Close to the Edge: The Birth of Hip-Hop Architecture exhibit to open in St. Paul
April 15 – June 15, 2019

Proposal for JXTA Arts Center, 4RM+ULA

“Don’t push me ‘cause I’m close to the edge.
I’m trying not to lose my head.
It’s like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder
how I keep from going under”
- From “The Message,” Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five

Minneapolis, MN, March 28, 2019 – The American Institute of Architects St. Paul (AIA St. Paul) and Springboard for the Arts are proud to announce the opening of Close to the Edge: The Birth of Hip-Hop Architecture on Monday, April 15 at 6:00, with a press preview from 5:00-5:45 pm.
The exhibition – curated and designed by Sekou Cooke, assistant professor at the Syracuse University School of Architecture – exhibits the work of 21 practitioners, academics, and students who are at the center of this emerging architectural movement – including St. Paul-based 4RM+ULA architecture and its principal, James Garrett Jr., AIA, NOMA, 2019 recipient of the national AIA Young Architects Award. The exhibit premiered at the Center for Architecture in New York City in fall of 2018 and has received significant attention from the national architecture press and generated great public interest.

“We are excited to host Minnesota’s first pop-up ‘center for architecture’ and for the focus to be on Hip-Hop Architecture,” said AIA St. Paul/AIA Minnesota executive director Mary-Margaret Zindren. AIA St. Paul President Steven Wolf, AIA, said “St. Paul in particular, and the Twin Cities broadly, is a hub for architects, designers and artists who are making the theory of Hip-Hop Architecture a reality.”

Springboard for the Arts’ new space on University Ave., being designed by 4RM+ULA, will bring the concepts of Hip-Hop Architecture to life. "We are delighted to be able to host this exhibit at SpringBOX as we re-purpose this space to be a creative community hub,” said Springboard for the Arts executive director Laura Zabel. “Hosting an exhibition on Hip-Hop Architecture, which is responsive, resourceful, and imaginative, is a great fit as for our goals for the space as platform for the community. Being able to showcase work from our partners at 4RM+ULA in this space before its transformation is exciting."

Hip Hop Architecture embodies the collective creative energies of one of the dominant cultural movements of our time. Hip-Hop Architecture’s ideals have primarily been tested by a loosely organized group of pioneering individuals, each using hip-hop as a lens through which to provoke and evoke architectural form. Over the last five decades, hip-hop’s primary means of expression – deejaying, emceeing, b-boying, and graffiti – have become globally recognized creative practices, and each has significantly impacted the urban built environment.

Close to the Edge: The Birth of Hip-Hop Architecture exhibits the work of these pioneers at the center of this emerging architectural revolution. It includes work by 25 participants representing seven countries, with projects ranging across a variety of media and forms of expression: from experimental visualization formats and installation strategies to façade studies, building designs, and urban development proposals.

One of those participants is St. Paul-based James Garret, Jr, AIA NOMA. "I see Hip Hop Architecture, ultimately, as a communication of movement and flow from the perspective of the artist/designer. I see the Hip Hop Architect as a mediator, translator, and incubator of this energy flow--oscillating back and forth between the art form and the building process."

Local graffiti artists Alex Smith and Roger Cummings will provide the first layer of intervention for the exhibit space – the garage of the former Saxon Ford building – with full-scale murals and tags on the interior walls. The next layer is a repurposed 40-foot shipping container sliced into sections and hung on the gallery walls, partially covering the graffiti below. “Shipping containers have represented creative reuse and appropriation for architects over the last several years,” says
Cooke. “Since repurposing, sampling, and appropriations are dominant themes within hip-hop, many Hip-Hop Architecture projects use them as a starting point. For the exhibition, this shipping container becomes a three-dimensional ‘tag’ on top of the already graffitied wall surface.”

Layering as a process continues throughout the show, with vinyl lettering, paper labels, paint-pen tags and arrows (including those by the renowned Graffiti artist David CHINO Villorente), wheat-pasted posters, and name tag stickers. A grid of framed images and drawings from the exhibition’s many participants forms the final layer of the intervention.

