia Bellan-Gillen	Heather Gordon	Freddie Outterbridge	Paul Valadez
Erik Benjamins	Michael Gurganus	Allyson Packer	Jeff Waites
Joshua Bienko	Elizabeth Hull	Jessica Almy-Pagán	Michael Webster
Lynn Bregman Blass	Brett Hunter	John Douglas Powers	Cathy Weiss
Molly Brewer	Michelle Illuminato	Neill Prewitt	Amy White
Ian Brownlee	Michael Itkoff	Jody Servon	Ripley Whiteside
Ann Chwatsy	Andrew Ellis Johnson	Susanne Slavick	Lance Winn
María DeGuzmán	Ann Pegelow Kaplan	Leah Sobsey	Denis Wood
Lee Delegard	Susan Alta Martin	Spectres of Liberty	
Travis Donovan	Mario Marzan	Tracy Spencer	

the ground we walk on



<http://www.facebook.com/LOCAL.HISTORIES.SHOW>

Sponsored by the Town of Chapel Hill Department of Parks & Recreation/ Division of Cultural Arts and the Art Department at UNC, Chapel Hill

Cover image: *Mainstreets* by
Susan Alta Martin

Opening Night / Local Histories



Local Histories: The Ground We Walk On

Do You Hear Birds? Bird Walk

Saturday, March 5, 8am (until approximately 10am)

Artist Julie Thomson and biology graduate students from North Carolina State University will lead a walk around Chapel Hill listening for, and identifying bird calls. Participants are encouraged to bring binoculars if they have them for bird watching. Dress for the weather and meet in front of the Local Histories exhibition building entrance, 523 E. Franklin Street, Chapel Hill.

Local Histories: The Ground We Walk On is an exhibition of over 50 artists from across the U.S. exploring Alfredo Jaar's idea that "place can not be global," curated by artist elin o'Hara slavick + art historian Carol Magee, Professors in the Art Department at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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CLOSED SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5

Other Special Events:

March 18, 7pm: Performances by Cathy McLaurin, *Where the Arms Hook Onto the Body*;
Neill Prewitt, *Untitled*;
Lance Winn, *Full Body Scan*

April 4, 7pm: Mildred's Lane Goes Elsewhere: artist J. Morgan Puett and Elsewhere, a living museum in Greensboro, North Carolina, (co-sponsored by the Institute for Arts and Humanities and the James M. Johnston Center for Undergraduate Excellence at UNC, Chapel Hill)

April 11, 7pm: RAFI-USA: The Rural Advancement Foundation International, Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Project (Joseph Schroeder, Program Director and Alix Blair, Information Specialist), SAF: Student Action with Farm workers, and Andrea Reusing, Chef at Lantern Restaurant



For Immediate Release:

Local Histories: The Ground We Walk On
523 East Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Monday, April 11, 7pm, Local Food and Politics:

RAFI-USA - The Rural Advancement Foundation International,
Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Project,
Joseph Schroeder, Program Director and Alix Blair, Information Specialist

In 1997, RAFI-USA created a cost-share grant program to help farmers replace lost tobacco income by putting their own ideas to work. This program began as a four county pilot and has expanded with support from the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission to serve all 100 counties in the state. RAFI-USA is a private non-profit organization based in Pittsboro, North Carolina dedicated to cultivating markets, policies and communities that support thriving, socially just and environmentally sound family farms.

SAF - Student Action with Farmworkers
Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University

Student Action with Farmworkers is a non-profit organization whose mission is to bring students and farmworkers together to learn about each other's lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers, and build diverse coalitions working for social change. SAF works with farmworkers, students, and advocates in the Southeast and nationwide to create a more just agricultural system. Since 1992, they have engaged thousands of students, farmworker youth, and community members in the farmworker movement.

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Other Special Event:
April 18, 6pm: Local Histories panel on Mapping and Community

Exhibition and events are free and open to the public.

LOCAL HISTORIES PANEL DISCUSSION
Organized and Moderated by Tracy Spencer

Monday, April 18, 6pm, Presentations by:

Robert Allen, *Virtual Cities / Digital Histories*
Blair LM Kelley, *Mapping the Geography of Protest*
Shane Cruise, *Geographic Segregation and U.S. 52*



Movies 'Over the Waves' at Lumina Theatre, Wrightsville Beach, Wilmington, N.C., 1931
in Durwood Barbour Collection of North Carolina Postcards (P077),
North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, Wilson Library, UNC, Chapel Hill

In conjunction with the visual art exhibition, *Local Histories: The Ground We Walk On*, this panel will discuss the ways in which maps and mapping effect the formation of history and memory. Three historians will present recent projects, followed by a discussion with the audience. This event is free and open to the public.

