

PRESERVING A HOME FOR VETERANS

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Preserving A Home For Veterans is an adaptation of the Metabolic Studio's January 2011 position paper on the Department of Veterans Affairs use of its largest land asset—the West Los Angeles campus. In 1888 this land was donated to the federal government with the promise that it would be used as a permanent home for veterans. Through meticulous research and persuasive legal arguments, ***Preserving A Home For Veterans*** details the VA's current practice of leasing parts of the property to private entities (e.g. Enterprise cars, a private school, oil drillers), in violation of the 1888 deed and in spite of the more than 20,000 homeless veterans living in Los Angeles County.

Equal parts legal document, historical report, socially engaged artist statement, and activist call-to-action, ***Preserving A Home For Veterans*** is one of the many works that grew out of *Strawberry Flag* (Lauren Bon and the Metabolic Studio, 2009-2010), an experimental aquaponic strawberry farm deployed amid three under-purposed buildings on the north side of the VA of West LA. For more than a year, a team of artists and veterans worked together to begin shifting the stasis that permeates this important historic property.

After investigating the abandoned buildings on the property and learning of the Deed of 1888, the veterans and artists, working with the Metabolic Studio's legal counsel, penned the position paper, which was later used by the ACLU and other lawyers in a lawsuit against the VA.

Now in pocket book format, ***Preserving A Home For Veterans*** has been edited and enhanced with historic and recent photographs of veterans' life at the property. The book was printed by veterans at the Veterans Print Studio—another project which grew out of *Strawberry Flag*—and co-published by Les Figs Press as part of its TrenchArt series of new literature.

Artist **Lauren Bon** is the principal of the Metabolic Studio in Los Angeles. She is a graduate of Princeton University and MIT and holds degrees in architecture and the history and theory of art. She lived in London for more than a decade and currently lives in Los Angeles where she is raising a son and a daughter.

Artist and writer **Janet Owen Driggs** is a member of the Metabolic Studio team. A frequent contributor to the *Strawberry Bulletin*. She is the editor of “*Not A Cornfield: History/Site/Document*” and co-author (w. J. Rochelle) of *Something More Than Just Survival* (ProBiscis, 2011). Other of her texts have appeared most recently in *Artillery*, *ArtUS*, *YoYo Magazine*, *Art Review*, and KCET’s Artbound blog.

Newspaperman **Terence Lyons** is news correspondent at the *Strawberry Bulletin* published by the Metabolic Studio for military veterans and the arts community, where he writes and edits news and features that focus on veterans’ affairs, including housing issues and VA land use. Mr. Lyons is an Army veteran of the Vietnam era and a past board member of the Los Angeles Press Club.

Lawyer **Richard Fox** is a partner in the Philadelphia firm of Dilworth Paxson LLP, where he chairs the Philanthropic and Nonprofit Group. He concentrates his practice in the areas of charitable giving, private foundations, tax-exempt organizations, estate planning, trusts and estates, income taxation, and family planning. He has represented some of the largest private foundations in the United States including donors in philanthropic planning and public charities.

PRAISE FOR *PRESERVING A HOME FOR VETERANS*

“Argument and aesthetics can go hand in hand: here’s an attractive little book that packs a big, provocative punch about roads not taken as regards the care of veterans. On the one hand, this is a historical investigation; on the other, it’s a manifesto, all smartly rolled into one, all worth reading, all worth thinking about.”

–William Deverell, Director, Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West

“*Preserving a Home for Veterans* is part legal position paper, part investigative research, part “special operations report” on an agitprop art project of the worthiest sort. A clever design frames the cause undertaken by artist Lauren Bon and her Metabolic Studio of defending veterans’ rights to possess a large tract of land in West Los Angeles, deeded to provide a home for disabled soldiers in 1888. The Metabolic Studio has launched a panoply of activity to bring attention to the issue and provide therapy for veterans, ranging from aquaponic strawberry farming and staging high teas, to the production of this compact volume in their veteran-run print studio. Guided by the motto “art begets change,” the Metabolic Studio addresses the complex problems of veterans’ homelessness, physical rehabilitation and psychological needs, which have ramifications that extend far beyond West L.A.”

– Laura Roulet, Independent curator, Washington DC