

WHERE
THE
FUTURE
CAME
FROM

A COLLECTIVE RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE INTEGRAL
ROLE OF FEMINISM IN CHICAGO'S ARTIST-RUN CULTURE
FROM THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

Special thanks to every artist who opened up their practice to the Chicago community, many of whom have given us access to their event materials and ephemera for the purposes of this project. Thanks to the scholars whose original research was lent to us in order to better understand this history—Tracey Jean Boisseau, Tempestt Hazel, Joanna Gardner-Huggett, Mary Ann Johnson, and Nicole Marroquin—along with the librarians, who have worked tirelessly in helping us secure documents and resources. More special thanks to the Women and Leadership Archives at Loyola University Chicago, the National Museum of Mexican Art, and CanTV for lending material to the exhibition; Judy Duguid, for significant editing assistance; Michael Thomas, for assisting in research and editing, along with hours of thoughtful conversation and extra childcare; our team of student researchers, led by Emily Gallagher and Rana Liu, with assistance from Kate Anderson; our student design team, Gianella Goan, Ashley King, and Lauren van Reken, who together created the *Where the Future Came From* watermark; Neysa Page-Lieberman, executive director of DEPS, for her expert guidance; Jeffreen M. Hayes and Melissa Hilliard Potter, for their support; and Mark Porter, exhibitions manager—who along with Guinevere Yoseyva, Melanie Vazquez, JJ McLuckie, and our fantastic student staff—oversaw the exhibition’s installation. Also thanks to Matt Novak, whose aptly titled *Gizmodo* article published in 2013 inspired the title for this project. Additional thanks go to Julia Klein from Soberscove Press, an amazing partner in publishing this book; Kristi McGuire, for her copyediting and proofreading; and Sonia Yoon, for her beautiful book design.

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Where the Future Came From Is Where the Future Comes From

Meg Duguid

This book is the official documentation of *Where the Future Came From*, a project that took place at the Glass Curtain Gallery at Columbia College Chicago (November 1, 2018–February 15, 2019). The program focused on the role of feminist artist-run activities in Chicago, from the late nineteenth century to the project's closing.

Consisting of an open-source participatory exhibition, a symposium, and a series of accompanying programs, the goal of *Where the Future Came From* was to create a record around the vast array of feminist artist-run events, programs, and projects that have been organized throughout Chicago's history. The physical exhibition contained a timeline of projects lining the walls of the space, a very large table intended for work and study, and shelves of research materials. Each project listed in the timeline had a binder associated with it, which contained event information and ephemera, and many of our other materials were available for visitors to look at. The information presented was reviewed, edited, and expanded upon by scholars-in-residence, students, artists, historians, and viewers alike. Our visual timeline was edited directly on the walls during the run of the exhibition, creating a living document that transformed, thanks to the voices and memories of gallery visitors.

In creating this project, we used the following concepts as guidelines for selecting collective and collaborative projects and collecting information:

VISUAL ART—broadly defined, it includes but is not limited to painting, sculpture, craft, fiber, installation art, video/film, sound art, performance art, and printmaking.

FEMINIST-ARTIST—an artist who organizes activities on behalf of women's rights and interests to amplify femme and women-identified voices.

ARTIST-RUN ACTIVITIES—activities by groups of artists who self-organize to make their voices heard. Endeavors might include—but are not limited to—formalized not-for-profit organizations, apartment spaces, discussion series, performance art theaters, mobile art carts, mixtapes, trunk shows, public protests, zines, print projects, and radical craft circles.

What we found as we began to collect information was that our definitions started to become blurry. How do you draw a line between performance art and theater? How many artists do there need to be at the beginning of a project for it to be considered artist-run? How do you define artists' activities that are housed in and bridge social-service organizations?

We also found that this work is incomplete and messy. The way people band together is messy. Art history is messy. And how this work is archived (or not) is messy. So, in turn, this book is a container for this mess and an organizing tool that attempts to make sense of this research.

