

PROMISED LAND

August 1 - September 7, 2014
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5th Avenue Pavilion
Asbury Park Boardwalk
501-503 at 1200 Ocean Avenue,
Asbury Park, NJ

EXHIBITION HOURS: Wednesday & Thursday, 12-6pm; Friday & Saturday 12-8pm;
Sunday 12-5pm.

Visit transformerdc.org for updates on weekly creative & educational programming throughout the run of the exhibition.

t r a n s f o r m e r is a Washington, DC based 501 (c) 3 artist-centered non-profit visual arts organization, providing a consistent, supportive, and professional platform for emerging artists to explore and present experimental artistic concepts, build audiences for their work, and advance their careers. A catalyst and advocate for contemporary artists and emergent expression in the visual arts, Transformer connects and promotes emerging visual artists within regional, national and international contexts through exhibition and programs partnerships with artists, curators, commercial galleries, museums and other cultural institutions.

Transformer's 2014/2015 Exhibition Series and programs are supported by: The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Bernstein Family Foundation, The CrossCurrents Foundation, The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/ NEA, The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, The Robert Lehman Foundation, The S&R Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts' Access to Artistic Excellence Award, and The Visionary Friends of Transformer – individual donors, members of our Annual Auction Host Committee, and Corporate Sponsors.

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Additional thanks to our incredible *Promised Land* lead interns Tara Welsh and Maggie Pakutka, as well as Kevin Sullivan, Kristina Berger, Liana Bluzer, Kristin Cosentino, and Adam Schwartz.

Image credit: *Promised Land* by Vigg Designs

CURATORIAL OVERVIEW

Transformer is honored to present *Promised Land*. This contemporary exhibition features artwork in a range of disciplines by twelve dynamic east coast based visual artists exploring current national issues as inspired by the past & present of Asbury Park, NJ. Taking place within the 5th Avenue Pavilion of the historic Asbury Park boardwalk, this five-week exhibition includes comprehensive creative & educational programming led by the participating artists and visiting arts leaders.

Promised Land artists include: **Jane Carver** (New York, NY), **Kevin Darmanie** (Newark, NJ), **Dahlia Elsayed** (Newark, NJ), **Alison Kuo** (New York, NY), **Mike Richison** (Asbury Park, NJ), **Raúl Romero** (Philadelphia, PA), **Jessica Segall** (New York, NY), **Crystal Stokowski** (Philadelphia, PA), **Scott Szegecki** (Asbury Park, NJ), **Tang** (Washington, DC), **Lisa Marie Thalhammer** (Washington, DC), and **John Vigg** (Asbury Park, NJ).

I selected the artists featured in *Promised Land* with the help of nominations from Maia Murphy, Recess Activities (New York, NY), and Jenn Hampton, Parlor Gallery (Asbury Park, NJ), as well as visits to Space 1026 (Philadelphia, PA), and consideration of artists Transformer (Washington, DC) has previously presented.

Transformer hosted a five-day artistic residency in Asbury Park, NJ June 5-10, 2014 for the *Promised Land* artists to pursue creative research. The artists met with a multitude of community leaders within Asbury Park to learn about the city's history and culture, and how it reflects & relates to broader American history and culture.

Why Asbury Park? This unique small American city provides fertile context for artists to question and create. While it has many distinctive aspects that are very much its own, Asbury Park is also emblematic of small cities throughout the United States.

Asbury Park's history is rich. This city by the sea has been epitomized by American writer Stephen Crane and American songwriter Bruce Springsteen as a symbol of our nations 'hopes & hypocrisies'. Asbury Park's centralized location within the northeast corridor makes it an ideal meeting point for Transformer to bring together this exciting and smart group of artists with the goal of building their peer artist networks, providing an opportunity for development of new work, and to engage new audiences.

Promised Land offers new creative insight and artistic perspective on current national events & concerns, contemporary American culture, and our national history through the iconic lens of Asbury Park.

