As officials commit to CPS closures, are Chicagoans being heard?

A modern Daguerre’s pictorial provocation
Cyber Ritmos fabulosity in Pilsen
A Beverly coffee house with character
store, told newspapers of how he hired
his shop from the area. He boasts that the
Beverly credentials by sourcing plenty in
but it’s also one that seems like it is con-
It’s a throwback to a bygone time, sure,
detectives who gave the shop its name.
paperback novels about the hardboiled
of obscure film noir from the fifties, and
of old crooners and tinkling ivory, posters
wine, has filled his shop with vinyl records
owner with a background in selling fine
scene. Gregg Wilson, the grey-haired
February that provided the setting for this
neighborhood joint newly opened in
no small part to Hardboiled Coffee, a
their happiness this Sunday was thanks in
But there they were, a family of four—
trip down tumbling hills of snow and ice.
Southern California to ever have taken a
chasing down baddies in sun-kissed
sedentary sport of chess, too smitten with
white shirt, too good at the thoroughly
too comfortable in a fedora and a crisp
Chandler’s detective novels was probably

food&drink

PHILIP MARLOWE IN RAYMOND
Chandler’s detective novels was probably
too comfortable in a fedora and a crisp

PHILIP MARLOWE IN RAYMOND
Chandler’s detective novels was probably

BEVERLY
Hardboiled Coffee
by Patrick Leow

Beverly Swills

Hardboiled Coffee
BEVERLY
by Patrick Leow

One thing I wish were different was
the relative lack of seating space—
Hardboiled’s small number of tables was
dwarfed by a large amount of empty space
behind the counter. I wasn’t able to ask
Wilson why this was so, but it would be a
shame if more people were forced to pass
up on a couple of hours over coffee, pas-
tries, and a good Dashiell Hammett yarn
because they peered through the window
and saw the few tables already full.

Hardboiled Coffee, 9135 S. Western Ave.
Monday-Friday, 6am-4pm; Saturday-Sunday, 7am-4pm. (773)238-8360; hard-
boiledcoffeecompany.com


businesses from Beverly’s 60643 ZIP code, and insisted that “everyone who is part of
this place is from around here.”

And it seems like these efforts have
paid off, less than a month since
Hardboiled opened its doors. The family
next to the Marlowe typewriter talked of
heading to the nearby Aldi after the
daughter, no older than ten, had finished
her fruit smoothie. They gave the smiling
cashier a cheery goodbye as they packed
up and left, a promise to see her next
weekend, maybe. An elderly pair of friends
lounged on a comfortable green satin
couch as they carelessly flipped through
Hardboiled’s 19th Ward Quarterly, bemoaning
the retirement of a doctor somewhere in
the neighborhood. Apart from myself and
the two friends I brought along that day,
there seemed little hint that there were
interlopers from outside the neighborhood
that morning.

Beyond Wilson’s conscious efforts,
though, an establishment like Hardboiled
Coffee given to celebrating a slower-paced
past seems uniquely suited to a neighbor-
hood like this. The streets outside in wider
Hardboiled also seem resistant to the rush
of modern Chicago.

It’s a stretch of the city that is short
of the kinetic energy that seems to power
most other parts of town. Far from the
busy Union Stock Yards or the throngs of
young people on hip Milwaukee Ave,
Beverly’s quiet is everywhere: its low-den-
sity cul-de-sacs full of standalone town-
houses, the signage at Top Notch
BeefBurgers a vestige from the 60s. Its
groups go virtually unmolested by the
CTA’s squawking announcements, and it’s a
place where one can go a long time witho-
out seeing Judge Mathis’ smiling face
tacked to the front of the bus’s bike racks.
It’s even a relative bastion of
Republicanism, a neighborhood that gave
the Romney/Ryan team its second-highest
amount of votes (10,133 votes in the 19th
Ward, in case you were wondering) within
city limits.

In a city where progress is the watch-
word and terms like “global city” are
bandied about with regularity, it’s essen-
tial to have a neighborhood dedicated to
the preservation of a less frenetic way of
life. Hardboiled Coffee, with its shelves
of pulp magazines and walls of long forgot-
ten film noir, is only the latest addition to
a neighborhood that’s unafraid to wear its
history on its sleeves.