Eric Benjamins, Massachusetts *Tasting Station for Dubbel Zoute Drop*

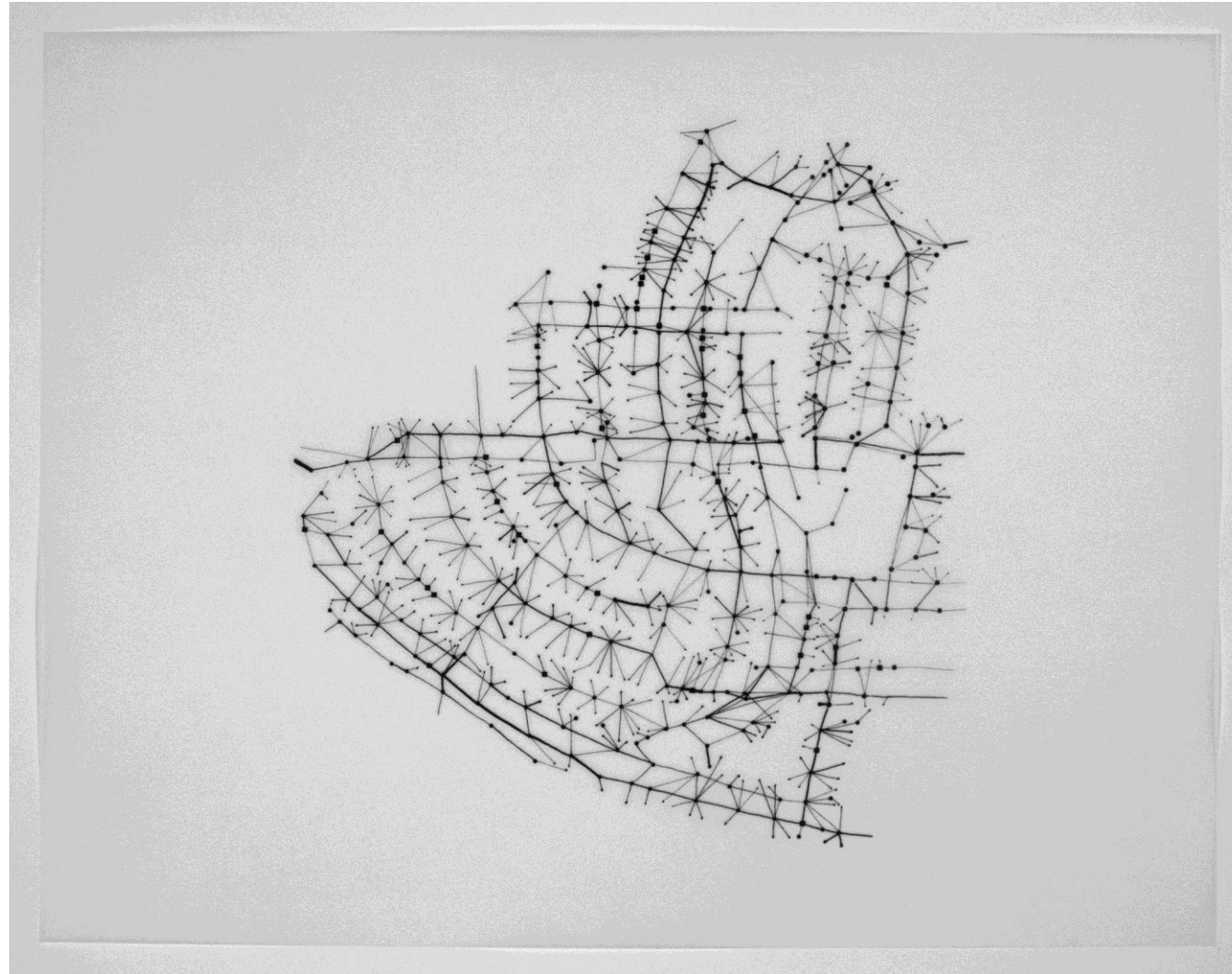
This is a mobile and interactive sculpture that presents a personal investigation of the Dutch candy, both loved and loathed within Benjamins' family (his Father's side is Dutch-Indonesian).



