



# ASSEMBLY 2020

A publication for the co-authored  
conference from PSU's Art + Social  
Practice MFA Program

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# Introduction

Since 2014, the Portland State University Art and Social Practice MFA students have put on an annual multi-day gathering of participatory events, discussions, and presentations highlighting our collaborative work and inspirations. To create this gathering, students select various sites around Portland, OR, in which to make and cultivate projects through existing relationships, curiosity, and chance encounters. Typically this has led us to many places around the city including a community center, city hall, a school, a panadería, a river, a senior center, and more.

*This year is different.*

This book archives a moment in which we can't create that in-person live moment of collaboration. After a year of careful planning, this year's collaboration with the King School Museum of Contemporary Art (KSMoCA) had to quickly shift gears due to the global pandemic and social distancing measures. Instead, we are sharing new work that has emerged in this context, as well as new conversations with existing projects and collaborations.

As a reflection of the current moment, this year the graduating cohort of the Portland State University Art & Social Practice MFA Program came together for a conversation to introduce Assembly and what it means to them. Below is the conversation that unfolded between Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr, Eric John Olson, Roshani Thakore, Tia Kramer, and Zeph Fishlyn.

**TIA KRAMER:** Let's begin with some questions. What is Assembly? What is valuable about it now?

**ROSHANI THAKORE:** I've always struggled with the meaning of Assembly. I think it's an opportunity to create work out of your familiar context and with some specific parameters including site and context specificity.

**TK:** For me, Assembly is an opportunity for all of us in the Social Practice Program to come together, as a cohort, to create a collective experience. It's a ritual.

**ZEPH FISHLYN:** From what I've experienced since I joined the program, Assembly provides an annual opportunity to see all of our work in dialogue with each

other. It allows other people to enter into our process and into our work, which generates interesting conversations.

**ERIC JOHN OLSON:** Over the past three years there has been a big, curious shift in my perspective on what Assembly is, what it could be, and what it's become. I've been attending Assembly and its earlier editions since 2013. I remember in earlier iterations, it seemed more like a conference with keynote speakers, panel discussions, and a couple of projects sprinkled in. Yet by the time the five of us started working on it three years ago, Assembly had shifted. Each year we collectively choose a site that becomes the context we are thrown into to collaborate within. In that challenge, I have seen delightful shifts in how we work individually, how we think about a site, how we think about existing communities, and how we think about the audience of the work. We have really challenged ourselves over the years to learn from what worked and didn't work.

This year we were so well planned, we finally had picked the site a year in advance!

**TK:** Yes. Before covid-19 we thoughtfully chose KSMoCA as a context because it is a site we all know well. The program, and most of us in it, have long-term relationships with KSMoCA. We feel personally connected to the projects, the students, and the teachers at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School. Then, in March that plan dissolved. At the last minute we

had to be responsive to the public school closing. We no longer had a site or accessible collaborators.

**EO:** Some people even perfectly stacked their Assembly and MFA graduate projects to be a year long collaboration with students that was supposed to culminate at this year's Assembly. So for it all to implode at the last minute, it's really hard.

**ZF:** It's especially hard given the way we usually create this event.

**RT:** What makes Assembly different from any other kind of conference or group event is that we, the students in the program, are fully collaborating on this festival together. It's fifteen voices. This is a very heavily collaborative process that I was new to when I started the program.

**TK:** Roshani, I remember you saying at the beginning of this term, "This program prepared us for this moment." We are trained to be critical, so we know the potential limitations and failures of creating site-specific socially engaged events. But we are also trained to be agile and respond creatively to our contexts. This moment requires that flexibility.

**ZF:** This program helps me navigate and catalyze social relationships in a variety of contexts. This is a new and very complex context. It demands committed and imaginative response on all levels. The social practice toolbox makes it easier to rework my projects to rise to that challenge. I so appreciate



everyone's thoughtful feedback, willing collaboration, and honesty about the heartbreak and difficulties. I'm inspired by all the ways I see people getting creative; this book offers only a narrow window into the full range of how peoples' practices are shifting.

EO: It also acts as a framework for people to create new conversations around their existing projects and share them with each other.

TK: In some ways, this year's online component is extra exciting, because people like our parents might show up for our projects. There are layers of people who might be in the room, so to speak, that would never physically come to Portland for Assembly.

EO: I still am going to miss the moment of us all coming together physically.

TK: Yeah, social practice is about relationships and coming together. Assembly creates a collective experience for us to ask similar questions and struggle with similar prompts. It also provides an opportunity for our individual communities to intersect with one another, both in critical discourse and also in a purely joyful social experience.

EO: I fondly remember the past celebratory aspects: singing karaoke, eating together, dancing, and long conversations both critical and personal. Being a distance student, you get to see everyone finish their work, the graduation party usually falls directly after,

and there is this deep moment of joy and relief.

RT: Karaoke! I think it was our first year at—ah, what's it called?? It's in downtown Portland.

ARTIST MICHAEL BERNARD STEVENSON JR.: Suki's.

RT: Yes, Suki's! Major dancing happening.

EO: Oh, that was so epic. It was after the program's ten-year anniversary lecture.

ZF: Oh, that was really fun.

ROSHANI: Yes! I remember all of those fun things. After my first Assembly, I remember thinking, whoa, I finally get what this is all about. The process of creating Assembly, the process of creating a public project. I remember knowing that I don't have to worry as much as I usually do that people are going to show up, because my classmates are going to show up. And I'm going to be there for my classmates when they do their projects. That instant showing up and supporting—to be trained to be in community with each other—that just made so much sense to me. We need each other and we need to rely on each other. And this is actually a structure that supports and trains us for that.



Assembly after party with karaoke and dancing at Suki's Bar & Grill, Portland, Oregon, 2018.