- Victoria Reis, *Promised Land* Curator
Co-Founder, Executive & Artistic Director, Transformer



Jane Carver

Whirl Up, Sea

2014

Performance with curtain with armature, swivel stage, sound

Whirl Up, Sea is a consideration of the relationship between spectacle and sorrow. Drawing from the shipwrecks of the New Era and the Morro Castle off the coast of Asbury Park in the same exact site, this work invites the audience to hear a song and take a spin, while immersed in view of the swaying cloth. As part of local lore, in the days following the wreck of the Morro Castle, eager crowds had to pay admission to view the ship's hull from behind a huge theater curtain.

The precision of the shared site brings to mind Charybdis, a creature from book 12 of Homer's *Odyssey*. She is a mighty whirlpool who swallows passing ships, spitting out the splinters. Her insatiable hunger matches that of her grisly neighbor Scylla, a six-headed beast who picks off sailors crossing the Strait of Messina. Scylla's body is also in constant spin.

Jane Carver is the artist-in-residence at the Association for Cultural Equity: The Alan Lomax Archive, and the co-founder of the performance series *Low Stakes*. She holds an MFA from Hunter College and is a member of the Bulgarian women's choir, *Yasna Voices*. She has performed at The Queens Museum, St. Mark's Poetry Project, and the American Folk Art Museum, and will be part of *Groundswell* in Hudson, New York this September. She is honored to participate in *Promised Land*.



Kevin Darmanie

Rations at the Beach

2014

Acrylic on canvas

32x46"

"I found Asbury Park to be an exciting place with diverse lifestyles and communities. As a prism for America, Asbury Park is a spectrum of ironies: A conservative and religious haven; the awkward but relaxing tourist experience; the exciting nightlife; the hidden in plain sight underclass and the under appreciated richness of its core. I love the city's strong sense of culture and magic. There is a lot about Asbury I found similar to Newark. We too have a glorious but crumbling architecture with deeply segregated communities and a rich history of music. With these paintings I make light of how American assets such as culture, wealth and space are distributed, chopped up if you will along lines of race, ethnicity and economic value. This dissecting of America has operated most popularly and with brutal effect amongst its Afro/Euro descendants. I determined to satire this phenomenon with the kind of aggressive, punk humor you might experience if say Richard Pryor were to perform at the Stone Pony."

Kevin Darmanie has produced paintings, murals, installations, comic books and works on paper. An immigrant from Trinidad & Tobago, raised in New Jersey, Darmanie's figurative watercolors incorporate tropes of graphic novels to reexamine Caribbean attitudes, social critique and self introspection. The artist has turned his attention to painting and printmaking, producing abstracted works that seek to minimally express Caribbean identity without resorting to cliché. His most recent work once again picks up on his ironic narrative approach but this time with a focus on his Newark urban experience and its surrounding areas.



Dahlia Elsayed

Porch Talk

2014

Installation and Performance

Porch Talk is an ongoing performance that takes place on the porch of the 5th Avenue Pavilion facing Ocean Avenue. Dahlia Elsayed launches the Professional Porch Sitters Union in Asbury Park (PPSU Local 1893), inviting *Promised Land* audiences to join the union and receive membership cards. (Membership is free.)

Porches are a hallmark of Asbury Park architecture, acting as a liminal space between the public and the private. Aside from associations with summer and leisure, porch sitting is regarded as a community builder and crime deterrent, and a key feature of New Urbanism design theory.

Porch Talk includes visual elements such as a chapter banner that will fly outside the *Promised Land* exhibition on the porch facing Ocean Avenue when the Union is in session. When the Union is not in session, the banner will be presented within the exhibition space, along with documentation and further details of the project.

"For over a decade, I have been making text and image based work that synthesizes an internal and external experience of place, connecting the ephemeral to the concrete. These visual short fictions take the form of narrative paintings, installations, multiples and occasionally performance."

Dahlia Elsayed's paintings, prints and artist books have been shown at galleries and art institutions throughout the United States and internationally, including Robert Miller Gallery, Bravin Lee Programs, the 12th Cairo Biennale, and solo exhibitions at Aljira Center for Contemporary Art and the New Jersey State Museum. She received her MFA from Columbia University, and lives and works in New Jersey. Ms. Elsayed is Assistant Professor of Humanities at CUNY LaGuardia Community College.



