

NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE NEW THING
Organized by Jackson-Reed High School's Digital Media Academy
in conjunction with their student organization The Community Coalition for Change
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American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center • Washington, DC



Tom Zetterstrom, Peter Parkham, Tom Zetterstrom, Topper Carew, Mr Rhythm, and two unidentified children in front of headquarters and administrative office of The New Thing, 2335 18th Street NW, 1969. Photograph, 18 x 24 in. Anacostia Community Museum, Smithsonian Institution.



Clockwise from top: Joel Jacobson, Stevie Wonder performing free concert at 18th Street NW and Florida Avenue NW, 1967. Photograph, 58 x 46 in.; Joel Jacobson, Blues legend Mance Lipscomb at The New Thing's Great Blues Festival at Howard University, 1970. Photograph, 24 x 19 in.; Joel Jacobson, Trombonist (unidentified) at Marie Reed Elementary School for a special program hosted by The New Thing, 1969. Photograph, 10 x 28.5 in.; Joel Jacobson, Pianist Les McCann at The New Thing Concert Series, 1970. Photograph, 14 x 18 in.; Joel Jacobson, Drummer Kenneth Scoggins of the Soul Searchers at Marie Reed Elementary, 1969. Photograph, 14 x 18 in. All courtesy of Joel Jacobson.

Topper Carew

Dr. Carew, founder of The New Thing Art and Architecture Center, attended Howard University Architectural School and has undergrad and grad degrees from Yale. After The New Thing closed in 1972, he moved into film and TV, eventually producing the long running series *Martin*. The spirit and intention of The New Thing lives on in all of Carew's innovative projects. He has empowered communities in the DC area, abroad, and in his hometown of Boston where he is at the MIT Media Lab. Carew has won innumerable film, TV, design, and civic awards over his career. In January, he sent a payload to the International Space Station containing a film of children's choirs from around the world singing "This Little Light of Mine." It will be broadcast back to Earth in the online publication Space.com.