# PROJECTS

# Auditing Ohio: A Textbook Audit

Rebecca Copper in collaboration with fourth grade teacher Kevin Acton

Auditing Ohio is an experimental, socially engaged art project that I facilitated where my child goes to school—at Colonial Hills Elementary, located just outside Columbus, Ohio. There, I asked my child’s fourth grade class to “audit” their social studies textbook, to think critically about their learning material. This idea came to me after working several years for a major K–12 educational publishing company, where I found many aspects of how educational products are created problematic. I created newsprint copies of the fourth grade textbook and organized the students into groups of three. In their groups, the students used red pens to critique the textbook. Together, in collaboration with their teacher, Kevin Acton, we curated discussions to foster questioning of the content included in the textbook, what information was not included, who was included and represented, and who wasn’t. Students took the opportunity to write what they liked and didn’t like about the textbooks which ranged from the content, design, images used, review questions, and more. Of course, they took the opportunity to doodle, too.

—Rebecca Copper

*Students who participated from Colonial Hills Elementary: Idil, Jesusia, Griffin, Timothee, Okbahzghi, Eva, Adrian, Evalynn, Chris, Kyad, Gavin, Augusta, Ben, Jordan, Will, Sam, Fadumo, Colin, Greta, Sharon, Shai, Sylvia, Scout, Pranish, Adwoa, and Kennedy*

*The following is a conversation between artist Rebecca Copper and their nine-year-old, Adrian. In the conversation, Rebecca asks Adrian about their thoughts of school and the project, Auditing Ohio.*

REBECCA COPPER: What do you think about school?

ADRIAN: I think school takes up a lot of my time, but I think it might be worth it.

RC: Is there a subject in school you like?

A: I really like science.

RC: What do you like about science?

A: There are so many things that are made from different parts of science. I mean, scientists do so many other things too, because in order to do the really complicated things or the science, you need to know things like math.

RC: What do you think about the things that are used to teach you like the worksheets, books, those kinds of things?

A: I think they are all right, but sometimes they annoy me.

RC: How do they annoy you?

A: Just the way they’re arranged or the way that they’re made. Sometimes, it’ll be highlighted sections, or stuff like that. That always hurts my head seeing all like this highlighted part and then there being a bunch of different things in it. Especially now, because we are online. They, one of my teachers, what they have to do when they send an assignment is highlight it in red. One time they highlighted a bunch of it in yellow and then there were these really bright highlighted red boxes that I have to write answers in.

RC: Oh, that sounds like that might hurt my head, too. So, now that you’re doing school-work from home because of the pandemic, what do you think? How’s that affecting you?

A: I kind of enjoy being able to be home and being able to do my work. But then again, I don’t get to see my friends. But, it feels

nice to not be rushed, being able to sit in my room and concentrate or do it when I like.

RC: Mr. Acton and I had a conversation the other day. We were talking about the kind of structures that are often forced on students in the classroom—the way that classrooms are set up, and the way schools have to function in a particular way. We were discussing how it’s different now that students have the freedom to work at their own pace, are able to work in their own way, that maybe in the classroom they’re unable to. Do you feel that way? Were there ways that the classroom functioned when you were there in person that were difficult?

A: I understand this because there’s so much to do in six hours. Wait, am I there for six hours or eight hours?

RC: I think you are there for six hours.

A: Now I only get two assignments in a day because they have to be flexible due to the pandemic.

RC: Do you think there’s not enough time to do all the work that they are required to teach you?

A: Yeah. I feel like we don’t really get enough time each day to work on the assignments that they give us. In math, sometimes, it’s hard for certain students. They don’t always get it done during the day. Then they have to skip the recess

to do it, like a punishment for not being able to do it in time.

RC: How do you feel about tests?

A: I mean, they're not always that bad when I actually know how to do the work, like when it's not a review test. That's when I usually feel like I'm doing pretty good. When it is a review test before we learn the actual thing, for me, it feels like I just don't know enough.

RC: What do you think about tests in general? Do you think it's a good tool to measure where students are at?

A: Um, yeah? I think?

RC: You had to do these standard tests, the big state tests...

A: We did in third grade. Yeah, we've done that second, third, and I think first. I don't think we did anything like that in kindergarten.

RC: With the standard tests, I remember, we got all this paperwork saying these big important tests that were going to happen with recommended resources where you could study. Do you know what those tests were for?

A: Those are, I'm pretty sure, so the state can know how well the school is doing. There were some teachers that said, "This isn't to measure you but it's to measure us and how well we are doing teaching you."

RC: What do you think about that?

A: I think it's all right. I think they could have it set up differently. A lot of the classes are these big two hours of studying things to where we are just sitting there and racking our brains. A lot of kids in my class are saying, "Why don't they just make a test for the teachers to do?"

RC: Do you think it's fair to measure the teacher's capability through testing the students?

A: No, not really. We did take a teacher liking test to measure how much we feel like our teacher cares about us.

RC: That's interesting.

A: We do that every year, but no student has ever said their teacher didn't care. Because the school is looking at it they feel pressured to say something nice.

RC: They, meaning the student?

A: Yeah, I mean, that's how I usually feel.

RC: Sure, that makes sense. I organized this textbook auditing project with your class where you guys looked at your social studies textbook. Your class was asked to mark up copies with your opinions. I asked you to question what the book was telling you and to criticize it. What do you think about that?

A: Um, I thought it was interesting at first. I mean, I still do because I get to put down my thoughts and what I like and

what I don't like on the copies you made of the textbook. Just being able to get that out, that was nice. I enjoyed that you were asking us to question because I feel like there were a lot of things that it didn't really put in the book, like Native American history.

RC: By "it," do you mean the publishing company?

A: Yeah, it leaves out a lot of details about what people might have done.

RC: For me, it was important that you guys saw that there are different perspectives that aren't included in the textbook. Do you think some of the conversations would have happened without the textbook audit?

A: Based on my teacher, Mr. Acton and how he works, before you came in, he also was telling us what was really happening.

RC: What do you think your friends thought about the process of marking up these newsprint copies of the textbook?

A: Some of them thought that was interesting, and then there were some others who thought, "This is just more work, I don't really like it." [Laughter]

RC: [Laughter] Do you think this project will help you think critically about other things in the future?