Alison Kuo

CONE SPA

2014

Installation and performance

CONE SPA is an ice cream themed salon installation and performance that offers an array of beauty treatments, from Cheeto Brows to Skittle Tipz, Brain Freezes, and Sparkling Pop Rock Sugar Scrubs. By operating this faux small business on the revitalizing Asbury Park boardwalk, this project seeks to play with the aspirational, self-improving nature of service-oriented enterprises, both on the part of the community and potential consumers. CONE SPA imagines ways that the city's need to succeed economically might alter the personal habits and desires of its inhabitants.

Alison Kuo is a Texas native with an MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York, NY, and a BA from Southwestern University in Georgetown, TX. She has exhibited her work at CANADA, Christopher Henry Gallery, ICI, Present Company, Cathouse FUNeral, and Art Jam in NYC, Eleven Seventeen Garland, SOFA Gallery, Co-Lab, and Domy in Austin, and the Untitled art fair and OHWOW in Miami. Kuo is the Art Editor at the Brooklyn literary magazine GIGANTIC, a contributor of reviews to Artslant, and the creator of the popular blog Accidental Chinese Hipsters. www.kuo-space.com.



Mike Richison

Altbauten aufbauen (Building Old Buildings)

2012

Interactive Projection using Microsoft Kinect and Custom Software

This piece utilizes the Microsoft Kinect and Max MSP Jitter to track hand movements and trigger video collages of collapsing buildings. By moving their hands in front of the Kinect camera, audience members can control the placement and height of imaginary buildings. The structures, which resemble abstracted houses and apartment complexes, appear to be 'rebuilding' themselves until they crumble and fall off the screen. *Altbauten aufbauen (Building Old Buildings)* was initially presented at the 2012 faculty show at Monmouth University. It features footage of the demolition of the 800 Building, a well-known landmark on Monmouth's campus and home of several classrooms and studios within the Department of Art and Design. The title is a play on the name of the German industrial group Einstürzende Neubauten, which translates to "collapsing new buildings." These ideas of creation, destruction, and renewal are central to a place like Asbury Park.

"My ideas stem from the time I lived in the Detroit area. It is difficult to think about Detroit's post-industrial situation without considering manufacturing, consumerism, and obsolescence. I capture these themes through the assemblage of discarded materials, a process utilized across several media — sculpture, video, drawing, performance, custom software and circuitry, and photography."

After calling the Detroit, Michigan area home for a number of years, **Mike Richison** relocated to New Jersey in 2007. He is currently a professor at Monmouth University where he teaches Motion Graphics, History of Graphic Design, and Typography. He is a multimedia artist who utilizes a variety of media and approaches including graphic design, video, sculpture, printmaking, drawing and installation. He has exhibited and performed at venues and galleries both nationally and internationally.



Raúl Romero

"Once upon a time there where two parts of Hydrogen and one part of Oxygen, they eventually met and once their electrons merged together it was magic..."

2014

Two-channel color video projection, sound, and Birch wood video screens, 168" x 72" x 36"

"I make multidisciplinary works that materialize into video. My projects and films document and romanticize my relationship with my surroundings paying homage to my experiences and quest for Neverland."

*"This video featured in *Promised Land* is comprised of mostly underwater footage, focusing on capturing the particles of the ocean, as its perspective fluctuates between an inner and outer spatial view of the ocean. This visual investigation leads to how the projected images interact with surfaces and morph into an alternate plane. The ocean has a significant influence on my experience, especially in Asbury Park, falling witness to a few phenomenal events that will stay with me forever. My contemplation about the ocean reminds me of my childhood, visiting family in Puerto Rico, and frequenting the beach in Florida. My respect for the ocean has grown more over the years and it represents a place that will forever keep one of my cameras as the ultimate director."*

Raúl Romero received his BA from the University of South Florida. Romero has exhibited at The Fleisher Art Memorial, Pentimenti Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, Delaware Center for Contemporary Art, Wilmington, DE; and in Tampa, FL, The Contemporary Art Museum, The Tampa Museum of Art, and The Museum of Science and Industry. He was awarded The William and Nancy Oliver Gallery Prize by Anne Pasternak for the 32nd Annual Juried Art Exhibition at The Contemporary Art Museum in Tampa, FL.