No matter how perfectly crafted their
trip back in time, though, Hardboiled
would never succeed if their coffee and
food weren’t up to snuff. In this respect,
they certainly don’t disappoint.

Their coffee is roasted in full view on
the premises, and that remarkable fresh-
ness was unmistakable in a tasty cup
of cold-brewed iced coffee. The Hard-boiled
Freeze is a concoction of mocha, caramel,
and espresso that verges on too-sweet but
remains refreshing.

The pastry case holds up too, full of
pasty puffs and muffins baked each morn-
ing. Most other coffee shops can get away
with serving stale pastries, the food an
afterthought in the core business of serv-
ing coffee and providing a place where the
young can see and be seen through the
course of an afternoon spent next to a
conveniently placed power outlet. The
food certainly wasn’t secondary here, and
the cashier I spoke to took obvious pride
in the fact that Wilson and his team made
everything on offer themselves. The Elvis,
an open-faced Nutella, peanut butter, and
banana creation was enjoyably flaky. The
“Jazzed Up” banana nut muffin smacked
of real banana and wonderfully soft bread.

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and saw the few tables already full.
Give it Shine
Merengue meets techno-pop in Pilsen
by Katherine Jinyi Li

CHICAGO-BASED PARTY COLLABORATIVE DALE SHINE knows there’s no better way to bring people together than a cozy space and good music. Boozey chetas? Check. Crackling chicharrones? Definitely. Thudding cyber ritmos? Claro. It’s six o’clock on a Thursday night in Caminos de Michoacán, Pilsen’s neighborhood bar, where small groups of friends both young and old have already gathered for the evening’s rounds of hearty five-dollar micheladas and, from aguardiente to rumchata, a wide selection of alcohol that any tequila lover would yearn for. Salvador Torres, the bar’s owner of over thirty years, bustles about making sure that everybody’s got a steady stream of complimentary fried pork skins and unshelled peanuts, leaning against the counter every once in a while to watch the baseball game or chat with those at the bar.

The customers don’t seem to notice Dale Shine’s three DJs in the back of the room, putting together their sets for the night’s musical event: “Otra Onda: Cyber Ritmos.” As the music starts, more groups of people gradually fill up the bar until every table is crowded with dancing people, snacks, and buckets of beer. Blanca Méndez, a DJ at Blankeyet., is up first with a mix of Chilean pop, Argentinean electrocumbia, Chicano classics featuring Selena and even some bicultural Beyoncé. In the back of the room, putting together their sets for the night’s musical event: “Otra Onda: Cyber Ritmos.” As the music starts, more groups of people gradually fill up the bar until every table is crowded with dancing people, snacks, and buckets of beer. Blanca Méndez, a DJ at Blankeyet., is up first with a mix of Chilean pop, Argentinean electrocumbia, Chicano classics featuring Selena and even some bicultural Beyoncé.

The Renaissance Society, 5811 S. Ellis Ave. Cobb Hall 418. Through April 14. Tuesday-Friday, 10am-5pm; Saturday-Sunday, noon-5pm. Free. (773)702-8670. renaissancesociety.org

Past, Imperfect
John Neff at the Renaissance Society
by Tobi Haslett

IN 1822, LOUIS DAGUERRE UNVEILED HIS DIOARAMA, A CRUDE, lurching ancestor of the cinema. A rotating platform, operated by the clanging of levers and cogs, would turn the audience to face large paintings that lined the room’s circular wall; this, coupled with a system of shutters and screens that let sunlight flicker into the theater, created the illusion of movement, the sense of a vast, continuous reality unfolding before the eyes of stupefied Parisians.

But in subsequent years, Daguerre perfected the daguerratype, the first widely used form of photography. This new technology incited such popular fervor that when his huge, creaking diorama caught fire in 1839, Daguerre hardly cared that he had lost his precious paintings. But photography, for all of its eerie precision, never aspired to the grand vision of its slightest older sibling—a photograph did not build a new world for itself, content to offer us a slice of the old one.

