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PUBLIC ARTWORK BY ARTIST ALEX STRADA INTERVENES IN CITY INFRASTRUCTURE TO CENTER HOMELESSNESS

Public Address is an Extension of Strada's work as the Public Artist in Residence with the NYC Department of Homeless Services and Department of Cultural Affairs



Official record-keeping books from city shelters (left) and NYC Department of Transportation Sign Shop (images courtesy of Alex Strada)

NEW YORK, NY— The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, Department of Social Services and Department of Homeless Services, together with the Storefront for Art & Architecture, are pleased to announce *Public Address*, a multiborough, year-long socially engaged public artwork by artist Alex Strada that centers the lived experiences of housing insecurity. The project seeks to destigmatize homelessness by amplifying the voices of people living in city shelters and frontline shelter staff through platforming their handwritten and drawn reflections onto official city signage. *Public Address* will premiere in Lt. Petrosino Square on October 18, with an opening event, and will move across all five boroughs over the course of a year. Individual signs will be installed throughout Manhattan—extending the installation's reach across the borough. Programming for the project will include an inaugural talk on October 25 with Pulitzer-Prize-winning writer Jennifer Egan and Deputy Director for Advocacy at Coalition for the Homeless, Will Watts.

"Art has the power to inspire change and amplify voices too often left unheard, especially those of people experiencing homelessness whom DHS serves every day, and Alex Strada's installation as DHS' Public Artist in Residence is a powerful testament to that," said **DHS Administrator Joslyn Carter**. "Through *Public Address*, Alex has brought together four city agencies in a collective effort to challenge harmful stereotypes about homelessness. I am hopeful this work sparks dialogue and fosters empathy, connection and understanding across our city and discredits the harmful stereotypes of those experiencing homelessness."

"Alex Strada's *Public Address* demonstrates the power of public art to open our eyes to new perspectives, foster empathy, and point the way toward creating a more inclusive city," said **NYC Cultural Affairs Commissioner Laurie Cumbo**. "As our Public Artist in Residence with the Department of Homeless Services, Strada collaborated with people living in shelters and frontline staff to illuminate their experiences. The resulting work de-stigmatizes homelessness and invites all New Yorkers to engage with the project, helping to bridge the distance that too often separates us from our neighbors."

"I make art to transform systems of power," said **artist Alex Strada**. "*Public Address* emerges from years of sustained listening, working closely with people experiencing homelessness and frontline shelter staff across the boroughs. I heard many frustrations around how homelessness is ignored and misperceived. Through the 'log-writing' workshops and anonymous reflections now displayed through the subversion of city signage, those most impacted can safely speak directly to the public, something that otherwise might not be possible with the increased criminalization of homelessness and migration. Record-level homelessness demands new tools and calls on every New Yorker to engage."

"Forty years after Storefront's *Homeless at Home* confronted New York's housing crisis, Alex Strada's *Public Address* carries its legacy forward, showing how collective artistic action can center the voices of those most impacted by housing insecurity, an issue that remains among the city's most urgent and unresolved concerns," says **Guillermo Ruiz de Teresa, Deputy Director and Curator at Storefront for Art and Architecture**.

The city remains the only municipality in the United States to guarantee the right to shelter, a commitment established through decades of advocacy and litigation. *Public Address* allows those most impacted to speak directly to the public, emphasizing access to temporary shelter as a basic right while exposing the limits of such provision in addressing deeper crises of affordability, displacement, and care.

Strada has been the Public Artist in Residence with the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Homeless Services since 2022. *Public Address* builds on over three years of collaborative log-writing workshops Strada has held in dozens of shelters across the city. Over 300 participants have contributed reflections exploring issues related to navigating the shelter system, housing advocacy, migration, the role of caregiving and other themes.

The handwritten and drawn reflections by residents and frontline staff were printed onto upcycled aluminum street signs fabricated in the Department of Transportation's Sign Shop, the same outlet that makes all municipal signs for New York City. Transforming the bureaucratic tool

of the logbook and the language of official city infrastructure into works of art, these signs will serve as forms of public testimony, amplifying voices that too often are not heard. The installations are designed to facilitate listening, dialogue, and respite in a city where public space is increasingly privatized.

Following the debut in Lt. Petrosino Square, *Public Address* will continue to grow and iterate across each borough every few months, with large-scale installations in NYC parks in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island, as well as individual signs—one per community district—that will be affixed to lampposts, prompting passersby to pause and engage. As the project travels across the boroughs, Strada will continue to host “log-writing” sessions in shelters, continuously integrating new responses.

Using GIS mapping, Strada has identified disparities in where homeless shelters are placed throughout the city. Depending on the location, the signs will strategically challenge stereotypes and misperceptions around homelessness, migration, and NIMBYism. Through this ongoing work, Strada asks the public to consider addressing homelessness as part of their civic responsibility. Most importantly, the project’s public presence offers people experiencing homelessness and staff an unprecedented space for their voices to be centered and heard. Bringing together disparate city agencies—Parks, Cultural Affairs, Homeless Services, and Transportation—with Storefront for Art and Architecture, *Public Address* exemplifies how artistic practice can uniquely address complex issues like homelessness and confront the infrastructure and shifting terrain of civic life in the city.

