

ART ENTHUSIAST



"Gallivanting Gallery Gals Get Going"

Written by Rachel Davis

March 5, 2017



Three Co-Founders of R/SF projects, from left to right Anicka Vrana-Godwin, Lauren Licata, and Kaitlin Trataris at 4 Rooms, November 2016. Courtesy of R/SF projects.

Who are those girls? What do they think they're doing?

They are R/SF and they are creating a new diverse artistic community. What about you?

R/SF is a collaborative, experimental and diverse art gallery in the Tenderloin Nob hill neighborhood of San Francisco. Nestled between a bakery and a bar, the two story cathedral windowed space is situated in a hub of constant energy.

Established in February of last year, the gallery is very new and what it has been able to accomplish thus far is remarkable. Founders, Lauren Licata, Anička Vrána-Godwin and Kaitlin Trataris met while enrolled in the Master's Program at the San Francisco Art Institute.

From humble beginnings in a one-room space in the Mission to a pristine white incandescent space, they continue to showcase work that engages the audience in new ways as well as actively developing strategies to support community growth and collaboration.

The original location functioned as an incubator and a launch pad for incredible dialogue and exchange. Within the span of only three months, they hosted 46 events with over 70 collaborators. In this way the space came to function like an ever evolving, growing experience for people to participate and learn. Through these happenings/events, and others like them, R/SF established significant momentum to reinvigorate the underground experimental arts scene throughout San Francisco.



'4 Rooms', R/SF projects' launch exhibition at their new downtown storefront, November 2016. Courtesy of R/SF projects, photo by Ben Hoffman

The intimacy of the events, as well as the performances and readings fostered an energy and a purpose that wasn't specific to any site or time. It permeated to the people who passed through, the participating artists and volunteers who gave their time to make the space a reality.

In every respect, they have created a new normal for galleries, bolstered by the "very willingness to actually live up to the idea that bonafide experimentation is the foundation for authentic growth, expression and backbone of their mission, and to function within a space of criticality where endless adaptation is possible."

R/SF's heightened acclaim and recognition is aligned with the Bay Area's flourishing renaissance. With more eyes on the art scene here than ever before, this means a space run by three female artists finding success is a platform to be utilized to expand our interactions, experiences and possibilities in engaging creatives to do more and to be more in today's constantly changing society.

"Focusing on our artists' practices and showing truly amazing new work has been really liberating, while also fulfilling our long love for surprising and engaging programming that opens the door to collaborating with other creative s in the Bay and beyond."

The process of working with the gallery and knowing all three of the women involved brings a feeling of appreciation and uninhibited possibilities. Watching the space become a part of a burgeoning art community and seeing the symbiotic roles artist, art, audience and gallery assume makes one feel this contagious magnetic energy happening now in this city and in this era. They are not only facilitating the growth of artistic opportunity in a larger environment, they are also cultivating the artistic process and dialogue throughout the Bay Area.



PREMIUM EMPORIUM (installation view), solo exhibition by Hadas Kleiman, 2017. Courtesy of R/SF projects

It is refreshing to see a space that isn't playing by the rules and takes pride in being the new kid on the block. They aren't afraid to gamble and to clean up later, "We unabashedly operate a hyper-femme space which doesn't conform to various gallery norms, whether that means scooping up a "risky" artist who hasn't shown elsewhere or signing a sales pitch with an emoji." Their programming is structured for lots of improvisation, providing flexibility for pop ups, performances, renegade screenings and crazy dinners.

In a soft, dreamy way, they have their cake and eat it too: solo shows that are planned a full year in advance and room to be a spontaneous space for the arts community.

When everyday it seems we get a new notification about another disrupting news article or crisis, it is important to know that there are art spaces committed to becoming the catalyst of community action and dialog. They see themselves as an arena for shared visions and imagining new futures collectively. "How could we not treat the responsibility of having this platform seriously? How could we not endeavor to open up space for others to speak in a time like this?"

No matter what there is to say about the art market — they're interested in being ambassadors for artists, and if possible, in taking up little Robin Hood schemes to put money in their pockets as well. They seem to play a role where they're complicit with the system to a certain extent (not total anarchists) but also taking up space within the system to foster alterity as well. Their artist-taught workshops, for example, endeavor to not only spread cultural- richness, but to also compensate the artists outside of the realm of saleable objects. Their immersive performance series MASQUE operates similarly, challenging how ephemeral media (sound, performance, socially engaged practices) are revered and consumed, and eventually compensated. Lately they've also been tossing around notions of the gallery as a 'third place,' a true watering hole for the art world and beyond, and what that could mean for current systems of social interaction or temporary communities.

To this generation of women, the R/SF team reminds them to never forget that collaboration is key. What we make and do together, no matter how much longer it takes or how unruly it is in the actual moment, is better as a vehicle for growth and enrichment.

"It's not —go out and network so that you might meet some big gallery dealer. It's about finding your place within a generation and all rising to the top together."



Spackle and Sparkle, event poster from residence/SF. Courtesy of R/SF projects.



Tyler Eash, Full Moon in the Daytime (installation view), 2016-17. Courtesy of R/SF projects, photo by Ben Hoffman.



Outside crowd at 4 Rooms, R/SF projects' launch exhibition at their new downtown storefront, November 2016. Courtesy of R/SF projects, photo by Ben Hoffman.



Pre-Party, residence/SF's inaugural launch at the initial project space. Featuring artists Zoe Kuhn and Stevie Southard, February 2016. Courtesy of R/SF projects.



Opening reception for *Constructed, instead?*, curated by Marcela Pardo Ariza at residence/SF, the initial project space, May 2016. Courtesy of R/SF projects.



MASQUE, R/SF projects' experimental performance series (next event is April 22), November 2016. Photo courtesy of Rachel Davis.



Co-Founder Kaitlin Trataris at residence/SF, February 2016. Courtesy of R/SF projects.



Simón García-Miñaur, *The Valley* (still), video, 2017, for his upcoming solo exhibition *The Valley*, opening reception 25 March, 7-10pm. Courtesy of R/SF projects.



Faluda Islam performing in 4 Rooms, R/SF projects' launch exhibition at their new downtown storefront, November 2016. Courtesy of R/SF projects, photo by Ben Hoffman.