A: Yeah.

RC: Do you know what it means to think critically?

A: That means criticizing and criticizing critically, thinking critically and criticizing are the same thing, basically.

RC: Well, thinking critically and criticizing are different things. They stem from the same word.

A: For me, from what I think it means is pointing out things that you don't like about it.

RC: To think critically means to think objectively, to question it, form your own ideas based on evidence or information you have. So, like if someone tells you the sky is green, and you're like, "I don't know if I agree with you. I see the sky is blue, so I think it's blue." You looking at the sky to see that it is blue, to form your own idea of what color the sky is, that would be critical thinking.

One thing I discussed a bit with your class was how some information textbooks will change from state to state—some textbooks will be created for particular states. For Texas, as an example, textbooks lean toward a Republican political stance. Textbooks made for California which is a more liberal state, the content will lean toward being progressive. What do you think about the changing of information for the political leaning of a state?

A: I mean, I think they would stay in business, but I don't think



that's very good. OK, they're just kind of, "we want to go this way for this place, that way for that place." It's just a way to keep the company in business.

RC: Now that you've criticized part of the textbook, and we've had conversations, what do you think of textbooks?

A: I think that there's a lot of lying happening, or leaving details out.

RC: How do you think textbook publishing companies should be making their textbooks?

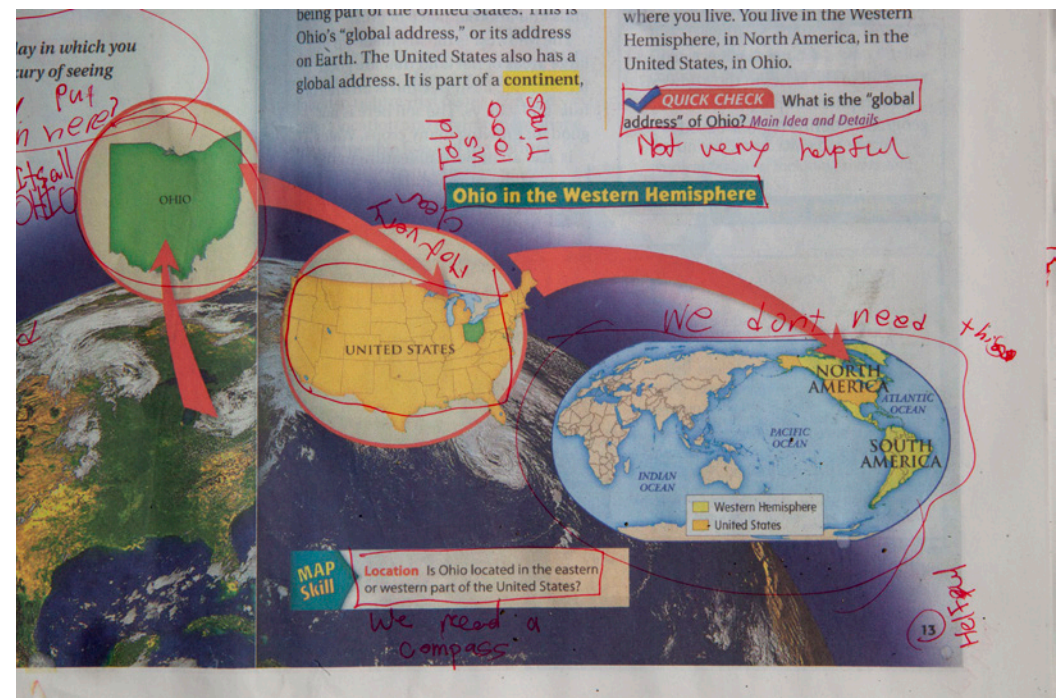
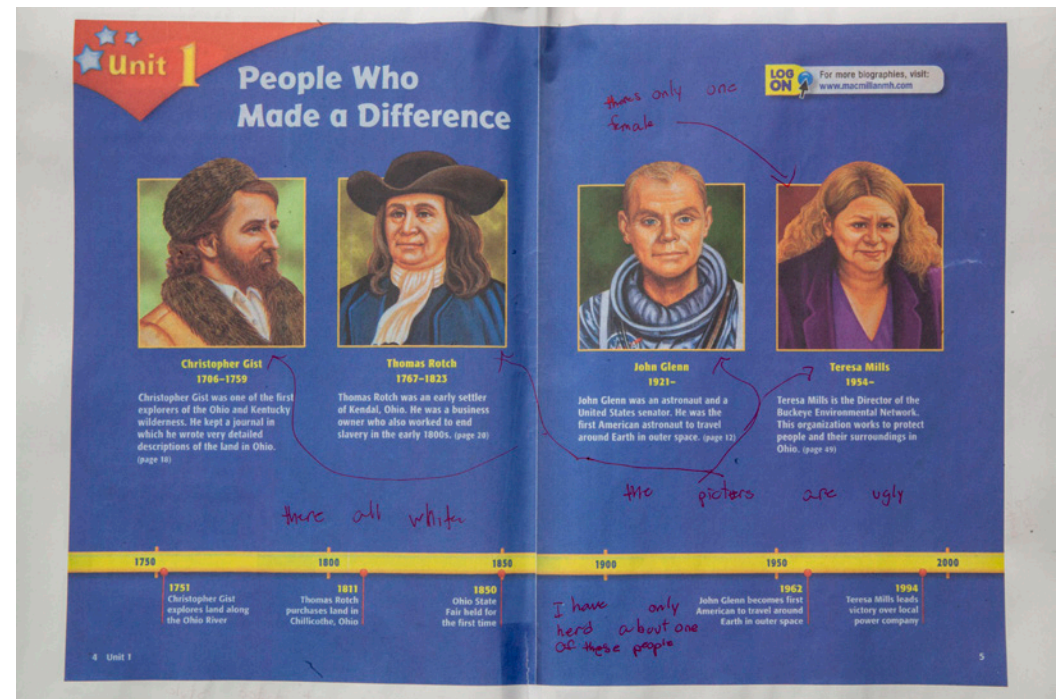
A: I think they should be bringing the people in who have the experiences.