Denis Wood, Squirrel Highways, Raleigh

This drawing was made by students of landscape architecture at North Carolina State University as part of a project to produce an atlas of the Boylan Heights neighborhood in Raleigh. More than fifty of them were published as Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas (Siglio Press, Los Angeles, 2010).

Shaub Dunkley did the initial work on this map of the electrical, phone, and cable lines running overhead through the neighborhood. Carter Crawford and Wood did the final fieldwork, and Carter drew the map.



Cathy Weiss, Los Angeles



Sophia Allison, California The organic environs of Allison's childhood home in the Blue Ridge Mountains of NC inspire this work.



Gail Goers, Chapel Hill, *The Elbe at Daybreak* - Since the reunification of Germany in 1990, the former East German city of Magdeburg has experienced a population loss of over 60,000 inhabitants.

Amy White, Saxapahaw

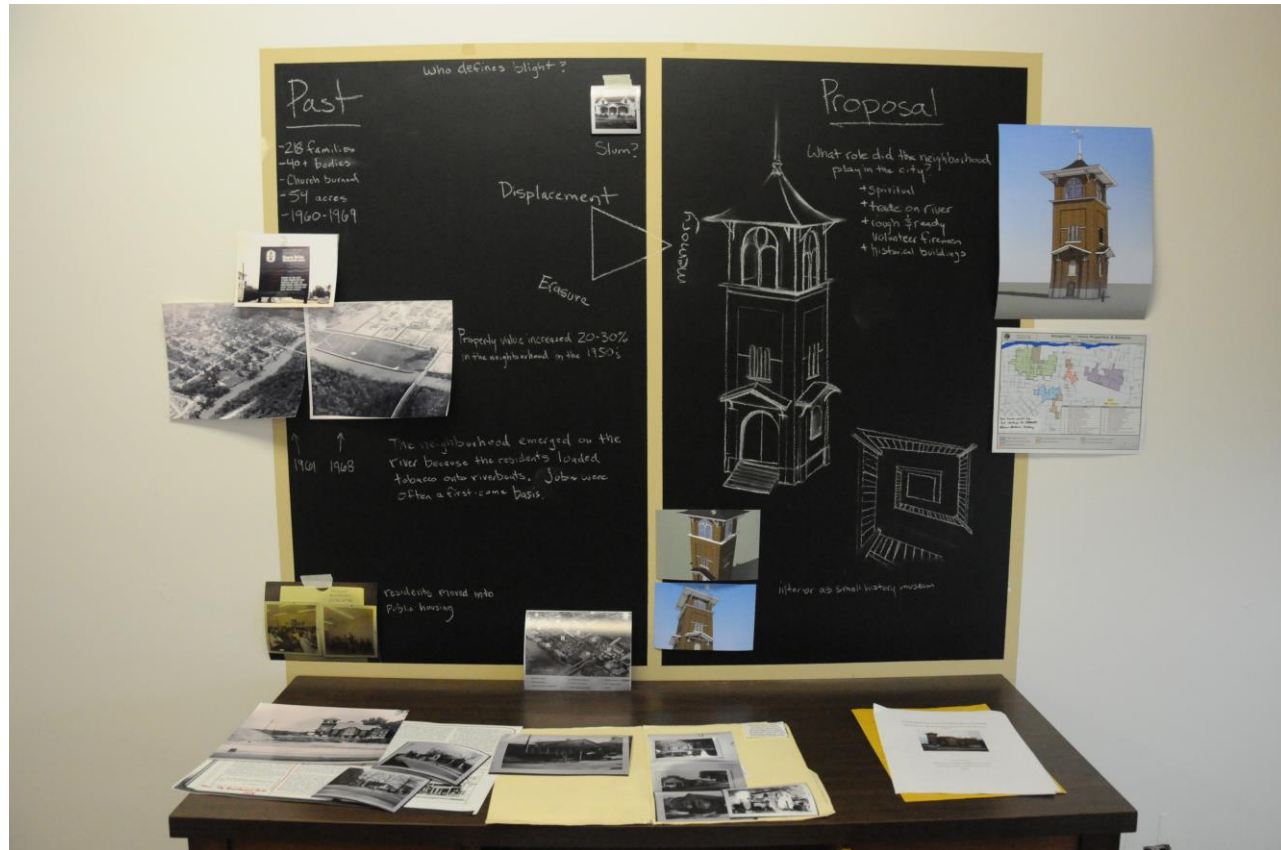
Cici Stevens, Durham, *Grounded*, red clay of the Piedmont, local stone of the fireplace, jars unearthed in Orange County, and water drawn from the creek nearby.



