

Rite Beyond the Site: Otabenga Jones & the Social Practice of Belonging



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Third Ward, one of the oldest African American neighborhoods in Houston, Texas, is known for its residential demography, its political noncompliance, and its culture of arts. A onetime muse for John Biggers, and the home of Project Row Houses, Third Ward has become a hub for Black artists. In this talk, I highlight the politicized aesthetic praxis of the artist collective, Otabenga Jones & Associates. Informed by their 2014 performance, “Monuments: Right Beyond the Site,” I suggest these artists, by assuming a community-centered Black sense of place, used their art to illustrate alternative forms of development for this segment of Third Ward. By revealing the use value of public and private spaces, Otabenga Jones & Associates challenged the individualizing spatial formations that override the development traditions of long-standing residents.