RC: What people? "People who have the experiences," can you talk a little bit more about that?

A: Native American, like really, Native Americans who were really there, who have a lot of that knowledge, a lot of that history. And also same with African Americans. Like the people they invite to come, they need to change the people.

RC: Do you mean the people that the publishing companies invite to write the textbooks?

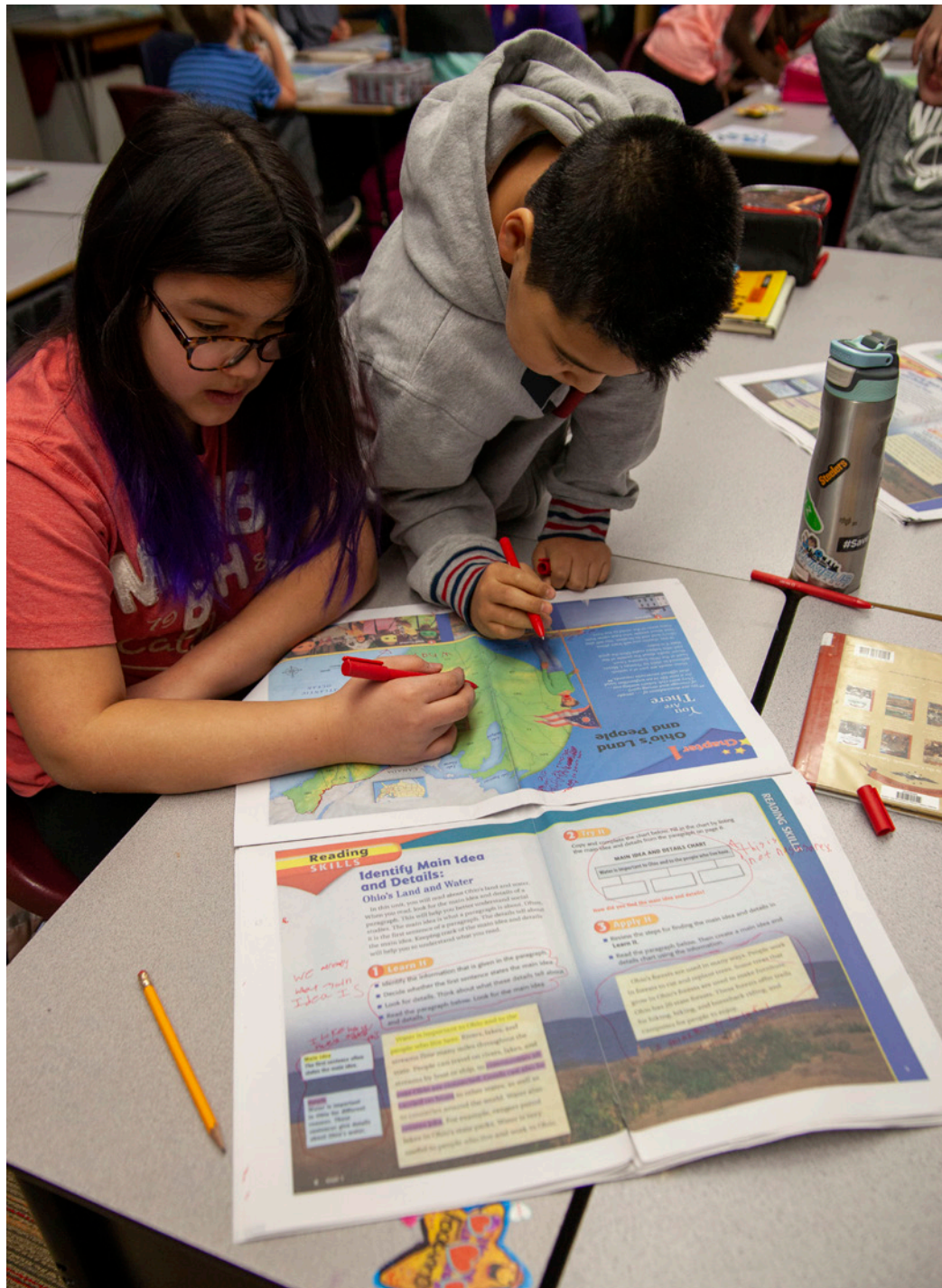
A: Mhm.



Top: Edits made by Greta, Fadumo, and Adrian on a time line about people who made a difference in Ohio: "there all white," "there's only one female," "the pictures are ugly," "I have only heard about one of these people."

Bottom: Edits made by Adowa, Griffin, and Gavin: "We need a compass," "not very clear," "told 1,000 times," "not very helpful," "we don't need this."





Sharon and Pranish discussing their ideas about the first chapter of their social studies book.



Chris and Kennedy writing their thoughts down on a newsprint copy of their textbook.



# The Portland Conservatory

Emma Duehr

Caring for plants offers self-care, self-sustainability, relational practices, and more. My relationship with plants was found as a healing practice that also helped create and connect with friends, family, and strangers. I grew up planting impatiens, hostas, and laying mulch with my mother. After I moved from Dubuque, Iowa to Portland, Oregon I picked up her favorite hobby as it helped me feel more connected to her from a distance. Supporting plants in their survival has taught me patience and the importance of self-care. I grew more deeply connected to myself, the natural world, and individuals who shared this hobby. Plants and gardening are an expensive hobby and the high value distracts from accessing the mental benefits. I opened the Portland Conservatory (TPC) in 2019 to formalize the passion, narratives, and education connected to plant collecting, care, and trading cuttings. TPC is supported through plant exchanges and plant donations to provide the benefits at no expense.

