

A Slightly Personal Introduction to The Barbershop Inc.

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The Barbershop Inc. at 3432 Caniff St. in Hamtramck, MI, USA

Setting foot into The Barbershop's larval form on May 24th, I was met with the remnants of what once was, surely, a barbershop. The faded pink walls, floor-to-ceiling mirrors, and large basins of granite counter-top which served as pedestals for chemical innovations destined to become groundwater. Despite this tragic beauty, I knew it all had to go, as I was there to meet with founder Jack Jacket to discuss possibilities for the soon-to-be gallery's first show. As our conversations progressed, we made great headway in realizing what kind of direction the space would take. However, I was also met with fleeting moments of resistance, specifically in regards to my language. In response to my references to The Barbershop as a gallery, Jacket consistently asserted that this was not (entirely) the case. In addition to the duties typically assumed by such a space, The Barbershop also aspired to be a hub for creative communities throughout Detroit. Jacket, along with the building's owner Daniel Eller, envisioned this hub as having spokes which could reach out to other institutions and fold them into a collective orbit; one which could begin to generate the gravitational pull which is needed to sustain the disjointed commune of a generation's avant-garde.



Jack Jacket, before renovation.



Tear-down.

For Jacket, this kind of sustenance will come in the forms of various zines and (in)formal publications, which aid in the realization of an institution that not only asserts its own aesthetic philosophies, but also embraces others' ideals—opening the possibility to radicalize an entire landscape's ambitions. From a macro perspective, the avant-garde's concern with widespread shifts in societal perception has sometimes been muffled through its rejections of the rest of the world. In this way, The Barbershop's intention to incorporate outside spaces seems to act as a contribution to the eternal pushback against the exclusivity of innovation.

During a recent late night inside one of The Barbershop's back corridors, Jacket and I expanded on this thought while discussing the tragic fate of the Earth. In regards to our own



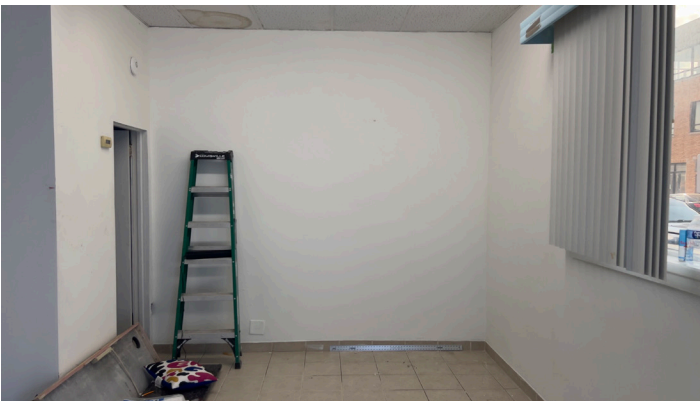
Snacks.

abhorrent contributions to the climate crisis, we acknowledged how we were also the products of a collective circumstance. Following a countless number of ancestral chain reactions, happenstance placed us in our respective predicaments. However, these casualties which bring tragedy are the same functions of chance which connected us through space and time. In this regard, for a gallery to simply paint all of its walls white, hide the cords which power its new display of "immersive" media and pigeonhole itself from any associations with the real world feels incredibly disingenuous, and frankly, shortsighted. From this perspective, it is clear why The Barbershop averts from directly acknowledging itself as a gallery, instead aiming to continue along a lineage of complicating what a gallery can be.



Paint.

About a month before this session of twilight ramblings, the process began of preparing the space for its first presentation to the outside world. Jacket, Hansen Francisco, Salem Thomas, and myself undertook the process of stripping The Barbershop of its prior association. The walls donned egg-shell white paint courtesy of Home Depot, the floors were scrubbed clean with brushes from the everything-store across the street, and the teal twin bed was removed from its temporary resting place in the corner of the room. These buildups of existence dissipated to make breathing room for the new work which would inhabit their absence. However, the sign and the name had to stay, along with the mountain of imported snacks in the back. Without these small relics, The Barbershop would likely be absorbed into the sterile wasteland of nothingness which it wished to repel. As the space began to fill up with a new kind of life, a new feeling also swept through its drop ceilings, one which felt like the spirit that keeps what we care about alive.



Finished.

The Barbershop's inaugural show, In Case of Emergency: Bccording, Salem Thomas, and Hansen Francisco, is on view from August 23rd to September 22nd 2024.

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**Photos by Hansen Francisco*

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