Jeff Waites, Falmouth, Maine
Wilson Swain Caldwell (1841 - 1898) and John Henry Merrick (1859 - 1919) Emancipated North Carolina Slaves

Ann Pegelow Kaplan, Davidson, North Carolina - *Roanoke*
Kaplan is interested in the stories that play out in our immediate vicinity that we pass by, our minds elsewhere. These photos are “found stories,” photographed within one hundred feet of where she slept the night before.





Michael Webster, Lillian and Freddie Outterbridge, Chicago, *Back to the Future*

The Shore Drive redevelopment project took place in Greenville, NC in the 1960's, displacing Greenville's African-American neighborhood from the downtown. This led to the burning of the Sycamore Hill Church and the relocation of its graveyard. The Outterbridges and Webster created a proposal to rebuild the church's bell tower as a historical sculpture. Currently, a park resides where the neighborhood once stood, and a master plan to redesign the park recommends building the proposed bell tower to remember this suppressed history.



Travis Donovan, Chapel Hill, *Smolder*, Tobacco, fog machine

Smolder reflects the tenuous, strained, and misunderstood relationship that Donovan and many North Carolinians share with the histories and heritage involved with traditional tobacco production in the state.

Tracy Spencer, Chapel Hill, *Tower (mother father me)* and *Six Chairs*

These works are part of a body of work that uses manipulations of furniture as allegorical narratives in order to complicate ideas of family, gender, and social control.



Lynn Bregman Blass and Leah Sobsey, Chapel Hill, *Our Stories, In Focus*

In 2009 the artists were commissioned by the Chapel Hill Public Arts Commission to create a public artwork to weave the lives and histories of the citizens of Chapel Hill and Carrboro together. They teamed up with the UNC program in Humanities and Human Values and the Southern Oral History Program to conduct four workshops. The workshops were a place where community members could bring in images, memorabilia, and ephemera that they scanned for this public art piece.





Local Histories in Chapel Hill

MARYA ROLAND on May 11, 2011 at 9:22 PM

[uds-billboard name="localhistories"]Regional energy and narratives have a dynamic presence in *Local Histories: The Ground We Walk On*, beginning with the exhibition building itself. Curator and artist elin o'Hara slavick noted the Chapel Hill Museum (previously the Chapel Hill Public Library and once a day care center) had closed and started the process of gaining permission to use and restore it for this exhibition. The undertaking was funded on a shoestring with slavick and many of the participating artists acting as cleaners and painters.

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28 | INDEPENDENT | THE TRIANGLE'S WEEKLY

Chapel Hill show animates concepts of place

BY CHRIS VITIELLO

I'm writing this sentence from inside a cardboard snowdrift. The sweet acidity of smoldering tobacco leaves wafts down the tunnel I crawled through to get in here. Out the tunnel's mouth I can see a curl of heavy smoke dispersing, a mound of red earth behind that and a photograph of a sidewalk with the chalked words, "Do you hear birds?" on a wall above and past the mound.

Various intense artworks and documentation projects from more than 50 American artists have been crowded into the old Chapel Hill Museum building for a show called *Local Histories: The Ground We Walk On*, co-curated by artist elin o'Hara slavick and historian Carol Magee. Exploring artist Alfredo Jaar's reality-check statement that "place can not be global," the show embodies that notion, rejuvenating the currently nameless building that has housed the Chapel Hill Historical Society since it ceased being a public library in 1997.

At a jam-packed opening night celebration last Friday, UNC-Chapel Hill MFA student Ashley Florence talked about "Drift," the cardboard igloo that she and Lee Deleard have built in a corner of the gallery.

"Something that I had noticed in a lot of interaction with people over the years was the stories of the blizzard of 1996," she told me. "What I found really relevant was that pretty much everyone who had lived here had a story

about it. So it was like this one collective history that people had together."