TPC is an art museum that presents curated collections of houseplants, events, and permaculture and horticulture education. The museum is located at my home in East Portland and is accessed by appointment only. The space features a 769 square foot conservatory upon a 7,000 square foot lot. I collect and curate plant cuttings by organizing open calls, studio visits, and invitations, which request plants that hold personal symbolism, relationships, or narratives specific to the individuals who submitted them. Participants range in location across the United States as the evolving collection displays galleries inside, outdoors, and online. The museum hosts public events such as gardening classes, workshops, and plant exchanges that invite participation through virtual platforms, through physical events, and through the mail.

The collection at the Portland Conservatory displays the intimate collaborations between community members and the natural world. “Contemporary” is an invitational collection that requests contemporary artists to submit a cutting of a plant from their living or studio spaces. The selection of artists invited to participate includes those whose practice has made a lasting impact on my own practice. “On Rotation” is a collection of plants that are temporarily under my care through the Plant Sitting Project, which assists neighbors, local businesses, and other community members in caring for their plants when they are out of town or unavailable to properly care for them. “Henry’s Rose Garden” is an outdoor collection donated by the Henrys on November 15, 2019. There are a total of seventeen rose bushes consisting of over ten varieties. “Generational” is a virtual collection

and open call for participants to share the narratives behind plant cuttings that have been shared throughout generations of their family. These are a few examples of the plants within the collection.

All plants are formally labeled in their display. Every time I receive a plant from someone, they share their relationship to the plant given to me. A custom plant stake is created that includes the date, the type of plant, and the person’s name. Plants from nurseries come with those informational graphics in the pot. They are just like that, but handwritten and custom to the exchange. Further information about the plants’ history and relationships is archived on the website. I also create a plant stake for every cutting I give; I share the date, care instructions, and the plant’s origin. This part of the project is really important to me, that way the intimate details, plant’s history, and story continue growing and people can look back on it periodically.

Visit [www.emmaduehr.com/ThePortlandConservatory](http://www.emmaduehr.com/ThePortlandConservatory) and follow on Instagram @theportlandconservatory to stay updated on events, opportunities, and projects. Full narratives, descriptions, and images from the featured projects above are shared online.

*The following excerpts are from conversations with various participants that took place over the past three years. Emma Duehr spoke with participants about their involvement in the project and to reflect on the origination of the project. The interviews have been shortened and edited for length and clarity and have been reviewed for accuracy by participants.*

*Conversation between Emma Duehr and Nae Dumouchelle, who is a participant in the “On Rotation” collection.*

EMMA DUEHR: You moved from Oregon to California in January 2019 and gave me eighteen of your plants to care for. What was this experience like?

bitter held a little sweet. Knowing that I was leaving them with you, a dear friend kept me feeling grateful. I had someone I trusted to take in these little lives that I had kept going and who gave me life in return.

NAE DUMOUCHELLE: Bittersweet. I was sad at first, knowing that I had to leave my little friends behind. Here is something that you have been tending to and taking care of every day, watching them grow up just a little bit taller and becoming fuller. I remember sitting there looking at them all and knowing I wasn’t going to be around anymore to witness a new leaf or another sprouting. As I said, my

ED: You know that you can take the plants back at any time right?

ND: A smile to answer this question. I sit here on this couch, hundreds of miles away and I allow each of them to come to mind. I am so much at peace knowing that they are with someone who would even consider

allowing me to take them back. I feel so grateful. I would not take them all. That doesn't feel right. I would almost want you to give them to someone else before they were given back to me. A different adventure and new direction of light. I am also sensitive when I think about how they are doing in a certain space. I would never want to rip them away from somewhere they were thriving. Or from someone who they were thriving with.

ED: Are there one or two that you miss the most?

ND: The money tree. Tasha's vine. The avocado plants, though I see

*Phone conversation between Emma Duehr and Harrell Fletcher who is a participating artist in the Contemporary Collection.*

EMMA DUEHR: Would you say that plants are connected with your artistic practice?

HARRELL FLETCHER: I went back and studied organic farming after graduate school and did a six month program at the University of Santa Cruz, and I worked on organic farms near Champoeg State Park. I did this project that was about growing vegetables at Southern Exposure Gallery in San Francisco, which was sort of a decentralized CSA. Plants have popped up here and there in different projects. I think that the farming experience really impacted my art practice as it made me reevaluate a lot of things indoctrinated into learning about contemporary art. Being really

the avocados all as one. Tasha is the one who gave me her plants to watch over and babysit when she moved away. She sat with me and told me their names. We talked about where they came from. Each one had a story. An ex-lover, a family member who had passed, or something that she held from seed. There was so much honor and reward that I felt knowing she was placing them in my hands and heart. six to seven years later, I became the one who wanted to wander away and leave my plants behind. Tasha planted that seed for me and knows you are holding onto mine.

concerned about proprietary and concerned about originality, but also not taking into account how I was going to distribute art. People are trained how to make art in art school but they aren't trained on how to get it to people. In farming, you really have to think about that in CSA's and farmers markets, things like that. I applied a lot of that experience to my art practice in thinking about not just the making of the art object but really thinking about the distribution and the public access to it. As a part of my practice.

ED: That says a lot about social practice and your origins. I am wondering now how this farming experience relates to the plants you have inside your home now?

HF: Sure. you know it's the same kind of process. You have to water them, preserve them, I've had mixed experiences with indoor plants as I used to travel so much and when I would leave I left the responsibility to those who would be house-sitting for me and I had various houseplants die over the years because of that and it made me really wary of having too many plants. Now that I have intentionally stopped traveling so much, I feel more comfortable about bringing more plants into my indoor life because I am here and able to really take care of them. I think that there are lots of benefits, there's aesthetic qualities, oxygen, there's just something really nice about the process of caring for plants. I really like it. I'm sad when one dies, there's worries that come up when a

*Conversation between Emma Duehr and Lucas Mitchell, who co-owns the home in East Portland.*

LUCAS MITCHELL: Don't you think we should dig up the roses? They have a disease and they aren't producing any blooms.

EMMA DUEHR: Well we didn't properly care for them when we moved here in the middle of winter. I want to at least wait a full season to see how they do! They [previous owners] left us a guide for taking care of the roses, the informational sheet on each variety, and tagged every single rose! This rose garden was obviously planted with a lot of love and they wanted it to stay loved.

plant gets sick, but it is also just a way to have a relationship with the natural process.

ED: I appreciate you sharing the joy and benefits that plants bring into your life. You gave me a cutting from your Chinese Money Plant in 2019, and it is really a healthy plant. How do you respond to claiming this cutting as a work of yours inside the Contemporary Collection within the museum?

HF: I am very open to the idea of artists making decisions like that and claiming things as a work, so it really strikes me as an interesting idea and I am happy to participate in it. I don't personally have any need to do it for myself, but I am happy to support you in doing that.

[Three weeks later the roses began to bloom and together they cleaned up the rose garden]

ED: I did something a little weird.

LM: Oh?

ED: I found the Henrys on social media, and guess what? The roses were planted in honor of her grandmother who loved roses! Look at all these pictures! The one by the garlic she called her "Dad's Rose." I knew they were special.

LM: They really are beautiful. Let's go identify all of them!



*Conversation between Emma Duehr and Brenda Mitchell, who participated in the Generational Collection.*

**BRENDA MITCHELL:** I submitted historical information about a generational plant that I have. It's a Christmas cactus whose original scions came from my mother's cactus, and she got her plant's original scions in 1958 from a cactus that belonged to my father's grandmother. I do not know how my great-grandmother acquired her Christmas cactus, but do know that it is still thriving. My grandma inherited the cactus before her mother's death in 1960, and her son and daughter-in-law (my uncle and aunt) are now the caretakers of this cactus. My mother's cactus is alive, which is wonderful since it was nearly gone after some deer feasted on it while it was enjoying the outside warmth three or four summers ago. My plant is thriving and happy as evidenced by the amount of blooms it produces from November to May every year.

**EMMA DUEHR:** Have you shared the plant with any family members since you received it?

**BM:** It's really funny that you ask that. The cactus is really thriving and growing quite large, so it is now my time to trim and share. I am potting up some scions to give to my two daughters and son here shortly.

**ED:** That is so exciting to hear, and I'm glad it is continuing to thrive. I'm wondering where your engagement with this project

began and what you have gotten out of the experience so far?

**BM:** My take-away from this experience is the feeling of connecting to something bigger than people... feelings of curiosity, wonder, and hope. And at the same time they are feelings one has when recounting fond and interesting memories with persons who share in the same interest. In this case my feelings include joy, contentment, sentimentality, and again wonder. This project is interesting, educational, and extremely motivating! Thank you for creating a space to share my experiences with plants. It's very enjoyable.



Top: The front facade of the Portland Conservatory, 2020.



Bottom: The Henrys' Rose Garden tags and informational guides, 2020.



# Spontaneous Untrained Volunteer: Everyday Disaster Response

Zeph Fishlyn

The coronavirus pandemic has thrown so many artists into critical uncertainty about their ability to pay rent, let alone make meaningful work in relation to current conditions. And it is extremely clear that many of the most devastating impacts are not from the virus alone, but from the way it is multiplying the chronic and daily disasters of US-style capitalism. With essential workers working double time at risky jobs, and unemployment soaring to Great Depression levels, a lot of us are asking ourselves, is this really a time to be working on anything that doesn't meet an immediate need? What exactly can we contribute as artists?

This is just the latest manifestation of a question I ask myself a lot. My practice as an artist and activist is driven by a sense of anxiety that our baseline support systems are on a destructive path. We cannot sustain escalating wealth inequality, homicidal white supremacy, and the reckless dismantling of ecosystems that sustain life. Even if social movements cannot shift these patterns, the planet itself is revolting—according to the World Meteorological Organization, disasters have grown fivefold around the globe in the past fifty years, mostly driven by climate change.

For the past year, I have been researching the imaginaries of disaster, from their manifestations in pop culture and individual imagination, to the complex infrastructures of professional emergency management, to grassroots mutual aid networks and radical disaster training. I have looked at (and participated in) activist approaches, design approaches, and cultural approaches to existing and future crises.

In particular, I got involved in an effort at Portland State University to develop an outdoor sculptural installation as a community gathering space and information hub. In the wake of a large-scale disaster—most likely the major earthquake that is overdue in the Portland region—it would serve as a meetup point for relief organizing efforts. Conversations with emergency management staff made it clear that even well-prepared and well-intentioned government response tends to be limited and might take seventy-two hours to kick in. Historically, most victim care is rendered by “Spontaneous Untrained Volunteers,” or “SUVs,” in emergency management lingo. Communities who fare best in the wake of large-scale disasters are the communities that already have strong ties. And so a key component of disaster preparedness is that average people are connected to their neighbors and ready to respond.

So, pre-covid-19, I proposed a collaboration with Portland State University and the city's Office of Emergency Management. I would organize a series of live events that would bring people to the site and encourage both connection and readiness. I imagined many possibilities: connecting local businesses, students, and neighborhood residents with an emergency meal kit cook-off and tasting; a disaster movie marathon and dance party; “go kit” building; a musical performance based on a local seismograph readout; a discussion with Native American faculty about long term resilience within the disaster of settler-colonialism; and highlighting the survival skills of houseless folks in the area.

A few short weeks later this vision of knitting-together was overtaken by a once-in-a-lifetime disaster that demands the exact opposite: we must stay apart. I've been able to participate peripherally in some of the radical and inspiring work emerging through mutual aid networks, and a creative advocacy project focused on an affordable vaccine. However, I am still seeking answers to the question, how do I engage as an artist in this moment? And what do I even mean by that?

One of my immediate modes of response in this time is focused on the material world, on logistics, infrastructure, and communications. Move tents to the outdoor distancing shelter. Move medicines to vulnerable people sheltering in place. Distribute food, disinfectant wipes, masks, and hand sanitizer. All these things are important. But it's easy to get tunnel vision and start thinking that if we can meet all these immediate needs, the situation will eventually return to a desired status quo.