Joel Jacobson

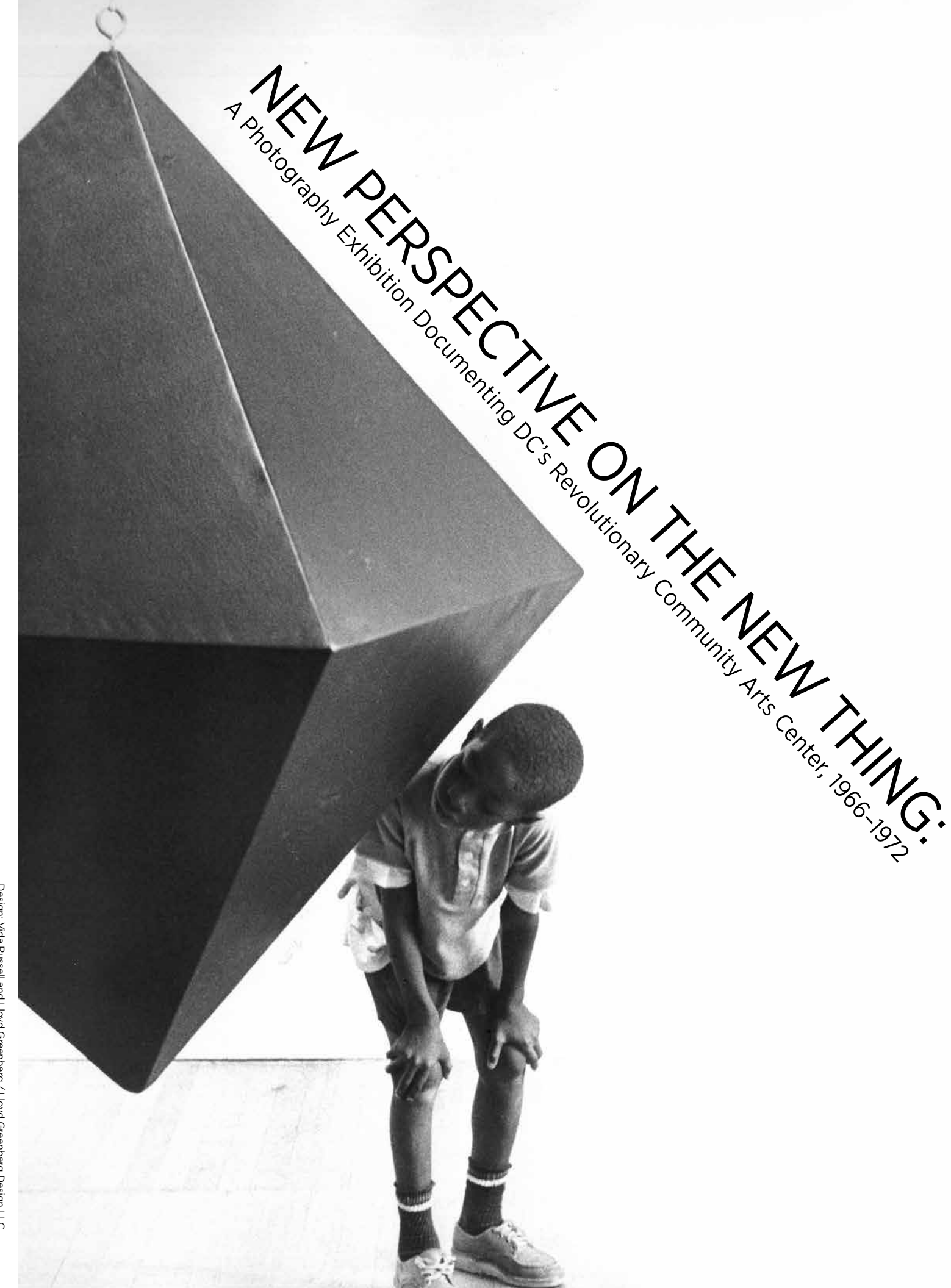
Jacobson introduced photography and film to The New Thing and to Carew through his friend, Lloyd McNeil. Jacobson is a woodworker, photographer, and filmmaker who graduated from BCC High School followed by the University of Maryland. During the 1960s, Jacobson worked as a filmmaker for the US Department of Agriculture by day, and at night was documenting much of the cultural landscape of Washington, DC. In early 1970, Jacobson made his first full length documentary with Adelphi Films, *The Revolution is in Your Head*. During the 1970s and the 1980s, Jacobson continued working in cinema with Bono Films and other production companies.

Tom Zetterstrom

Zetterstrom elevated the presence and importance of photography during his two year alternative military service residency at The New Thing. Zetterstrom is a fine arts photographer and environmental activist. His *Moving Point of View* and ongoing *Portraits of American Trees* photographs are represented in 43 museum collections nationally, with a substantial holding in the Library of Congress, Changing American Landscape section. Beyond his 1960's New Thing street photography, Zetterstrom's other street portfolios include *White Russia, 1973*, in the Library of Congress collection and *Faces of China, 1981*, sponsored and circulated by the Yale-China Association. Zetterstrom lectures widely on the American elm, invasive plant impact and on photography.



4400 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20016
www.american.edu/cas/museum



Design: Vida Russell and Lloyd Greenberg / Lloyd Greenberg Design LLC



Tom Zetterstrom, *New Thing Art and Dance 18th St Studio, 1968*. Photograph, 14 x 18 in. Anacostia Community Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE NEW THING:

A Photography Exhibition Documenting DC's Revolutionary Community Arts Center, 1966–1972

In 1966, Howard graduate student and architect Colin “Topper” Carew opened The New Thing Art and Architecture Center in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood of Washington, DC. With its humble origins in a former laundromat on Florida Avenue NW, Carew developed the small space into an ad hoc arts classroom where he offered free workshops for the youth of Adams-Morgan. Focused on cultivating opportunities for black architects in Washington, Carew’s vision evolved into a multi-disciplinary organization that hosted hundreds of concerts, workshops, and free classes for the youth between the years of 1966 and 1972. The goal of The New Thing was to transform local neighborhoods and empower citizens in light of urban renewal projects that displaced minority communities.

