

CREATIVETIME

CREATIVE TIME PRESENTS

PLAYING THE BUILDING: AN INSTALLATION BY DAVID BYRNE

THE BATTERY MARITIME BUILDING, 10 SOUTH STREET, NYC

MAY 31–AUGUST 10, 2008

FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS NOON–6PM (FREE)

PRESS PREVIEW WITH THE ARTIST: MAY 31, 11AM–NOON

OPENING RECEPTION MAY 31, 6–8PM

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Playing the Building, installation rendering by Danielle Spencer, 2008.

DAVID BYRNE TRANSFORMS THE INTERIOR OF THE LANDMARK BATTERY MARITIME BUILDING INTO AN INTERACTIVE SOUND INSTALLATION FOR ALL VISITORS TO PLAY.

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(May 5, 2008, New York, NY) Creative Time presents *Playing the Building*, a 9,000-square-foot, interactive, site-specific installation by renowned artist David Byrne. The artist will transform the interior of the landmark Battery Maritime Building in Lower Manhattan into a massive sound sculpture that all visitors are invited to sit and “play.” The project will consist of a retrofitted antique organ, placed in the center of the building’s cavernous second-floor gallery, that will control a series of devices attached to its structural features—metal beams, plumbing, electrical conduits, and heating and water pipes. These machines will vibrate, strike, and blow across the building’s elements, triggering unique harmonics and producing finely tuned sounds.

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As Byrne explains: "Typical parts of buildings can be used to produce interesting sounds. Everyone is familiar with the fact that if you rap on a metal column, for example, you will hear a ping or a clang, but I wondered if the pipes could be turned into giant flutes, and if a machine could make girders vibrate and produce tones."

Playing the Building marks the first time in decades that the second floor of the Battery Maritime Building will be accessible to the public. The space will be open and free on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays throughout the summer of 2008. Everyone will be invited to sit at the organ, tap on the keys, and create a unique array of sounds that travel through the space.

"David is most widely known as a musician, but he is an extraordinary writer, visual artist, and director who resists categorization, plays around with grey zones, and favors a life of broad creativity," says Anne Pasternak, curator of the exhibition and President and Artistic Director at Creative Time. "*Playing the Building* is deceptive in its simplicity; it's layered with rich meaning relating to human nature, our contemporary relationship to place and sound, and considerations of shifts in culture at large." Pasternak's interview with Byrne is available on www.creativetime.org.

Playing the Building was originally presented and commissioned by Färgfabriken, Stockholm in 2005.

TALKS/PERFORMANCES

David Byrne and Creative Time will invite guest musicians to challenge the project through a series of performances. A schedule of performances and artist talks will be available by the end of May at www.creativetime.org/byrne.

DAVID BYRNE

Since the early days of his practice, Byrne has been a dynamic force in public space, having installed artworks in Belfast, Toronto, Stockholm, San Francisco, Tokyo, and Sydney. Byrne first collaborated with Creative Time in 2002 by creating a sound installation at the World Financial Center in downtown Manhattan as part of the exhibition *Sonic Garden*, with Laurie Anderson, Marina Rosenfeld, and Ben Rubin. Byrne is internationally renowned as the co-founder of the groundbreaking Talking Heads (1976-88)—a band that took popular music in new directions—and has won Grammy, Academy, and Golden Globe awards for his music. He has been creating book projects and exhibiting his visual artwork for more than a decade.

www.davidbyrne.com

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Playing the Building continues Creative Time's history of animating and amplifying unique spaces in New York City's urban landscape. This practice began over 30 years ago, when Creative Time transformed sites in Lower Manhattan that were left in disuse or neglect by the city's recession, including: the First Precinct House; a beach created from the landfill of building the World Trade Center (that eventually became Battery Park City); the U.S. Customs House, with Max Neuhaus' sound installation *Round: Sound for Concave Surfaces*; as well as the Battery Maritime Building with the performance *Love of A Poet* by John Kelly in 1990. Creative Time's recent projects include Paul Chan's *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans*; Mike Nelson's *A Psychic Vacuum*; Doug Aitken's *sleepwalkers*, a film projected on the Museum of Modern Art, NY; and *Tribute in Light*, which served as a gesture of hope and healing after 9/11.

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THE BATTERY MARITIME BUILDING

“The collaboration between David Byrne and Creative Time is a wonderful opportunity to bring a unique art installation to the people of the city and to this special place, prior to its being redeveloped by Dermot Company and the Poulakakos family,” said Seth W. Pinsky, President, New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC).

The exhibit, and subsequent development of the Battery Maritime Building, will preserve the historic features of the building, bring the grandeur back to the second-floor Great Hall, and create a waterfront destination for all New Yorkers and visitors to enjoy. The Battery Maritime Building will be a great catalyst for the continuing revitalization of Lower Manhattan and the evolving New York Harbor District.

Designed by Richard Walker and Charles Morris and completed in 1909, the Battery Maritime Building is the last surviving East River ferry building from an era when 17 ferry lines traveled between Manhattan and Brooklyn. The building, which is in the Beaux-Arts Structural Expressionism style, was designated a historical landmark in 1967. The second story was home to the Great Hall, one of New York’s distinguished public spaces, which was at one time illuminated by a stained glass skylight. The Great Hall was used as a waiting area for many years, and in the 1930s was connected to the neighboring Whitehall Ferry Terminal by a pedestrian bridge. The Battery Maritime Building shut down its ferry service to Brooklyn in 1938, and consequently suffered structural deterioration due to lack of maintenance. It is now the property of the Department of Small Business Services and it is managed by the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

DIRECTIONS

The Battery Maritime Building is located at the southern tip of Manhattan next to the Whitehall Ferry Terminal. Take the 1 to South Ferry, the R/W to Whitehall Street, or the 4/5 to Bowling Green. The entrance is between the Staten Island Ferry and the ferry to Governors Island.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT AND THANKS

Special thanks to the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), The Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation, and The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Additional promotional support provided by The River to River Festival.

Creative Time is funded through the generous support of corporations, foundations, government agencies, and individuals. Additional funding provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; the New York State Council on the Arts, a State agency; and New York City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn.

The exhibition is pending final NYC approvals, please check www.creativetime.org for any updates.