Response to the existing social disasters highlighted by the pandemic demands a much more complicated engagement with human structures of power, race, and economy, and a status quo that is far from desirable. Meanwhile, the usual disasters normally labeled as “individual problems” become systemic in a pandemic—relationship breakdowns, overdue bills, a crisis of loneliness.

The accumulation of these realities is overwhelming. I, like many other people, have been spending too much time hunched over social media scrolling through endlessly enraging and frightening news that I feel helpless to do anything about, while desperately wishing I could see my close people face-to-face. What can I do? How can I avoid the paralysis and isolation that are the basic building blocks of trauma?

When I am thinking through the relationship between practical and creative action, I often look to the Center for Artistic Activism. They write, “Activism moves the material world, while Art moves the heart, body and soul... Creating and sustaining lasting change demands a change in values, beliefs and patterns of behavior, that is: cultural change... Culture lays the foundation for politics. It outlines the contours of our very notions of what is desirable and undesirable, possible and impossible.”

This emerging project is driven by a simple question: How can we use imagination to connect in satisfying ways within the constraints of a dangerous virus? How can we address overwhelming claustrophobia and despair in order to fuel the more practical actions we need to be taking to secure our individual and community well-being?

I had been talking for months about starting a virtual Kitchen Dance Party Network to connect far-flung community who have limited time, energy, and access for going “clubbing” but still love to dance. So I adapted this idea to our current reality and started an Emergency Dance Party Network. I got together with Ariana Jacob in the parking lot next to KSMoCA, a contemporary art museum inside a public elementary school in North East Portland. We set up a Bluetooth speaker, and a folding chair with a laptop to bring in virtual attendees. Then we chalked out a pattern of circles to help twelve live partygoers practice social distancing while we danced to a playlist by a local DJ, the Seamstress of Sound.

We are training to be responders in a global pandemic of paralysis, disorientation, dangerous leadership, and untrustworthy physical and human surroundings. The first step to being a responder is to keep our bodies and spirits in motion—to get connected to ourselves and others. Together we’re going to shake out the news and the anxiety, explore our senses, and wrap ourselves in a virtual gauze of collective curiosity.

Subsequent Emergency Dance Parties moved to an all-virtual format as the scale of the pandemic peaked; I’ll soon be returning to a hybrid of live and virtual participation now that we have more clarity on the effectiveness of social distancing.

In preparation for Assembly, I have also been experimenting with other modes of live outdoor movement while connecting through virtual technology. This is all new to me; I am acting as a Spontaneous Untrained Volunteer in a crisis. Taking inspiration from guided meditations, other virtual meeting experiments and artists’ audio walks (Janet Cardiff, in particular), I am developing Evacuation Routes: Exploring Public Space in a Pandemic, in collaboration with Shawn Creeden and Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr.

This project will take dispersed participants on a live exploration of the internal and external landscapes of our varied geographies. In addition to the basic first aid of getting people in motion together, the project explores the shifting realities of public space in the context of covid-19. New cultures are emerging in encounters with strangers and in our relationship to the built environment, shaped in the crossfire of health science, behavioral norms, and the human need for sociality. Can we find safe zones where our bodies meet public space? Can we use technology to create a collective impression of the space and time we’re in?

*The following is condensed from a conversation on May 14, 2020, between Zeph Fishlyn and Anne Williams, a long time San Franciscan whose professional bio reads, “Artist, mother, yogi, student, crone. Order varies.” Williams took part in several Emergency Dance Parties and the first Evacuation Routes test walk.*

ANNE WILLIAMS: I’ve been really fortunate. I’ve had four degrees or five degrees of separation from anyone who is physically impacted with the illness. The sense of emergency for me has been in how to keep my immediate community as safe as possible, to maintain our physical and spiritual health. In terms of economic and lifestyle effects, it’s hit me very much more closely; I have had economic emergency.

The first two weeks were tricky. My daughter Stella was just out of school. And we hadn’t hit a stride on what we were supposed to do; we were definitely circling around in a lot of unknowns. We had our routine and it got dumped over. Then it was just like, well, what are we doing? How do we get back into a routine so that we don’t just get immobile—that fight or flight thing, that little freeze from fear.

ZEPH FISHLYN: Those first two weeks, my body was really vibrating.

AW: Your project has been beneficial for me because it gets me outside. It reminds me to stay connected to people larger than my immediate small circles. And it also reminds me to move my body because it’s so easy to just sit still. It’s so easy to sit in front of a computer. There are so many

cool things online that by that third week I was just completely overwhelmed with choices. The messages that I was supposed to be doing certain things—I was supposed to be reading certain books, and I was supposed to be baking a certain number of baked goods, and doing a certain number of puzzles, and bingeing on a certain number of Netflix shows. I got panicky because I wasn’t doing any of it.

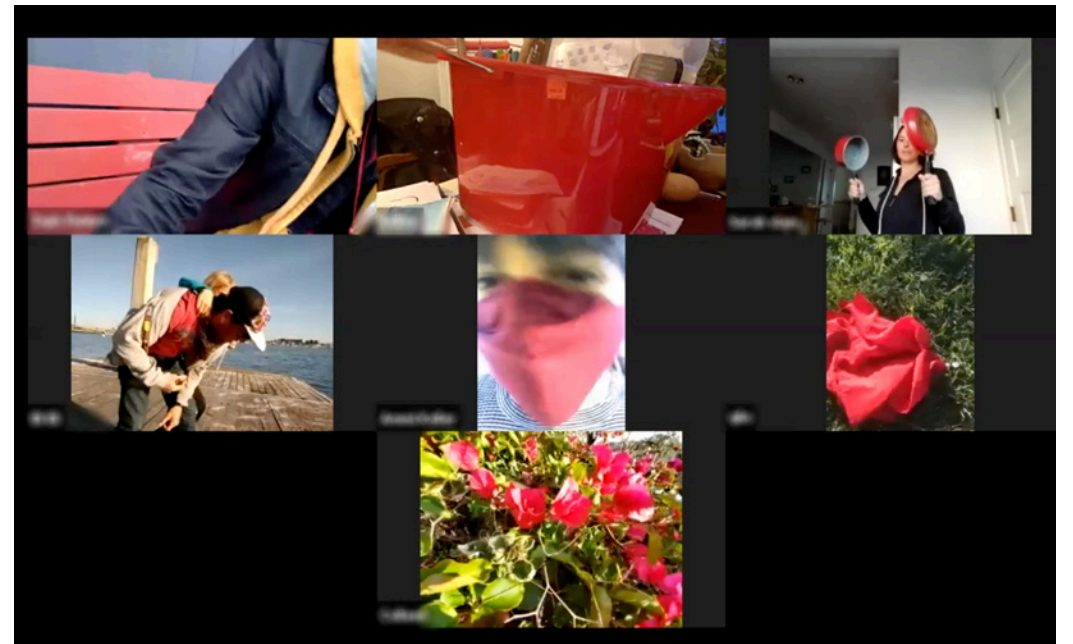
ZF: Did you feel like you were obliged to go to a certain number of dance parties?