It seems that John Neff’s photographs, currently on display at the Renaissance Society, grant us—perhaps knowingly—at some of this strange, wistful history. Like Daguerre, Neff has given the world a technological innovation (“advancement” is not the word) in the form of his scanner camera, a coarse and ungainly contraption with an exposure time of several seconds. It is composed of the lens and body of a Kodak camera joined to a portable Canon scanner, so his little machine incorporates both analog and digital elements to capture and develop the black and white stills.

The show transports us to a bygone era, one of heaving pulleys and turning platforms, in how it seems to reenact the emergence of photography from the ashes of older media. Neff’s photographs are arranged in a row that wraps, diorama-like, around the gallery walls, and the windows of the Renaissance Society have been tinted for the show, recalling the screens of Daguerre’s clunking machinery that seemed to bring images to life with a mere glimmer of light. And yet the pictures themselves, in their technical imperfection and modest size, recall the ghostliness of those first photographs, those smudged, grainy traces of moments frozen in time.

In Neff’s pictures, what emerge are intense scenes—portraits, still lifes—that nevertheless bear the mark of their mechanical production. His photographs—of flowers, of furniture, but mostly of faces and bodies bathed in soft light—are scored by scanner lines and flecked with tiny errors. What we might otherwise dismiss as technical blemishes are instead central to Neff’s practice. In these scarred pictures, intimate registers as a kind of mechanical failure, such that feeling scratches its way into the image by a process of erasure. The less we see of Neff’s subject, the more we feel its spectral presence.

For each of these photographs, the low quality of the image reminds us of Neff’s odd machine, which in turn places us squarely in the encounter in which the photograph was taken. In *“1/22,2011,” for instance, we cannot simply look at a man, sitting and wearing an eye patch, and rest assured that this is simply a random moment plucked neatly from time. We are instead forced to imagine Neff stringing up his awkward device, orchestrating a scene that appears natural or “authentic”—authenticity, remember, was what made the photograph superior to the diorama—so we come to see this photograph not as part of some boundless web of objective reality, but instead as the product of a relation between persons, a negotiation between friends, perhaps even between lovers.

And while Neff’s lovers serve as frequent subjects, the evidence of his homosexuality—many photographs are of nude or half-dressed men, often gesturing tenderly—does not jump out at us with the aggression of, say, Nan Goldin. Neff’s work bears none of the defiance of an earlier generation of queer artists, many of whom sought to depict the gay life as radically “other,” either by mythologizing the deletable seediness of the drag scene or mourning for the ravages of AIDS. No, Neff’s work is fastidiously apolitical—or so he claimed in his public conversation with Associate Curator Hamza Walker after the March 3rd opening. But maybe Neff has smuggled some political program into his work; maybe this new quiescence, this new provocation, consists in daring to present gay life not as liberated, nor marred by persecution, but as defiantly normal, as life.

This, too, is sketched onto the photographs’ blottedy surface. In shrugging off the burden of making images that point to some concrete truth, Neff need not use his pictures to expose or unveil the unknown. Rather than lay bare some shocking fact, some unpleasant or undeniable reality, he is content to give us tender recollections, splotchy memory, a reality speckled not with outrage or bitterness, but with nuance, with feeling. So we might think of this show as a nod to Daguerre’s scarched, undreamed diorama, whose wheels and handles, which now seem like cheap showiness, spun into existence a new way of seeing, a kind of image that was not just fetched from reality, but made from scratch.
Behind the CPS Closures

As officials commit to CPS closures, are Chicagoans being heard?

by Hannah Nyhart

ON MARCH 21, CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS ANNOUNCED THE CLOSURE OF SIXTY-ONE SCHOOL BUILDINGS, more than ten percent of the city’s elementary and middle schools. CPS claims it faces a one billion dollar deficit next year, and since November has framed the crisis as one of underutilization. Although taxpayers pay to maintain facilities with a capacity for 511,000 students, the district claims, only 403,000 of those seats are filled. In response, CPS will close or restaff more than half as many schools as it has over the past decade. The decision comes after a five-month conversation with the communities it affects, communities that turned out in force to protest the closings. How that dialogue has unfolded over the past five months tells the story of a district’s efforts to enact highly unpopular school actions on a scale unseen in the city. It also represents a heightened, highly visible effort at engagement that has been unable to overcome a widespread conviction that closings will fail students.

