



For immediate release:

Sesnon contact: Shelby Graham sesnon@ucsc.edu

Gallery: 831-459-3606

IAS contact: John Weber, weberj@ucsc.edu

Office: 831 459-3121

What Do Farms and Museums have in Common?

*Campus-Wide **Collective Museum** Project Launches February 11*

Collective Museum exhibition February 11 - March 12, 2016

Thursday, February 11:

Talk: 4 pm Digital Arts Research Center (DARC) 108

Opening Reception: 5- 7 pm Sesnon Gallery comments at 6:00pm

Kindly RSVP for reception ias@ucsc.edu or (831) 459-5003

Friday, February 12:

9 am Collective Museum walking tour, Meet at DARC

On February 11, 2016, UCSC's Institute of the Arts and Sciences (IAS) will open its first exhibition project, *Collective Museum*, by the Portland-based artist group Public Doors and Windows (PDW). *Collective Museum* takes the form of a surprising and vast campus-wide installation complete with signage, a photo exhibition dispersed through five university buildings, a museum tour, a print-on-demand catalogue, and a mobile website: iascollectivemuseum.com. It opens with an inaugural exhibition in the Mary Porter Sesnon Gallery at Porter College, including a public reception 5-7pm, February 11, and an artists' talk at 4pm in the Digital Arts Research Center. The ambitious project spans the university's 2001 acres and, as the artists explain, "takes the campus from having no museum to having one of the largest museums in the world."

To re-envision the university as a museum, the artists, Nolan Calisch, Harrell Fletcher, and Molly Sherman, collected stories from faculty, staff, students, and alumni about 50 sites on campus. They range from the site of the first international meeting to discuss sequencing the human genome; sites of academic and personal experiences of students, staff, and faculty; and natural sites such as the mysterious mima mounds on the southwest of the campus.

Collective Museum creatively highlights some of the multiple and diverse stories and

voices that make up UC Santa Cruz. This is in keeping with PDW's shared commitment to creating socially engaged artworks. Harrell Fletcher, the group's founder, is a 1996 graduate of the UCSC Farm apprenticeship program and now an internationally renowned artist. The collaborative, ecology-conscious legacy of the Farm greatly influences his practice which emphasizes working collaboratively with other people, particularly non-artists, an understanding of art as a "social ecology," and a belief that art, like healthy food, should reach everyone. Notably, he and his art partners often work outside of traditional museum spaces to create innovative projects rooted in the specific contexts and institutions that sponsor them. This made PDW perfect for the first IAS artist residency, and they have been coming to UC Santa Cruz since early 2014 to conceptualize and create their *Collective Museum*.

According to Institute of the Arts and Sciences founding director, John Weber, "*Collective Museum* responds brilliantly to key aspects of our mission, offering a creative, playful, yet deeply meaningful look at UC Santa Cruz, our culture, and our campus. It will offer visitors a unique window into the university. Yet I'm also sure that even long-time campus staff, faculty and students will learn something new and fascinating about this unusual place." Sesnon Gallery Director Shelby Graham adds, "this multiple-site, exhibition project breaks new ground for the future of museums, by combining collective memory, storytelling, landscape, objects, and walking beyond the gallery walls."

The artists' "museum" demonstrates a broad, interdisciplinary reach, deliberately touching on locations and activities across campus, even extending down to the Long Marine Lab, and the Forest Ecology Research Plot, a hard-to-find site on the Upper Campus. Each of the 50 sites is marked with distinctive blue signage, with a short quote from the site contributor and a link to interviews and information. Additional gallery walls across campus further document the sites and deepen the project. "The artists are calling this project a museum," says Weber. "But it is also a huge conceptual art work that needs to be experienced by walking, looking, thinking, and also talking with others. We look forward to creating tours of the project with students as tour guides, just like you'd tour a museum; not looking at everything there, but picking out a few favorite pieces to share with visitors."

Rachel Nelson, the IAS's graduate assistant, served as co-curator of the project while pursuing her work towards a Ph.D. in Visual Studies. "My work is on contemporary art that engages issues of social justice," Nelson said, "and working closely with Harrell, Molly and Nolan over two years has given me great insight into the processes that inform and shape this commitment in art practice. I'm also constantly surprised at how PDW was able to capture so much of UC Santa Cruz. My own time here has been a mixture of intense intellectual moments with amazing scholars like Angela Davis, David Marriott and Jennifer González, confrontations with social forces, upheavals in the form of strikes and protests...all of it punctuated by dreamy walks through the trees and ravines. You get a surprisingly rich glimpse of this experience in PDW's *Collective Museum*."

A print-on-demand collection catalogue documents the *Collective Museum*. As with the other aspects of the project, it echoes but updates traditional museums practices, taking

the form of a largely informational, no-nonsense 140-page book. It includes archival and new photos about all the sites, a conversation between the artists and renowned museum scholar and historian James Clifford, emeritus professor in UC Santa Cruz's History of Consciousness department, and an essay about the work of Public Doors and Windows by Weber and Nelson. Clifford is also a participant in the project, contributing and discussing one site. Another catalogue contributor is the filmmaker, performance artist and author Miranda July, who offers an evocative autobiographical reminiscence of her two years on campus as a student.

To keep costs down and make the catalogue easily accessible nationwide, the IAS and PDW opted to produce it through Amazon's CreateSpace platform. The book can be ordered directly from Amazon and only then is it printed, bound, and mailed. Weber noted that this method allows the IAS to offer a more substantial publication than would otherwise be financially feasible, while also making it widely available. It represents a deliberate experiment in leveraging digital technologies to maximize the IAS's public impact at a minimum cost.

On February 11 at 4pm in the Digital Arts Research Center, Room 108, there will be a free public talk between the artists and Lydia Matthews, Professor of Visual Culture and Director of the Curatorial Design Research Lab at Parsons School of Design, The New School, and a prominent, long-time theorist and curator of collaborative art projects and practice. Then from 5-7pm the artists will be present for the public reception and opening at the Sesnon Gallery. The gallery show, installed by Porter College Curatorial Practice students, includes sculptures of each site, made by students in Dee Hibbert-Jones's and A. Laurie Palmer's art classes, plus portraits of the participants who provided sites and stories for the museum, photographed by PDW artist Nolan Calisch.

On February 12, 2016, the artists will lead an all-day tour of the museum. This unusual stroll will provide a rich glimpse of the people, sites, and experiences that compose this highly personal, eccentric, and illuminating museum and the university it reflects. For more information, please visit our website:

ias.ucsc.edu/projects/collective-museum

The Sesnon Gallery encourages interdisciplinary discourse through the lens of the arts. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Saturday, noon to 5:00PM and Wednesday until 8:00PM. The gallery is located at Porter College, UCSC and is wheelchair accessible. Admission is free and metered or special event parking is available at Porter College. Group tours are available by appointment at (831) 459-3606. Please visit our website at arts.ucsc.edu/sesnon.

###