

Sheila Pree Bright takes the “Young Americans” to Old Fourth Ward

Kick-off for 1960 Who public art series, a street project to unite communities and generations



ATLANTA- During Labor Day weekend, Sheila Pree Bright, nationally celebrated fine-art photographer, placed epic-sized portraits from the *Young Americans* series on the David Tobias Howard High School, a historic site landmarking the first Atlanta public school where African American children were educated during segregation. It was named after David T. Howard, who was a former slave and the first black millionaire of Atlanta. Established in 1923, the school operated for 28 years in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood by an all African-American staff. The school closed in 1976. Currently, the property grounds are used as a sports field for a soccer association that trains local youth.

On Saturday August 31, *Young Americans* were being placed on the school walls facing the fields as the alumni of the school celebrated their legacy by having a picnic reunion for graduating classes of 1945 to 1976. Ronald Knight, class of 76' spoke with Bright, stating, "The Howard school helped me build character. I came from an extremely broken family structure. I am the only surviving male member left in my family."

Bright feels strongly that *Young Americans* on the historic building honors the school's alumni. The work depicts diverse attitudes and values of Generation Y as American citizens. Participants posed with the American flag, using it as a prop to express sentiments about America. In 2008, *Young Americans* premiered at the High Museum of Art under the curation of Julian Cox, who is currently the Founding Curator of Photography and Chief Curator of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Currently, the portraits are displayed at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in a group exhibition entitled "Emerge". Last year, Bright took the series outside of museums and galleries to engage communities. The series appeared on buildings under the curation of Keif Schleifer, acclaimed street curator. Locations included: Art Basel Miami 2012 at the Wynwood Art District, the community of Coconut Grove, Miami, FL, and neighborhood walls in Chattanooga, TN in connection with the Glass House Collective Organization.

In July, the idea of placing the work on public walls in Old Fourth Ward sparked debates among city council members for the handling of the flag by the youth who participated in the project; however, it was approved by the City of Atlanta and the Atlanta Public School District to appear on the monumental building, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a graduate. Bright states, "It's important to connect with communities. Hopefully, by bringing the *Young Americans* to Old Fourth Ward's historic Howard school, the respect for its dignitaries will be reinforced and youth who play sports on its field will become aware of the special history of the landmark ."

Furthermore, the *Young Americans* on the David T. Howard wall is a kick-off for Bright's *1960 Who* street exhibition, which launches in October during the celebration of the Atlanta Student Movement exhibition at the Robert W. Woodruff Atlanta Library; Atlanta University Center and part of Elevate 2013, a public art experience produced by the City of Atlanta, Office of Cultural Affairs. This new series and campaign is inspired by the civil rights movement and activists such as, Lonnie King and Herman Russell, who are alumni of the Howard School and will appear in the street art project. Bright states, "The goal of the series is to show youth all people faced bullies and overcame struggles. The intent of the street art campaign is to unite generations and inspire communities to create positive solutions for social change."

For more information about *1960 Who*, visit www.project1960.com.

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