Assuming the recommendations made by CPS CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett are approved by the school board in May, CPS will close fifty-two elementary schools and one high school program—the upper grades at Mason Elementary—due to under-utilization. Crispus Attucks Elementary in Bronzeville is to be phased out over two years. Six additional schools will be turnaround schools, in which all administration and staff will be removed, and management turned over to the non-profit Academy for Urban School Leadership. Another eleven schools will become part of co-locations, in which two separate schools with independent administrations are housed in the same facility.

Effects of the measure tilt heavily toward the South and West Sides, a distribution that fits into the broader trend of CPS closures. More than ninety percent of the district’s 104 closures and turnarounds (in which a school is completely restaffed) since 2001 have been in those sections of the city.

Throughout the process, the district has emphasized its efforts toward community engagement and transparency. While CPS is required by state law to publicize any school closings by December 1, last November Byrd-Bennet successfully pushed for a four-month extension on that deadline in order to solicit community feedback. In exchange, the CEO promised a five-year moratorium on closures, a move to stabilize a district shaken by controversial reform efforts and last September’s teachers strike. With that postponement came the initiation of what the district promoted as “a rigorous, transparent, and open dialogue,” which included the appointment of a nine-member Commission on School Utilization that would hold four data-gathering meetings and six community meetings, in addition to offering online avenues for community feedback. Along with the commission, CPS also organized a lineup of twenty-eight community meetings. Held across the city over the course of two months, the district estimates the meetings had a combined attendance of at least 20,000.

On February 19, community members from the district’s Burnham Park Network—an administrative region stretching from the Loop to 67th Street—convened at Saint Anselm Church in Washington Park for the network’s second and final meeting. The stakes were high: twenty-four Burnham Park schools remained candidates for closure, more than in any other network. Each school had five minutes to state its case to CPS officials on hand, supported by crowds of parents, teachers, students, and alumni.

At an earlier meeting in Saint Anselm, held two weeks prior, the large church had
bees. This time, the church was overflowing; pews on the ground floor and balcony were packed, and dozens of people stood in side aisles and at the back of the chapel. Community meetings across the city saw similar turnout. A few weeks earlier, a crowd of more than a thousand led to a police barricade at a meeting in Little Village; at Saint Anselm patrol cars lin-
gered outside.

Speaking on behalf of Dumas Technology Academy in Woodlawn, mentor and school advocate De’Andre Short offered one variation on an argument given by many of the schools that fol-

lowed him in closing Dumas, he told the board, “you will be dividing a family.” Others challenged the district’s utilization formula, the basis for its lists of 330 and later 129 candidates for closure. They cited uses for rooms that ranged from after-school programming to special edu-
cation classes and GED programs for par-
ts. Regardless of the nature of the argument, the facts were often laced with a fundamental distrust of a school system that speakers felt had historically manip-
ulated and underserved their community.

Nona Burney, head of the Bronzeville Community Action Council, places the cur-
rent consolidations in a context of school actions taken by the district in Bronzeville, referencing the tumultuous pasts of schools on the closure list. Crispus Attucks, which was represented at the Burnham Park meetings, is one of those schools. Attucks received the stu-
dents displaced by the 2004 closure of nearby Raymond, and was relocated four years later to a building that had housed John Farren Elementary until it too was shuttered in 2006. “Before the community action council existed, schools in Bronzeville had already been dismantled, destabilized by closings...There’s a whole history,” said Burney.

That history prompts the question of whether or not the newest CPS efforts have represented a move toward genuine engagement. CPS has been keen to dis-


tance its efforts in the most recent closure cycle from those in past years; for the First time, a CPS spokesperson said, community feedback had been solicited prior to rec-

ommendations being made to the board. District officials visited every school pro-
posed for consolidation, and the indepen-
dent Commission on School Utilization supplemented initial meetings over the course of December with additional con-
troversions with Community Action Councils and Local School Councils. Byrd-

Bennett was not present at all of the meetings, but received a record of all feedback.

Burney, at least, is pleased with the district’s engagement efforts. As she says, “We were able to be closer to the pre-deci-

sion process of saying, ‘Here’s what we have in our community, here’s what we want in our community, and we believe that all of our buildings need to be left alone so that we can do the work that we had originally outlined to do.”

Eleven Burnham Park schools are clos-
ing or being turned around, among them Dumas and nine schools within the Bronzeville CAC. Despite outsides, some closures were not at odds with community input. Burney cited the consolidation of Williams Elementary and Williams Middle, which typically serve the same student population as a closure backed by the community.

But that feeling of inclusion didn’t translate to the community meetings, CPS’s broadest effort at engagement. De’Andre Short, speaking before the final closure list was announced, said of his turn at the mic, “It leaves you kind of defenseless. You don’t want to not do it because you got to take any chance you can get, but at the same time you walk away not knowing how effective you actu-

ally were. Am I actually being heard? Is this just a facade to say that we did hear you, or is this something that you’re actu-

ally considering?”

Wendy Katten, director of parent group Raise Your Hand, was also critical of the meetings as an engagement model. “Having a one-sided, non-interactive con-
tersations and thes telling parents that the district leader will listen to the feed-

back on an audio-tape,” she said, “does not really provide confidence that any kind of information is really getting to the right people.”

The case of Brentano, a Logan Square school that serves students from Pre-K through eighth grade, offers a view of the organizing manpower necessary to keep a school from closure. “We approached it like a campaign,” said Will Guzzardi, a community organizer in the neighbor-
hood. “We had some strategy sessions early on where we hammered out our mes-
saging, how we were going to talk about this to people in the community and elected officials and to the CPS adminis-
tration, and all the different players.”

Though Guzzardi said the community meetings had offered a valuable chance to display broad support for the school, it was only one element of a larger strategy that included a public presentation of a community petition, securing vocal sup-
port from elected officials, and eventually meeting with someone from CPS. “We had a meeting with a CPS administrator with our school and the two other elementary schools in Logan Square, where he was
A rally in Daley Plaza on March 27, as speakers and protesters echoed concerns that had been raised throughout the engagement process, they held aloft a banner reading, “Don’t close our schools.” One hundred and twenty-seven protesters were removed and ticketed after blocking LaSalle Street, but overall protest turnout became one more number to haggle over. (On the rally the Chicago Teachers Union estimated the crowd was somewhere between 5,000 and 6,500, the police estimated it was a mere 700-900, and the next day’s Sun-Times analyzed a photograph to peg it at a minimum of 2,750.)

While a polarized vision of Us vs. Them had been a common thread throughout community organizing efforts and optimizations given at local meetings, by the start of the Daley Plaza protest that vision became explicitly Us vs. Him. A sign with a caricature of Rahm Emanuel screamed, “Your ego needs right-sizing.” Protesters chanted, “Hey hey, ho ho, Rahm Emanuel’s got to go!” And CTU President Karen Lewis said to the assembled crowd, “To close schools down when people say they want their schools is unjust. And when you have an unjust leader, you must rise up.”

The protest comes a week before CPS will initiate another wave of engagement. April 6 through May 2, the district will hold two community meetings and a public hearing for each consolidation or co-location. Each of the six turnaround schools will also have a public hearing, for a total of more than 180 meetings in a little more than a month. The Board of Education is expected to cast a final vote on the closures on May 22.

Despite the meetings, recent comments by Byrd-Bennett, who has committed to staying the course on closures, and Mayor Emanuel, who has said that the time for negotiations is over, indicate that there is little chance officials will alter any of the closures on May 22.