Jessica Segall

Untitled

2014

Video, 2 min. loop

Segall's practice is multidisciplinary, falling under the categories of sculpture, performance and video. With a mix of humor and elbow grease, her work investigates the link between creativity and survival; engaging current cultural attitudes towards adaptation. For the *Promised Land* exhibition, Jessica will be working on a text piece using the medium of aerial advertising prevalent at the beach front. Found text will be flown over Asbury Park, representative of the nostalgia and optimism particular to Asbury Park's shifting economic and cultural identity. Special thanks to Antonio Jose Guzman, Adam Schwartz and Tara Welsh.

Jessica Segall's work has been exhibited at the 10th Havana Bienal, The National Gallery of Indonesia, The Queens Museum of Art, the Aldrich Museum, The National Modern Art Gallery of Mongolia and The Inside Out Museum in Beijing. She is the recipient of grants including Art Matters, the Leighton International Artist Exchange Program, an Arts and Science grant from Chicago University and The Gatsby Charitable Foundation. Jessica attended artist residencies at Skowhegan, The MacDowell Colony, Sculpture Space, Kuenstlerdorf Schoppingen, Art OMI, Bemis, Triangle Arts and Socrates Sculpture Park. She is a graduate of Bard College and received her MFA from Columbia University.



Crystal Stokowski

Always Here: An Homage to Lenni Lenape

2014

Mixed media assemblage, reclaimed wood, found objects

Crystal Stokowski's installation addresses the absence of recognition for the Lenni Lenape, New Jersey's indigenous people. In today's hastily developed and disposable culture, autochthonous civilizations who have thrived sustainably are often forgotten. Stokowski's wigwam, an homage to the traditional Lenape home, is constructed from repurposed and found materials and sewn with endemic bark patterns that she silk screened in neutral tones. Her approach magnifies this peaceful structure, which encourages a deeper awareness and reflection to the once flourishing Lenape nation. She provides a place to sit and contemplate the dwelling with a free zine as a memento.

Crystal Stokowski is an ocean enthusiast and self-taught artist who works in a variety of mediums that incorporate recycled and repurposed materials. Her work ranges in scale from mural size fabric installations to pocket size zines and mobiles made with organic elements. Stokowski is a member of the Philadelphia based artist collective Space 1026. She has exhibited around the world, having held both group and solo shows at venues such as The Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, 96 Gillespie in London, Hamburger Eyes in San Francisco, and The Clocktower Gallery in New York City.



Scott Szegeski

uki

2012

koji paper and homemade black sumi ink

"With *Promised Land*, I intend to try and show the spirit of the Asbury Park alternative surf/skate culture. In the years of ups and downs that have blanketed this city, this specific community of people seem to be Asbury Park's only constant. We inhabit its crack-ridden beaches, and enjoy its waves. We clean ocean side abandoned pools and skate them. We travel and stay here because it affords us those things that others desperately search for. We rent apartments and buy homes here because we desire to live close to that community, and immerse our lives within it. I knew I had found a great place when, during my first week in business here, I met a man who instead of picking up and collecting sea shells, collected crack vials while on his daily walks on our beaches."

"The medium I most use today centers around the Japanese art of GYOTAKU (pronounced ghee-oh-tah-koo), and its deep connections with the sport of surfing and surfboard construction. Gyor means 'fish' and Taku means 'rubbing'. A common surf vernacular for a surfboard that has a cut out tail is the word 'fish'. In essence I take an ancient art form and change the subject matter to fit my interest for surfing and surfboard construction."

Scott Szegeski received his undergraduate degree in English and journalism from Western State College of Colorado. He lived and worked in southern California for Surfer and Snowboarder magazine for 3 years, before leaving and working with the magazine staff at swell.com. His work has been presented in solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States, and has been featured in publications throughout the world. Scott also has a restaurant and surf shop in Asbury Park, NJ where he works every day.



