

Program Summary (19 April 2012)

At 7:50 p.m., President Alexander alerted the membership that the evening's presentation would begin shortly. But first, announcements and the elections must take place. Visitors were introduced. Ballets were circulated.

At 8:00 p.m., President Alexander asked John Boles to make a special announcement. John gave a brief history of tonight's special guest, Hank Hudspeth, former Rice board member and teacher of Political Science 210 and 310 for many generations of Rice students. On February 21, 1980, Hank presented a paper to the Houston Philosophical Society on the topic of "Variations on a Theme of Natural Law." Hank recently took the time to write the talk up after all these years. Bound copies of the talk were circulated to the assembled HPS members. John indicated HPS was honoring Hank for his years of participation in HPS, and more generally, for a lifetime of service to Rice and the community. Hank and his wife received a standing ovation.

At 8:10 p.m., Fields introduced the evening's speaker **Rick Lowe**. Rick is the founder of Project Row Houses in 1993, an arts and cultural community located in an historically significant and culturally charged neighborhood in Houston, Texas. Rick is also co-founder and executive director of the Community Artists Collective, which creates and facilitates opportunities promoting African American cultural traditions in the natural and built environments. For these and other efforts, Rick has received numerous awards. The title of Rick's talk was *Project Row Houses: Past, Present, and Future* (With a brief five minute interlude, each section elected a new head.) Fields called order and asked Rick to come to the lectern. The membership warmly welcomed Mr. Lowe.



Mr. Lowe began his talk with an antecode about his multiple interests — from artist, to architect, to businessman, to community organizer, among others. He laughed that when he gives a talk, a good fraction of the audience often expects a different emphasis.

Rick initially came to Houston to do installation work as an artist, including showings at the Contemporary Arts Museum. He also performed a few protest works to give voice to those in the community who had none.

A group of a dozen houses in the Third Ward became the basis for Project Row Houses. These small row houses were slated for demolition. Rick happened to be with city leaders surveying the neighborhood one final time. But Rick and friends took the renovation of the neighborhood as a challenge, and it succeeded beautifully. A new community of contemporary artists is beginning in Mobile. Rick expects to devote a portion of the next two years to completing the Mobile project.

Rick moved on to a new project that he is trying to create a proposal for over the next three weeks. The project is entitled “Opa-locka Vision 20/20: Community Gateways Design Project.” Opa-locka is a small town of four square miles just north of Miami, Florida, that has a number of serious challenges, from high unemployment to high crime. The name of the community makes reference to the number of locks and six bridges (gateways) that gain entrance. Rick is looking at placing art at these bridges. Can this effort lead to proud and active residents? Rick is optimistic.

Rick described another recent project in Mobile, Alabama. Mobile has no contemporary arts community. Rick identified goals of introducing contemporary arts to the city, and simultaneously bring people back to downtown Mobile. Rick showed pictures of the new Mobile facility, which just opened this past week. Again, Rick is looking to renovate buildings the local leaders have slated for demolition. Time will tell.

The presentation was followed by a brief question-and-answer period. Rick observed that habitat for humanity is now working in the same area of Houston. The audience warmly thanked Rick at the conclusion.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

David W. Scott
Recording Secretary

The new sections heads elected at the regular meeting were:

Section A. Jack Agee

Section B. Wayne Shandera

Section C. George Barnstone

Section D. Wil McCorquodale

Section E. Will Cannady

Section F. Angus McCorquodale