

Revisiting Murals, Animating Neighborhoods

October 15, 2009

Slide 1: Title

Slide 2: Mural Depicts Local Black History:

Background:

In the summer of 1978 the Champaign-Urbana community became aware of a local mural project. The young men L. Nolan, M. Mitchell and P. Caston were part of the group of 20 high school students and young adults that assisted in the creating of the mural.

City and federal agencies, non-for profits and members of the African American community of Champaign and Urbana worked together to help in what became at the Mural Project. The mural was an out growth of the Nurturing Neighborhood Awareness project which was established in 1977 established by the Educational Resources in Environmental Sciences. Nurturing Neighborhood Awareness known as NNA had been successful in a series of art based workshops held at Douglass Center to stimulate community empowerment. Kathryn Cender the project's coordinator and Eugene Britt the community coordinator began investigating the idea of a large outdoor mural. To this end with the support of the African American Cultural Center, the La Casa Cultural Latina and the departments of Political Science, Anthropology and Art of the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana they were able to bring muralist Mark Rogovin of Chicago, IL in for a workshop and discussion with local African American artists and interested members of the community. From the beginning of the process there was community concern, and artists reluctance to the mural project. They wanted to do done by a local artists, not by outsiders, and who would determine what would go in the mural, the artist, the community or the institutions and agencies? Many of the local black artist

didn't want anyone to have a say in their creative process. Then there was the sheer amount of work and organization to be done. Just before Mark Rogovin came in April (1978), I was contacted about the mural project and if I was interested to attend a meeting that was to be held at Oasis Graphic, a graphic studio that supported local African American artist was by Alonso Mitchell. It was that meeting that set me on the path to create the mural.

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Slide 3: Park Street and 5th Street

This mural was a way of me making money between jobs doing what I was trained to do. I had no true political interests at the time, however those around me did. It as been surprising to me that the mural is still held in high esteem in the community as a symbol of the connectedness of the old "North End".

Slide 4: The Mural

Today I will discuss the process of creating the mural.

Slide 4: