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## *State Needs*

*A Public Intervention in Yerevan, Armenia  
summer 2010*

*Jerolyn Bahm-Colombik · Vahe Budumyan · Roger Colombik  
Gohar Karapetyan · David Nubaryan*



Flora holds a portrait of her parents who settled in the Kond neighborhood in the early 1920's after the genocide.  
She lives with her husband and their son in the home that her father built.

### *STATE NEEDS: A Public Intervention in Yerevan*

At the corner of Teryan and Northern Avenue, a Soviet era building has the air of festivity adorning its façade. Flags and banners sway from wrought iron balconies in the early summer breeze. Approaching the structure, a more sobering intent of the proclamations becomes clear. SOS is printed in large block letters. In this particular circumstance, SOS translates to SAVE OUR BUILDING. The residents are joined in solidarity, bravely united in opposition to the oligarch's insatiable greed.

At the beginning of the new millennium, the Armenian government established a mandate of “State Needs” as its principle guide for urban development in the central hub of downtown Yerevan (to be called Northern Avenue). For the thousands of residents to be effected by the government's imminent domain plans, the exact nature of what the state needed was never discussed with them. Within the historical neighborhoods desperately in need of civic infrastructure improvements, the populace welcomed change. Genuine State Needs such as civil society principles of progressive urban development that addressed community, education, health and the preservation of history were never brought into the dialogue. Serious discrepancies soon emerged in regards to fair and adequate compensation for homes and property.

Through the manipulation of legislative procedures and control of the independent judiciary, the government and developers established the Project Implementation Office. Their intimidating policies resulted in:

- ridiculously undervalued compensation packages
- threats of violence towards families/individuals that refused the offers
- forced evictions

Basically, this was a government sponsored slash and burn policy of deportation and forced migration.

These same malfeasant government policies toward private property are now being imposed upon residents in several neighborhoods. For the historic community of Kond, for the SOS building off Northern Ave. and for the few remaining families living in the shadow of vacant opulence along Arami St., the situation is, well, overwhelming.

With this public intervention our collaborative team hoped to ignite a constructive open dialogue that addresses the relationship between genuine State Needs and a civil society. The use of the Monopoly logo as a framework for our visual identity was developed as a politically relevant and easily recognized symbol to address this important issue. The Armenian language text translates directly to *St. Needs*. The advertising went out and on the evening of June 17th we gathered along Northern Ave. across from the SOS building to distribute flyers and talk about the ongoing dilemma of *State Needs* with the masses that parade along the boulevard. The banner quickly became a well known image, soliciting knowing smiles, the shaking of heads, and unfortunately, a certain pessimistic reality in regards to saving what little is left of historic Yerevan.

Project Sponsored by CEC Artslink  
and Colombik Studios

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of the International Artist in Residence “Art Commune”  
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Special thanks to Susanna Gyularmiryan, Director of ACSL





Artosh and his wife moved into their one room hovel in Kond after they lost everything in the Gyumri earthquake of 1988. He is bedridden and cared for by his wife. Family portraits from a much different era adorn their room.





The facade of this building is all that remains. The stones have been numbered in a catalogue system for the government's promise to reuse the blocks as a means of historic preservation in another structure. This has yet to be accomplished in any other of the new developments under construction.



The SOS building as seen in the reflection of a new residential/commercial structure along Northern Ave.





4433  
1503004  
"Заключения врачебно-трудовых экспертных комиссий об условиях и характере труда инвалидов являются обязательным для администрации предприятия, учреждений и организаций"  
000486  
Министерство труда и социального обеспечения республики Армении

(вид. профиль врачебно-трудовой экспертной комиссии)

СПРАВКА сер.

№

113963

(исдается инвалиду)

(фамилия, имя, отчество)

Дата рождения

1960

Дата освидетельствования

2015

Освидетельствование

Группа инвалидности

44

(указывается профессия)

Причина инвалидности

Инвалидность установлена на срок до 1

Дата очередного переосвидетельствования





*The Caregiver, Kond*



*Grandmother and child in the old neighborhood below St. Lusarovitch church*





*Karapat Uchutyan, age 87, with his wife in their kiosk along Kochar St. He counted off on his fingers, time and again, “Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw, Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw...” This is an excerpt from a series on Armenian and Soviet soldiers.*





Vartang (pictured in yellow shirt) serves as the point man for the SOS building coalition in its legal battle with the governing oligarchs who are trying to force the tenants to sell. He has spent the last few years studying the laws in order to fight the battle through the courts. When asked if he was comfortable with our idea to suspend the banner on the building he laughed and said, “What could it hurt after months of screaming SOS?”



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SOS building as viewed from the balcony of a new condo along Northern Ave.





Susanna Gyularmiryan (Director of ACSL), Susan Dessel (artist, NY)  
Jerolyn Bahm-Colombik, Vahe Budumyan (artist, Yervan),  
Roger Colombik



David Nubaryan (artist, Yerevan), Gohar Karapetyan (artist, Yervan)

pictured below w/group: Asheer Akram (artist Kansas City)



Vartang, SOS Building Coalition



Jerolyn & Northern Ave. Patrol







For more information: [RC26@txstate.edu](mailto:RC26@txstate.edu) Catalogue available in Fall 2010