

Public Abstract

First Name:Matt

Middle Name:R

Last Name:Rahner

Adviser's First Name:Joe

Adviser's Last Name:Johnson

Co-Adviser's First Name:Matt

Co-Adviser's Last Name:Ballou

Graduation Term:SP 2014

Department:Art

Degree:MFA

Title:Eminent Domain

Eminent Domain is a documentary photographic project and an archival exploration of a neighborhood located on the East Side of urban Kansas City, Missouri. The series documents a four-block portion of the Wendell-Phillips neighborhood that was bought out and demolished under the premise of eminent domain. Photographs from this series are connected to a continuum of documentary photographs in pictorial approach and aesthetic choices. The project is related to the work of contemporary artists such as LaToya Ruby Frazier, Jim Goldberg and Ira Nowinski. By working across traditions and modes of image making, including portraiture, typology and appropriation, this project is concerned with exploring the use of eminent domain and its ensuing realities.

The project began with the knowledge that one day there would inevitably be a void: Occupied homes would become empty, then demolished, and the piles of debris hauled away. The neighborhoods process of arriving at this void was the physical manifestation of eminent domain that could be photographed. I gathered tangible photographic evidence through looking, interpreting and collecting. In the final display of this exhibition the images confront our gaze squarely. In addition to the production of images, I collected found objects, ephemera and photographs from vacant lots and homes. These objects signify the intangible, for example, the qualitative being-ness of this neighborhood and its residents. Aware of my inability to photograph the past, these objects allowed me to look back and know the story more completely. This series allows interpretations of many narratives such as Kansas City's racial history, African-American familial histories, larger questions surrounding urban renewal, and the ability of one entity to forcefully remove others from their homes.