

Rodney  
Ewing

October 6 –  
December 2, 2017

# Days and Occasions: The Unexpected Griot

Southern Exposure is honored to present a new iteration of Rodney Ewing's *Days and Occasions* project, *The Unexpected Griot* (2017). This newly commissioned work, drawn directly on Southern Exposure's street-facing wall, expands upon Ewing's expansive, long-standing drawing practice. The title refers to West African griots, who traditionally perform the role of community historians, as public speakers or singers of stories documenting local history for social gatherings and public ceremonies. Like a griot, Ewing acts as a collector and conveyor of neighborhood oral narratives.

Ewing's work often reflects upon and layers intersecting social histories, memorializing and elevating fleeting moments of social engagement. In *The Unexpected Griot*, he weaves together overheard conversational fragments with notations of time, catching and holding these shards of conversation as they roll past, recording them over the course of a year or more. Through a laborious process of stenciling this found text in powdered graphite directly onto the gallery wall, he gives weight to ephemeral intimacies and aggressions while embedding them into the gallery's architecture. Here, the seemingly divergent trains of thought are condensed into one continuous flow, flattening and disrupting our sense of time and filling the wall with a dense, cacophonous, smeared sociality.

Ewing, who has lived down the street from Southern Exposure for nearly a decade, bears witness to the vast cultural shift that has taken place during that time in the Mission and in San Francisco at large. Outside the doors of Southern Exposure, conversations centered on media and technology largely eclipse the chatter of neighborhood kids.

Ewing's work reminds us that our everyday social interactions have longstanding effects, embedding themselves in our psyches and the bodies of our edifices. The voices that echo in Ewing's text are spectral. He is merely the recorder, his act a kind of automatic writing that gives voice to troubled souls who now haunt the institutional space. For instance, the speaker of *9:07 My skin is only valid when i am not in it* leaves us with a heart-wrenching echo. We hear the lonely musicality in these brief refrains of human fragility.

*Rodney Ewing is a San Francisco-based artist. He received his BFA from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, and his MFA from West Virginia University. His drawings, installations, and mixed media works focus on intersecting body and place, memory and fact, in order to re-examine human histories, cultural conditions, and events. He is a founding member of the 3.9 Art Collective, a group of African-American artists, curators and writers whose name and work call attention to the diminishing African-American population of San Francisco.*

*His work has been included locally in numerous group and solo exhibitions, including the Arc Gallery, Jack Fischer Gallery, Nancy Toomey Fine Art, the Berkeley Art Center, The David Brower Center, Kala Art Center, the de Young Museum, the University of San Francisco, Alter Space, Pro Arts Gallery, SOMArts, ASC Projects, Root Division, Ictus Projects, de Saisset Museum, Frey Norris Gallery, Lisa Dent Gallery, Dog Patch Gallery, The African American Art and Cultural Complex, Performance Art Institute, San Francisco Public Library Main Branch, and Swarm Gallery. Nationally, his work has been shown at The Drawing Center (New York), Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (Los Angeles), Johnsonese Gallery (Chicago), Richmond Center for Visual Arts (Kalamazoo), Beta Pictoris Gallery (Birmingham), and Greymatter Gallery (Milwaukee).*

**October 6, 7:00 – 9:00 PM**

Opening reception

Angela Hennessy, *When and where I enter*

Rodney Ewing, *Days and Occasions: The Unexpected Griot*

The Center for Tactical Magic, *If You See Something, Say Something*

**October 14, 7:00 – 9:00 PM**

URL/IRL & Shadow Workshop: performance and skillshare

by Wizard Apprentice

**October 20, 7:00 – 9:00 PM**

*Our Sacred Noise in Street Light Shadows*: live performance

by Radio Healer

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