



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***10,000 Steps:*
A Profile of Four Squares**

Exhibition Dates: September 8 - October 9, 2009
Artists' Reception: Thursday, September 17, 6 - 8pm
First Friday Walking Tour: Friday, October 2, 5:30pm

Oakland, CA: Pro Arts presents *10,000 Steps: A Profile of Four Squares*, an exhibition of the artist group marksearch's multi-year participatory stewardship project in and around Oakland's historic downtown parks. These parks—Jefferson Square, Lafayette Square, Madison Square, and Lincoln Square, each occupying only one city block—are tiny spots of open space in the urban fabric of downtown, places where tai chi practitioners, men gathering for a pick-up game of basketball, kids in after-school programs, mothers with strollers, and the homeless can all come together. Through a unique style of stewardship, marksearch has been exploring how people understand public space, by making the invisible visible, and in turn by making themselves invisible. In wearing brown overalls and pushing a workcart containing a trash can, brooms, and trowels—which they do use to actually clean the park—marksearch is modeling stewardship and at the same time investigating the parks as outsiders, since they don't live in the neighborhood. They have spoken with everyone: small business owners who have shops facing the park, recreation center directors, long-time residents, the homeless. Working with the neighbors and community groups that surround these parks, marksearch has initiated a series of engaging green art activities including: the creation of a community garden with unique park benches, on-site collection of oral history, and a variety of downtown stewardship performances.

This multimedia installation at Pro Arts will showcase the history of these parks and the diverse communities that surround them through image, text, maps and video. In celebration of the first phase of the *10,000 Steps* project, the exhibit will incorporate an innovative series of events to familiarize the public with the parks and their neighborhoods, including guided walking tours (sponsored by the Oakland Heritage Alliance) and lunchtime demonstrations. *10,000 Steps: A Profile of Four Squares* continues the spirit of recognizing Oakland Parks and Recreation's Centennial Celebration. This project has received support from Friends of Oakland Parks and Recreation, The Creative Work Fund and Oakland's Cultural Funding Program. For detailed information about *10,000 Steps*, please visit www.10000stepsoakland.org.

marksearch, an Oakland based wife-husband team (Sue Mark and Bruce Douglas), has been creating community art projects since 2000. In their unique brand of interdisciplinary art, marksearch creates interactive projects inviting people to reflect upon their local communities and increase their awareness of the natural environment within the urban fabric. These ecologically and socially-based projects rely on an accessible format based on daily life. Through the development of kinetic vehicles, traveling signage, unconventional surveys, and official logos, marksearch crafts a much-needed conversational commons. Conversation guides their urban investigations that push the boundaries of how community-based art can influence public policy.

About Pro Arts

Pro Arts is a nonprofit artist-based organization that supports the arts within communities by serving the ongoing needs of artists. Pro Arts provides critical access to contemporary art in Oakland and the East Bay through its independent curated exhibitions, capacity-building artist services, open studios, juried programs, and diverse collaborative programs. Last year Pro Arts exhibited 580 artists and produced 53 events drawing an annual audience of 65,000. In addition to being an invaluable resource for regional artists, Pro Arts offers youth and community programs to further engage art audiences that reflect innovative artistic expression, and the rich cross-section of cultures, ethnicity, age, and race in the Oakland/Bay Area. New Gallery Location - Pro Arts at Oakland Art Gallery, 150 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza (entrance on Kahn's Alley), Oakland CA 94612.

For more information please contact: David Huff, Exhibitions and Programs Coordinator:
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