Lisa Marie Thalhammer

A Gay Queen of the Waves

2014

Rembrandt pastel, Liquitex acrylic and gel mediums

85.5"x70.5"

Inspired by the Transformer *Promised Land* artist residency in Asbury Park June 2014, this large scale painting and screen print series references a 1888 cover of *The National Police Gazette* which pictured one of the earliest records of surfing in the Colonial USA. This illustration titled "The gay queen of the waves" pictures a girl surfing off the shores of Asbury Park, New Jersey. Thalhammer's appropriation of this girl from Sandwich Island (which was the name given to the Hawaiian Islands by James Cook in 1778), builds upon her current "Rainbow Warrior" series of self-portraits amongst mystical regions of the world.

Visual Artist **Lisa Marie Thalhammer** developed a passion for travel while working at her family's truck stop business in the midwest USA. Completing studies in drawing, painting, feminist theory, and art history at the Art Institute of Chicago, University of Kansas, and Staffordshire University in England, Thalhammer continues to travel internationally and maintains a studio in Washington, DC. Thalhammer is known for her striking and powerful portrait paintings, collages and public artworks, which have been exhibited locally, nationally and internationally. She has received major funding from the DC Commission of the Arts and Humanities, an agency supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and has been featured in notable publications such as *Artnet News*, *The U.S. News World Report*, *The Washington Post*, and numerous local media outlets. Additionally, *The Washington Blade*, the oldest LGBT newspaper in the USA, featured Thalhammer on the cover of their Top 30 under 30 issue of 2008 and nominated her for "best visual artist" in 2013.



Tang

Good Installation

2014

Wood, paints, and photographs

8'x5'

"*Good Installation* is largely based on a writing, 'everything dies baby that's a fact', that I saw on a vacant building in Asbury Park, NJ while participating in Transformer's June 2014 *Promised Land* artist residency. Discovering it was a lyric from one of Bruce Springsteen's songs, and that the following lyric was 'But maybe everything that dies someday comes back' reminded me of Asbury Park and how it has had up and down times, just like the sun and the sea."

Tang received his BFA in Fine Art from the Corcoran College of Art + Design in 2004. He also attended a summer program at the Skopelos Foundation for the Arts in Skopelos Island, Greece in 2003, which inspired him to travel and create artwork. Tang's work has been exhibited in multiple art spaces in the Washington, DC area. He has also exhibited in Mexico City, Mexico at Garash Galeria as part of Transformer's 2009 *Give and Take/Da y Toma* exhibition.



John Vigg

Mapping Asbury Park

2006-2014

Wall installation of archival InkJet prints, vinyl wall text
32' x 7'

"My work mixes new technologies to further describe contemporary landscape and the changes in current aesthetics while investigating the production of space. For *Promised Land*, my work mixes photography and mapping to further describe the quickly changing contemporary landscape of Asbury Park. Heavily influenced by geography and sense of place, my projects are often categorized by an in-depth analysis of specific subjects such as land use, theories on landscape and exploration. By combining photography with mapping my projects reveal sites that are normally unseen, expose areas of contradiction, and challenge the traditional use of photography to record what we understand as 'place'."

John Vigg is an artist and entrepreneur working in central NJ. Born in Davenport, Iowa to two transient parents, John quickly became independent with a strong interest in what makes up the landscape around him. A prevailing sense to continue exploring ways to describe 'place' has brought John to complete his MFA at Montclair State University and Kingston University in London with a concentration in photography. The depth of his art comes from his interests in technology, alternate ways of recording images and cartographic processes. Combining these aspects into his gallery installations, viewers share in the processes he developed to make his art. John's studio is located in Asbury Park, NJ and his work has been exhibited globally and is in many private collections across the northeast. He owns a creative design agency, heads up a cooperative art space and ran a photography gallery for over 5 years. His current project is researching and exploring the NJ Pine Barrens to photograph, track and record its larger environments.