Public Address is being realized in partnership with Commonpoint Queens, allowing people in their construction job program, many of whom live in shelters, to be hired and paid to install and deinstall the work. As the project moves through the boroughs, it will be accompanied by transdisciplinary public programming focused on housing justice, migrant rights, the criminalization of homelessness, and community-driven systems such as mutual aid networks, tenants’ unions, and community land trusts.

The project is the first in a series by Storefront for Art & Architecture, titled *Public Works*, of off-site commissions by artists Alex Strada, David L. Johnson, and Rose Salane, whose work each responds to the erosion—and reinvention—of civic infrastructures in New York City. These projects will examine how the vulnerability of public institutions and non-governmental organizations that have traditionally served as mediators in civic life can open a space for artists to engage and address, providing both critique and alternatives to systemic shortcomings.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Alex Strada is an artist and educator based in New York City whose work spans installation, film/video, sound and orality, printed media, participatory workshops, and public practice. Through a research-based approach grounded in transdisciplinary collaboration and public engagement, her projects reimagine systems of power and create platforms for collectivity, civic agency, and political transformation. Since 2022, she has served as the Public Artist in Residence with the NYC Department of Homeless Services and the Department of Cultural Affairs. Recent solo exhibitions include the Queens Museum, NYC; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San

Francisco; Aldrich Contemporary Museum of Art, CT; Times Square Arts, NYC; and Project Row Houses, Houston. Strada has received grants from the Graham Foundation, Artadia, NYFA, NYSCA, Rema Hort Mann Foundation, and the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. Her work has been featured in the *New Yorker*, *BOMB*, *New York Times*, *Hyperallergic*, and on WNYC's *The Brian Lehrer Show*. She holds an M.F.A. in Visual Arts from Columbia University and is an alumnus of the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program. Strada is the Fine Arts Civic Engagement Fellow and faculty at the Pratt Institute.

ABOUT NYC DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The Department of Social Services, comprised of the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), serves millions of New Yorkers through a broad range of services that aim to address poverty, income inequality, and homelessness. HRA serves over three million New Yorkers by administering more than 15 major public assistance programs. DHS oversees a broad network of shelters, services, and outreach programs dedicated to helping New Yorkers experiencing homelessness get back on their feet. DSS is central to the City's mission to expand and strengthen access to the safety net for low-income New Yorkers and connect individuals experiencing homelessness to permanent housing. For more information, visit nyc.gov/site/dss/index.page and stay connected on Twitter @NYCDHS and @NYCHRA.

ABOUT NYC DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) is dedicated to supporting and strengthening New York City's vibrant cultural life. DCLA works to promote and advocate for quality arts programming and to articulate the contribution made by the cultural community to the City's vitality. The Department represents and serves nonprofit cultural organizations involved in the visual, literary, and performing arts; public-oriented science and humanities institutions including zoos, botanical gardens, and historic and preservation societies; and creative artists at all skill levels who live and work within the City's five boroughs. DCLA also provides donated materials for arts programs offered by the public schools and cultural and social service groups, and commissions permanent works of public art at City-funded construction projects throughout the five boroughs. For more information visit www.nyc.gov/culture.

ABOUT NYC PARKS' ART IN THE PARKS

For nearly 60 years, NYC Parks' Art in the Parks program has brought contemporary public artworks to the city's parks, making New York City one of the world's largest open-air galleries. The agency has consistently fostered the creation and installation of temporary public art in parks throughout the five boroughs. Since 1967, NYC Parks has collaborated with arts organizations and artists to produce more than 3,000 public artworks by 1,500 notable and emerging artists in more than 200 parks. For more information, please visit nyc.gov/parks/art.

ABOUT NYC DOT ART

The New York City Department of Transportation's Art Program (NYC DOT Art) partners with community-based, nonprofit organizations and professional artists to present temporary public art on NYC DOT property throughout the five boroughs for up to eleven months. Artists transform streets with colorful murals, dynamic projections and eye-catching sculptures. Sidewalks, fences, triangles, medians, bridges, jersey barriers, step streets, public plazas and

pedestrianized spaces serve as canvases and foundations for temporary art. Since 2008, NYC DOT Art has produced over 500 temporary artworks citywide. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dotart and [@nyc_DOTArt](https://www.instagram.com/nyc_DOTArt) on Instagram.

ABOUT STOREFRONT FOR ART & ARCHITECTURE

Storefront for Art and Architecture amplifies the understanding of the built environment through artistic practice. Founded in 1982 by artists and architects in downtown New York, Storefront has chronicled the changing urban landscape of the city over the years and remains committed to producing and presenting work about diverse notions of place and public life.

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