Additional reporting by Katherine Jinyi Li.
is contradicting his psychedelic influence take on ‘70s and early ‘80s funk and bringing a twilight surrealism. You can see him at McAlpin’s Piano Bar-Comedy Theater this May. Arts Center Theater, 2102 S. Lake Shore Dr. Friday, May 17, April 27-28, $35-$45; $42-$50 main floor. (773) 727-0208. ruben.com/Chicago (Scott Metcalfe)

Victor Wooten
Few musicians, let alone banjoists, have succeeded in gene-
merging as well as Victor Wooten. He’s transformed contem-
porary banjo into a funky-spiritual-organic-groove vehicle
while preserving that point where “jazz” doesn’t begin to cover what Wooten is capable of with a bass guitar in hand. No genre or style seems too big for this giant to handle. While he’s the banjoist for fusion group Béla Fleck and the Flecktones, Wooten thrives most on solo banjo and has tackled jazz stan-
dards, past tunes and classical music alike, while main-
taining a unique accessibility. Wooten provides a broad tast-
ing platter outside of the music sphere as well, having writ-
ten a novel in addition to his instructional music books and
founding an arts and education nonprofit, his band the Campo. His playing technique is driven—perhaps that’s what earned him those Five Grammy’s—and regardless of whether his style tickles your fancy, hearing such a ‘fungi-funk’’ good game chang-
er is not something we miss. Reggies, 2105 S. State St. Saturday, April 20, 7pm. Prices range from $30-$50. 17+.
(312) 949-0121. reggieslive.com (Cydney Grannan)

KBS-ONE
WOPT-WOPT! That’s the sound of socially conscious upper
KBS-ONE inviting a police officer. It’s the sound that brings a
safety, memorable representation of police brutality and
institutionalized racism. Through the depoliticizing magic of
popular culture, it’s now another rallying cry for intoxicated
attacks, sculptures, and video room projections—Pope.L recon-
cates social threads, paying particular attention to the spaces
where race, class and politics are interwoven. The exhibition opens with a reception on April 19. Zhou B Art Center, 1029 W. 35th St. Opening reception April 19, 7-10pm. Through May 11. Monday-Sunday, 10am-5pm.
(773) 525-2508. freewritejailarts.org (Seunghee Han)

Adversity
Finding a healing crisis and a market collapse, interior designer Lin Thelen moved back to painting. In a solo show at Bridgeport’s Zhou B Art Center, Thelen presents his frustra-
tion and subsequent reappropriation with “Adversity.” Rejecting the complacency of realism and still life, Thelen plays with circular forms. Spontaneous and intuitive, his work is an adventure of self-exploration, centered on the balance of destruction and harmony. He works with large canvases and a dark color palate, creating studies and forms around the theme of the sphere. “Maturity” catalogues Thelen’s work experience and his search for control within chaos. The exhibition opens with a reception on April 19. Zhou B Art Center, 1029 W. 35th St. Opening reception April 19, 7-10pm. Through May 11. Monday-Saturday, 12pm-5pm. Free. (773) 523-0200. zhoubartcenter.com (Maughan Murphy)

Forsaken
While The Renaissance Society comes to the end of another
season, William Pope.-at the UofC’s Department of Visual
Arts is launching into new spaces with refreshing familiar-
ty. An interdisciplinary artist best known for his tactile pub-
lic performance of “crawls” across New York City, Pope.- ingeniously exercises his sense of self to tackle a complex
knot of social realities like race, class, and politics. With
Forlesen, his latest work and first solo exhibition since mov-
ing to Chicago, Pope.-’s house in on the way in which differ-
cence is demarcated between the polar forces of these strati-
cates social threads, paying particular attention to the spaces
separating blackness and whiteness. In effect, through incentive play with media—installation of walls, draw-
ings, sculptures, and video room projections—Pope.- recon-
figures The Renaissance Society, transforming the space into a reflection and investigation of the manifold texture intrinsic
to these controversial issues. The Renaissance Society, 5851 S. Ellis Ave. Reception April 20, through June 22. Monday-Saturday, 12pm-7pm. Closed Monday. Free. (773) 729-6070. renaissancesoci-
ety.org (Larinda Ralph)