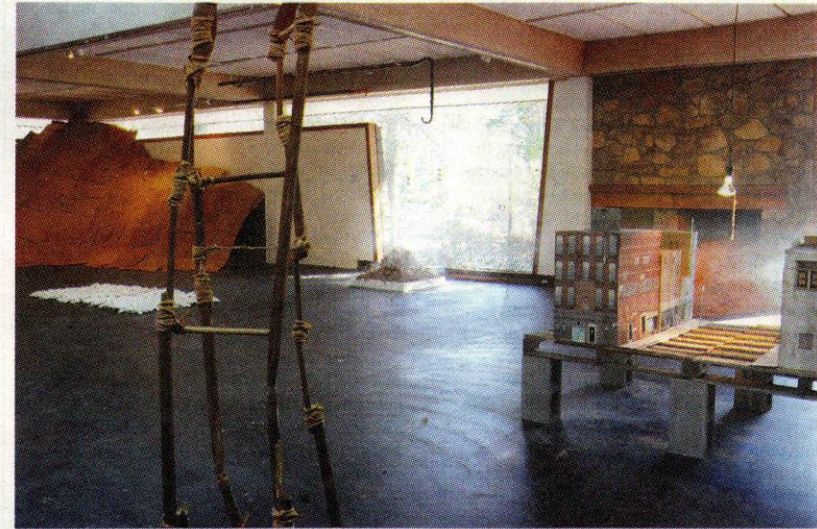
While collecting those stories, Florence and Deleard were impressed by how extreme weather brings people together, which brought up a whole new realm of questions about place and community.

"We started becoming curious about why, in the face of impending environmental disaster that we're always told that we're in, that same urgency isn't there. Why aren't we coming together all the time?"

"Drift" terminates a north-facing wall of the gallery, one of several takes on local geography and history. "Smolder," the tobacco pile by Chapel Hill's Travis Donovan, periodically exhales its plume with the help of a whirring machine. In a piece called "Grounded," Durham-based Cici Stevens installed unearthened glass jars and a protruding mound of Piedmont clay in a stone fireplace set into the wall And Texan Julie Thomson's

"Do You Hear Birds? Chapel Hill" photograph hangs above a pile of chalk that gallery visitors are encouraged to take. The chalk wrappers contain a little bird-call guide and instructions to write down the piece's title—"Do you hear birds?"—in chalk wherever one hears the sound of birds.

Many of the works hover between the poles of art and documentation, to varying effect. In its understated superimposition of a painted 10th-century graeco character upon the photograph of a raided Iraqi archeological site, Susanne Slavick's "Regenerate II (Gardening the Robber Hole)" succeeds in reclaiming an ancient emptiness. But Michael Webster's overwhelming "Back to the Future" installation comes off as heavy-handed in its critique of Greenville's 1960s Shore Drive redevelopment project, which displaced a



View of the space, with Ashley Florence and Lee Deleard's "Drift," Travis Donovan's "Smolder" and Cici Stevens' "Grounded" visible PHOTO COURTESY OF ELIN O'HARA SLAVICK

prominent African-American neighborhood and resulted in a church burning. The installation is as visually dry and dense as an evidence locker. That Webster was successful, however, at getting a proposal passed to rebuild a lost bell tower in a new park redeems the work by reminding us that aesthetics and concepts are not ends in themselves but means to make life better for people.

Curators slavick and Magee received work from more than 150 artists who answered an open call for submissions. From the variety of pieces on display, it must have been a fun show to hang, with so many fabulous resonances between proximate works. One corner brings together two works that use language in fascinating ways. Durham-based Heather Gordon's paintings "1st Amendment 24027" and "2nd Amendment 12344" present the amendment text converted into binary code in circular analog charts, amounting to a pair of eye-like, checkerboarded circles with red numbers over their pupils. The unreadable binary carries implications for the encoded laws, making for great gallery discussion. To the right is Los Angeles artist Cathy Weiss' "Light," comprising five sheets of acetate, each with an ornate drawing of a hand making each letter of the title word in sign language. Suspended away from the wall so that the ceiling fixtures cast blurry hand shadows on the wall, the

piece conflates the visual, tangible and auditory into a differently loaded code.

Many of the pieces depend upon gallery text to explain the history of an issue, or the relationship between the materials in the artifact and the place to which it refers. It's too much in some places. Morgan Muhs' two photographs of New Orleans architecture—"Untitled (overpass)" and "Untitled (pulpit)"—echo the unnecessary language, obfuscating the haunting power of her two images. Muhs doesn't need to tell us that the church is dilapidated or that the overpass is perceived as unsafe. The work should carry the content more than the text beside it.

Local Histories contains a lot of content, but much of it is presented in such a variety of ways that visitors of all stripes—including kids, who were enjoying the opening as much as their parents—will take something away. And the takeaways are actionable. I chalked "Do you hear birds?" on the bike path this morning as hawks discussed the rising sun. ☒