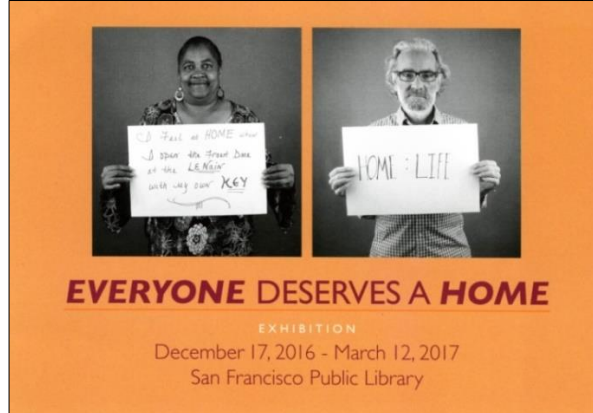


**Everyone Deserves A Home**, Jewett Gallery, San Francisco Main Library, January 13, 2017

*"This exhibition tells the story through photos and oral histories of the journey for Californians living in permanent supportive housing in San Francisco. The goal of the project is to highlight the gap in understanding between public perception of San Francisco's homeless population and the actual rich and compelling history of our fellow San Franciscans."*

Delivering Innovation in Supportive Housing (DISH)



Big museums exhaust me. The admission cost compels me to look at hundreds of objects requiring a commitment of many hours. It is overwhelming to sort all that out and make sense of it. I prefer smaller galleries with more reasonably sized exhibits, ones that are limited enough that I can embrace and comprehend what I see.

The Jewett Gallery at the SF Library is one of my favorite venues. It is a non-commercial gallery; yet it is operated by a significant cultural institution. The library mounts a variety of exhibitions, most with some local connection, since it does not have to sell anything. The gallery is tucked away downstairs. It is well lit. The room itself is trapezoidal rather than rectangular with an internal dividing wall.

This exhibit is made up of forty or so portraits. Most are about 24"x36" and hung in vertical rather than horizontal orientation. The portraits are three-quarter length, black & white, on plain grey background, simply framed with white mats and black frames. Some of the subjects hold signs and some have longer narratives posted next to their picture. There is no photographer credit for the portraits. A few narratives posted included how long the subject had lived in this hotel of "supportive housing." In one case it was twenty years. I was surprised by this. I think I was under the delusion that those in the safety net could be put back up on their feet and sent on their way. Life is complicated (if you don't think so do your own taxes) and some people will need our help the rest of their lives. I knew this but its significance had alluded me.

I have complete confidence in the honesty and sincerity of those that mounted this exhibit, but it did trigger thoughts about what I saw.

*"But the role of the curator and editor is both interpretation and distillation..."*

*Charles Desmarais, in a review of Lynn Hershman Lesson, SF Chronicle Feb. 12, 2017*

Interpretation and distillation are necessary; without them we would be drowned in details. Yet they do have the potential to alter the very essence of what we see. A well-meaning curator who wishes to elicit understanding from the viewers may have selected subjects that appear most friendly and non-threatening. The photographer could have selected subjects with the most weather-beaten faces to make interesting photographs. The prejudice could be unintentional; if a significant portion of the hotel's tenants had a cultural aversion to public display of their photograph, they would not have

participated. Any of these or thousands of other acts of interpretation and distillation could completely alter the impression we get of the hotel's population. We can't know everything, the trick is to have confidence in the interpreters and distillers we choose.