Topper Carew: “When we started, I opened a storefront on Florida Ave NW... [with the intention] of providing architectural services to community organizations. On its corporate papers, the full name was The New Thing Art and Architecture Center. And the way things happened, we had this storefront and neighborhood kids would look in, and at that time I had very long hair, big beard, was wearing coveralls... and they were curious. I eventually opened that door to them, and we began to teach art. And the very first art teacher at The New Thing was Lloyd McNeil. He is one of the cornerstones of The New Thing.”



Joel Jacobson, *Instructor Betty Garman with student at The New Thing, 2127 18th Street NW, 1968*. Photograph, 14 x 18 in. Courtesy of Joel Jacobson.

Through his relationships with artists like Lloyd McNeil and Melvin Deal, and with community activists like Betty Garman, Carew assembled a teaching faculty that was inclusive and holistic in its approach to educating the youth of

Adams-Morgan, which was predominantly African-American and from lower income homes. The opportunities provided by The New Thing were innumerable, with hundreds of students positively impacted by the education they received in drumming, African dance, photography, painting, creative writing, sculpture, and music. For the greater community, Carew hosted culturally enriching programs such as the jazz workshop at St. Margaret’s Church, which celebrated local artists and provided musicians with the opportunity to present their music in a non-commercial space where they could fully be heard and appreciated.

Topper Carew: “St. Margaret’s Church, on Connecticut Avenue, offered their small auditorium that we could use. Lloyd McNeil was the very first musician that I presented in a jazz workshop, a series that continued every Tuesday night for many years. After a while, the workshop gained momentum and we could attract more musicians. We made a commit-

ment to host local artists at a venue where they could fully present their music and not hear liquor glasses clinking. There was no alcohol, only tea. There was one intermission and it cost a dollar.”

As a ‘community architect,’ Carew’s herculean efforts in providing arts programming, educating the youth, and building community has had a lasting impact on the fabric of Washington, DC.

Topper Carew: “The New Thing was an energy. It was a cultural energy. The way it worked we would have a master like Lloyd McNeil and then there would be some high school or college students who would work as apprentices, who then would teach the younger kids. So that old art master / apprentice model made it so dynamic and so successful.

And the kind of art and music we were generating was culturally audacious, and it was completely new and fresh, filling out the landscape given the neo-European classical aesthetic that was the veil over Washington. And we were changing that.”



Joel Jacobson, *Dance and drum instructor Melvin Deal, 1967*. Photograph, 18 x 28 in. Courtesy of Joel Jacobson.

These photos, many of which have been unseen for over five decades, were taken by Joel Jacobson and Tom Zetterstrom between the years of 1966 and 1970, and document the wide array of programming and joyful celebrations that The New Thing had to offer, showcasing its influential role in the cultural landscape of the era.

— Marc Minsker and Yovanna Ortiz-Cotto
Jackson-Reed High School



Clockwise from top: Joel Jacobson, *Neighborhood kids outside of The New Thing, 1968*. Photograph, 14 x 18 in. Courtesy of Joel Jacobson.; Joel Jacobson, *Unidentified boy completing sidewalk art, 1966*. Photograph, 14 x 18 in. Courtesy of Joel Jacobson.; Robin Walden, *Jackson and Zetterstrom installing photos on the “Soul Wall,” 1970*. Photograph, 58 x 46 in. Anacostia Community Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Cover: Joel Jacobson, *Sculpture and unidentified boy inside The New Thing, 1968*. Photograph, 14 x 18 in. Courtesy of Joel Jacobson.