As we collected information, we only became hungrier for more. Even though there was only an eleven-inch gap between timeline entries on the walls of the gallery, it seemed as though there were giant chasms where additional information belonged. By the end of the exhibition, while much more had been added, many things were still missing, and women of color were not represented as much as we believe they should be. We found evidence of sustained, women-centered, arts-oriented activity in Chicago as far back as 1880, when the Palette Club was founded, but we know that there is information that has yet to be uncovered. One of our biggest barriers was finding projects from earlier eras, in which women taught classes from their kitchen tables, or where needlepoint and other craft works were celebrated and sustained.

We also recognize that this history is disappearing as we speak. We likely hosted the last documented presentation of venerable artist and SisterSerpents cofounder, Mary Ellen Croteau, who passed away as the exhibition was closing. Many important figures who led projects are sick and unable to help distribute or fully work on their archives. In addition, we found that much of the work is only partially archived or not archived at all. So we pored through exhibition listings in newsletters, newspapers, and magazines. Unsurprisingly, our information is still partial and incomplete. Sometimes we heard about the existence of a group that would fall into our feminist artist-run definition, but we couldn't find enough documentation of their work to confirm our suspicions.

When the project closed, the timeline on the walls of the gallery gave an overview of the activities of forty-five projects, dating as far back as 1880. The binders in the exhibition contained information about more than five thousand events that were produced, and they included announcements about the work of thousands of artists. We digitized over sixty hours of video footage containing performances, lectures, and exhibition documentation, and we transcribed twenty-eight hours of presentations that we produced.

In this book you will find transcripts of presentations by the artist-organizers who participated in the symposium that kicked off the project, along with materials from the scholars-in-residence that took place throughout the run of the exhibition. The timeline entries that lined the gallery walls are also included. In addition, you will find three commissioned essays that help to contextualize aspects of this project. Despite all of this material, you are not going to find neat definitions or final assessments of histories tied up with tidy bows of how certain things came in and out of being. Our hope is that in twenty years, the information presented in the following pages will only be a fraction of the material that will have been collected about the feminist artist-run in Chicago.

Where the Future Came From is Where the Future Comes From.

This book is not an end point; it is a starting line.

[Redacted]

SYMPOSIUM

[Redacted]



(L-R) Lynne Warren, Courtney Fink, and Meg Duguid. Photo by Judith Brotman.



Arlene Turner-Crawford of Sapphire and Crystals. Photo by Daniel Livingstone.

Sapphires and Crystals

Arlene Turner-Crawford

I'm connected to that Great Migration. My people were part of the inspiration for self-determination that grew out of Jim Crow. Up from the South they came.

I'm a Baby Boomer who came to consciousness at the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, by way of Kent State, the Watts riots, voter registration, the murders of Malcolm, Martin, Jack, and Bobby. The Vietnam War, flower power, and Black Power.

I felt I was on a pulse,

inside a time that taught me a lot.

I witnessed,

I participated.

I came to be just who I believe I am.

Now I believe in people power. I witnessed it in my parents, extended families, teachers, and friends. Thanks to Nelson Stevens, I saw the *Wall of Respect* and felt moved to be part of a vanguard—BAM! The Black Arts Movement got a new recruit.

I sat at the feet of Larry Neal, Jeff Donaldson, Calvin Jones, Murray De Pillars, Margaret Burroughs, Amiri Baraka, and Marva Jolly. A host of ancestors who had a clue.

Maulana Karenga created a cultural ideology that owes much to the work of LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka):

Culture is the basis of all ideas, images and actions—we move by a set of values, given to us by our culture. The 7 criteria for Culture: (1) Mythology, (2) History, (3) Social Organizations, (4) Political Organizations, (5) Economic Organizations, (6) Creative Motif, (7) Ethos.

One of the crucial questions around the social upheavals of the 1960s was, “How can art and culture most effectively participate and contribute to the quest for self-determination and liberation?” As you’ve been learning, it was wildfire. It spread out to peoples, to cultures, to all the people who did not have a chance to be their own voice. Young people, women, men, different cultures were