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### Hip-Hop Pop-Up Shop Opens Inside Bronx Apartment Complex

By Patrick Wall  
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CROTONA EAST — Walking through the South Bronx, it isn't hard to find spray-painted street art, flashy t-shirts or amateur emcees bouncing their latest rhymes off anyone within earshot.



But beginning Friday, all that hip-hop-flavored art will be on display in one spot, at a pop-up shop curated by local rappers Circa '95, situated inside an affordable housing complex.

The shop runs from Friday until July 28 and will feature a series of community events — open mic nights, mixers, art-making workshops, yoga classes and more — along with the clothing and crafts on sale.

"I see us as social entrepreneurs as well as artists," said Patty Dukes, a Bronx-native and one-half of rap duo Circa '95, who released a new album in November called "Free Lunch."

"How can we do what we love," asked Dukes, "as well as help out the community?"

Dukes and her partner, Reph Star, enlisted artist friends from the Bronx and beyond to provide the art and merchandise at the temporary store inside the Intervale Green housing development at 1303 Louis Nine Boulevard.

Among the contributors are graffiti artists SpazeCraft1 and TooFly, who painted murals, M.Tony Peralta and rappers Rebel Diaz, who are selling handmade t-shirts, Puerto Rican artist Esperaza Martell, who is offering indigenous-inspired jewelry, and Manhattan's Crosby, who makes clocks from photos of famous faces.

"Instead of putting art in a museum, it's about bringing art to the people," said Rephstar, who claimed Keith Haring's 1980s-era Pop Shops as an inspiration.



*Reph Star and Patty Dukes of the Hip Hop duo, Circa '95, will be curating the Pop-Up Shop.*

The rappers also organized a series of live events, which will be open to the public and free or with a suggested donation of \$5 to \$10.

Regular events will include a weekly Wednesday mixer where local artists and residents can network; a Saturday wellness series with workshops on urban organic shopping and alternative medicine; and Friday night talent shows for singers, poets, b-boys and girls and everyone in between.

On other dates, visual artists will demonstrate their craft in real-time, a photographer will set up a temporary portrait studio and Cydney Gray will offer a master class on how to create wallets out of duct tape.

Dukes said she and Reph Star, who both hold day jobs teaching art-making to kids, had set up pop-shops in galleries throughout downtown Manhattan, but felt that the Bronx was ready for one of its own.

“There’s a real movement of artists going uptown,” said Dukes. “There’s a renaissance going on in the Bronx.”

The Bronx nonprofit Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation, or [WHEDco](#), provided the 1,400 square-foot space for the shop inside Intervale Green, an Energy Star-certified rental complex that WHEDco completed in 2009.

WHEDco is using the space as a “laboratory” for programs that could eventually move to a music-themed community center it plans to open in 2015.

The center, called the [Bronx Music Heritage Center](#), will sit inside a 10-story, 360,000 square-foot mixed-used development that WHEDco hopes to begin building, in partnership with Blue Sea Development Company, in Melrose next year.

The development, called [Bronx Commons](#), will also house a charter school, a rooftop hydroponic garden and 293 subsidized rental units, some of which will be reserved for elderly musicians. Next door, the plans call for a large park with a soccer field, basketball courts and a racetrack.

“We really want to draw on and highlight the assets in the community,” said Rebecca Eigenbauer, WHEDco’s director of housing development.

“There’s such a strong community here,” she added, “that’s often overlooked.”