

# tairwell's

**ISSUE 2**

**JULY 2012**

## NOAH KRELL

I am *Stairwell's*, and I will inhabit the Outer Sunset's Carville Annex for one night on Friday the 13th in July 2012. I will house artwork in response to this foggy, drift-wooden environment. While I possess it, Noah Krell has promised to capture time and play it back on the Annex's walls. He will layer recently caught history inside a room that thinks it could be a 1970's ski lodge. In the past, Noah's films and photographs steered us to observe subtleties. He presented small moments: weeds bending in the breeze, birds chirping, and things that seemed still until your sight adjusted, like staring at a Magic Eye stereogram. That 'A-ha!' moment is the weight of a wordless drama. Noah is sifting through the cement-y suburban Outer Sunset for evidence of its quaint histories. One hundred years ago horses gave up their trolleys and cable cars were permanently lifted from the tracks. These unmoving carriages became vacation cottages and playtime parlors in the dunes. Then one day, the party was over. A rallying call was uttered, "Make Clean Today, By the Burning and Sweeping of Yesterday!" and the bonfires turned bohemian nests to ash. Maybe Noah's camera will catch decades of fog, blowing sand, new, and old things fading until they are replaced again. All the while the never-ending sound of pounding surf, shifting sands, and human progress will make a soft din in the background.

**Stacy Martin**

## NEW VENUES:

### *Stairwell's* goes back to the land

While weeding last week, I developed an itch on my lower right eyelid. Since I was wearing soil-soaked gloves, I had no easy, practiced way to scratch the delicate spot. So I tilted my head southward, drew my eyes up high and brought the cuff of my glove carefully to my eyelid, drawing it back and forth to relieve the itch. In this position, I focused briefly on the brim of my straw hat. Light fought its way into pinholes between straw slats, and a grid appeared, forming dozens of viewfinders through which I could observe the garden bed's mulch (straw of a different fate). Each image melted gently around its edge, undulating where garden met hat. While a clear view of the bed revealed shadow and highlight, the hat's many lenses lifted the difference between shade and illumination, between wet and dry mulch. As I shifted, one portal became hybridized brick, soil and beetle; another, mulch again; a third, part frog. The viewing grids were stairwells stretched long and pulled taut, the top of each step a window, the step's drop a piece of straw hat. I shook my head to blur the windows, running up the stairs.

**Marion Anthonisen**

## COLLIN McKELVEY

Sound is one of only two human senses easily recordable for later recall. The way a loudspeaker emits recorded sound to a listener is, albeit in reverse, the same process through which the human ear sends aural information to the brain. The ear drum is like a speaker's transducer.

In one of his site-specific works created for A GOOD WAY AWAY, Collin McKelvey uses transducers to transform walls and boxes—some of the very structures and objects that contribute to the space's acoustics—into sound sources themselves. These environmental speakers broadcast recordings of McKelvey traveling through the Carville Annex and its surrounding neighborhood. Though altered through processing, the resultant tracks are not truly finished until they are played back in their place of origin.

The presence of listeners' bodies will further alter the acoustics, changing the way sound moves through the space while adding their own steps and rustlings to the piece.

Site-specific work often responds to or alters a space and then exists statically henceforth. McKelvey's work, as presented here, is ephemeral. The site does not exist without the work and the work does not exist without the site; it is site-specific in the truest sense of the word.

**Michael Rothfeld**

## MATT KENNEDY

Days ago, I emailed Matt Kennedy posing as a 6th-grade girl with questions about photography. Matt, perhaps sensing that this message was in fact from a 29-year-old man, never responded. And so my attempt to instigate a naïve and honest dialogue on art, through trickery, failed. Below is our unfinished correspondence.

Hello Matt,

My name is Laura and I am a 6th grade student at Julia Morgan School for Girls. My assignment is to interview an artist and I found you online. I hope you don't mind. I would really like to be a photographer! My report is due this Wednesday, and I would love your help. Thank you!—Laura

- How long were you taking pictures before you got good at it?
- What's your favorite part of photography?
- It looks like you take pictures of everything, but sometimes just trees. What's the best thing to take pictures of? My art teacher has a unibrow.
- Is photography hard? I don't have a camera yet, just my phone.
- What's the difference between news photography and art? Are you on Instagram?
- How can one picture of an old fence be good and another picture of an old fence be bad?

**Michael Flannery**

## CARVILLE ANNEX

Things have changed a lot since I was born—1950, the year the 49ers had their debut season, which wasn't pretty. Less than 800,000 people called San Francisco home then. I got \$158,903 of improvements recently, and my sale price in '97 was \$225,000. In the '90s, I saw a business consultancy set up shop here, and recently, an artist named Jeff Canham painted a name on my front window that first got made up in the 1890s. My predecessor, the original Carville Annex, was a coffee shop/saloon inside one of the many old horse-drawn streetcars that were repurposed as commercial establishments and residences in the neighborhood. So here I stand, the new Annex. I get filled up with the hum and rattle of the N Judah more than a few times a day. I'm told I have a refined scent of wood, old carpet, and ocean. I can get fifty people in here, if they squish.

**Taylor Wiles**

## OUTER THERE

The Outer Sunset has always been a faraway place. In San Francisco's younger days, the small city was separated from the ocean by miles of sand dunes (the result of granite ground by glaciers in the Sierra Nevada and brought by various bodies of water to the sea), while ocean currents brought more sand up from the south. The mythology of the Wild West is intertwined with the history of this neighborhood. People dwelled in the dunes sheltered from the rest of the city by distance, cold and fog. Close to the shore, musicians, artists, and bohemians lived in converted carriages and street cars in Carville. It was a lawless, forgotten place. This part of the city is still far off for some, but its proximity to the ocean is what makes it so compelling. Waking up every morning on the verge of the next frontier is what keeps us out here, aware of the vast body of water that houses a million possibilities.

**Emily Gable**

## CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

*Stairwell's* is looking for Field Trip leaders, writers, blog contributors, and volunteers. Email us at [stairwells.sf@gmail.com](mailto:stairwells.sf@gmail.com) to see how you can get involved.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**August 4–17:** *Stairwell's* co-curates "House Show," organized by S.H.E.D. Projects

**September 23:** Second Field Trip

**November 2012:** Third Exhibition & Publication

## THANKS

We are grateful to Sarah Fontaine, Alexis Petty, Katherine Fontaine, and Lana Porcello of the Carville Annex, Courtney Johnson, and all the artists and writers for their help in making A GOOD WAY AWAY possible.

*Stairwell's* is a curatorial project by Sarah Hotchkiss and Carey Lin, supported by a 2011 Alternative Exposure grant from Southern Exposure. *Stairwell's* mounts short-term temporary exhibitions throughout the Bay Area, produces publications, and hosts off-site excursions called Field Trips.

Visit [www.stairwells.org](http://www.stairwells.org) for updates and further information.