“I Know You Seen Me on Your Videos,” a multi-screen video collage of lectures, music videos, and other footage of events relevant to Hip-Hop Architecture, completes the content in the main gallery. The exhibition also includes “on Form,” a series of 3D printed models presented as blank formal objects divorced from their contexts; “B-Sides,” a series of images and statements about other architectural movements related to Hip-Hop Architecture; and “Black Noise,” an audio booth used for listening to additional lectures, interviews, and clips from architecturally inspired rap music. According to Cooke, “the entire experience will be sensorially stimulating, highlighting the totality of Hip-Hop Architectural space.”

The exhibit will be offered free to the public to experience. The organizers suggest that visitors make a donation to the Minnesota Architectural Foundation’s Wigington Minority Scholarship fund – named for St. Paul’s own Clarence ‘Cap’ Wigington, the first African American municipal architect in the United States and the first licensed African American architect in Minnesota. The scholarship helps pay the cost of tuition for people of color who are pursuing an architecture degree in Minnesota.

Additional partners who have made this event possible include 4RM+ULA, AIA Minneapolis, AIA Minnesota, the Minneapolis-St. Paul chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects (MSP NOMA), and the Minnesota Architectural Foundation (MAF).

**RELATED PROGRAMS**
Members of the press are invited to all related programming. For more information and to RSVP, contact [hansen@aia-mn.org](mailto:hansen@aia-mn.org).

**Exhibit Opening**
Monday, April 15
5:00-5:45 pm preview for members of the press
6:00 – 9:00 pm
SpringBOX!
262 University Avenue West, St. Paul
*Sekou Cooke and James Garrett, Jr will be in attendance.*

**Symposium: Wednesday, April 17**
Panel discussion
3:00-5:00 pm at SpringBOX!, 262 University Ave W, St. Paul
Continued conversation and “cypher session”
5:30-8:30 pm at U of M, Rapson Hall, 89 Church St SE, Mpls
Panelists: Sekou Cooke, Ujijji Davis, James Garrett, Jr., Olalekan Jeyifous
Moderator: Jennifer Newsom, assistant professor at the University of Minnesota School of Architecture.

Previous Press Coverage:
https://www.metropolismag.com/architecture/hip-hop-architecture-exhibition-center-architecture/

Partners & Sponsors

Close to the Edge: The Birth of Hip-Hop Architecture is presented by:
  AIA St. Paul
  Springboard for the Arts

Substantial financial and in-kind support is also provided by:
  4RM+ULA
  American Institute of Architects Minneapolis
  American Institute of Architects Minnesota
  National Organization of Minority Architects, Minneapolis-St. Paul chapter
  Minnesota Architectural Foundation

About AIA Minnesota / AIA St. Paul / AIA Minneapolis / AIA Northern Minnesota
The American Institute of Architects Minnesota, founded in 1892, and the local chapters of AIA St. Paul, AIA Minneapolis and AIA Northern Minnesota, are dedicated to strengthening our communities, improving our built environment and providing exceptional design. AIA Minnesota and the local chapters provide regular opportunities for the public to engage with concepts related to architecture – from placemaking to design thinking to sustainable, resilient, and regenerative design. Pop-up events and exhibits are part of a broader intention to create a “center for architecture” in Minnesota, in conjunction with the Minnesota Historical Society and Mill City Museum. For more information on the organization and Minnesota architectural firms, reference our website visit our Facebook page and pick up a copy of Architecture MN, our award-winning magazine.

About Springboard for the Arts
Springboard for the Arts is an economic and community development organization for artists and by artists. Our work is about building stronger communities, neighborhoods, and economies, and we believe that artists are an important leverage point in that work. Springboard for the Arts’ mission is to cultivate vibrant communities by connecting artists with the skills, information, and services they need to make a living and a life. For more information, visit www.springboardforthearts.org.