AW: I didn’t feel obliged. I loved doing that first one when Stella and I got up on Bernal Heights [a hilltop park in San Francisco]. There was this family of two dykes, an older toddler and his sister who was maybe five or six. I was dancing, and they weren’t. This little kid was just looking at me like crazy. And I said, it’s a dance party with friends in other states! And the two women were both like, cool. And he started dancing along by himself as he walked by. It brought other people into it, it was just awesome.

After the Evacuation Routes walk, I’m still surprised at myself, that my evacuation route was not the physically easiest direction from my house. I intuitively went up the hill toward the green space,

rather down the hill to where there's a transit corridor, and it's easy to get out of the neighborhood. It's a steep hill, so there's stairs on some blocks instead of a street—it's kind of safe and protected and hidden. The farther you get up the hill, the streets are less paved, there are still some areas that were late to be incorporated into the city. I love the sense of overview of the city, getting the big picture.

It's fun to be a participant in a project that has people in different places, like, hey, we're all feeling a little bit squirrely. Or even one person, like, you're having this experience, and how can you draw in other people to help support you through that experience? They get to be witnesses and bystanders, but also participants. We get to benefit vicariously from helping you get through your emergency!



Top: *Distance Dance*, live/virtual hybrid, Emergency Dance Party Network. Photo by Mack McFarland.

Bottom: "Dance with something red"—virtual Emergency Dance Party Network screenshot.



# Borrowed Tool Project Archive at the Carlisle Tool Library in Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Mary Olin “Mo” Geiger

Sometimes during this period of distancing, I take a break from doing whatever it is that I’m doing, and wonder: what are the ways in which we know each other? I know people’s eyes, their hands, the way they walk, the sound of their voices. I know the way they laugh and the music they listen to. But what would it be like to get to know someone by observing what they make? Or by seeing what tools they use to fix things? We do this naturally to a certain extent by recognizing a friend’s loaf of bread, the jingle of their keys, or duct tape quick-fixes left behind. But most of these memories are not compiled anywhere other than in our minds.

The Borrowed Tool Project Archive exists within a Tool Library in south-central Pennsylvania that serves members from six adjacent counties. The space encourages an accessible sharing economy that prioritizes relationships, and I’ve worked with this organization for a little over two years. Originally, I wanted to start the archive because I realized that, although tools were being checked out from the library and work was being done, we didn’t have any way to look back and reflect upon members’ projects. Several of our members, including Brionna (pictured later), sent us some wonderful documentation of their work, and the more I asked around, the more projects I came across. The Project Archive is both a practical and imaginative solution. It is a vessel that suggests the importance of documenting work, while at the same time creating a way to collectively explore personal efforts. By compiling this evidence of labor, we see the people of a community represented by the things that they make and repair. We celebrate the mundane and the extraordinary simultaneously! While thinking about the ways we can interact with this documentation, I dream of a space in which all things evoke wonder.

The cycles of the natural world around me seem more visible at this moment in time—with the turning of a fresh, green season and rainfall on warmer days. These spirals show up in everyday life, in both built and natural environments: things activate, they change, and then they regenerate. Last week, a large rip emerged in my bed’s fitted sheet. I dug through a bin of scrap fabric and found several leftover muslin sampler pieces that I made months ago. I sewed them together to make a patch and pinned it to the sheet. I sewed along the frayed edges, strengthening the material so that it could once again be a bedcover. It’s different now, but it works, and shows signs of that

cycle of wear. My tendency toward repair, in addition to leading workshops for varied skill levels, has taught me how important material experimentation is to problem solving. The Borrowed Tool Project Archive acknowledges this tactile learning process, and it freezes snapshots to view along the way.

Getting a glimpse into the way another person interacts with their environment seems commonplace, but sometimes I forget how often I gain knowledge from this kind of observation. This archive is in a space built for collaborative learning, applying knowledge, and reimagining systems. It reminds us that all kinds of interaction—material and social—can be evidenced by recording intentional acts of sharing.

*The following exchange takes place between two separate recollections. One is shared by Jeff Adams, cofounder of the Carlisle Tool Library. The other is shared by Mary Adams, Jeff’s mom, who is on the Tool Library’s board and served as its treasurer for the first two years of operation. The recollections were edited and compiled by Mo Geiger.*

JEFF ADAMS: I remember a time when Jo and I wanted to motorize a bike.

MARY ADAMS: The tools of my trade when I first began were pencil, paper, and erasers. Later they included adding machines and finally computers. I have not enjoyed learning to use computers, but I have made my peace with them.

JA: We took a lawnmower motor and tried to mount it to a bike, and we rigged up this mount and added some chains and pulleys to the motor.

MA: I presume you could also add printers and copiers to this mix. I am often surprised with how proficient I have become changing ink and toner cartridges.

JA: And in the end, it didn’t work; we didn’t have the right alignment with some of the parts that

were needed, but just trying to get it to work was fun.

MA: I am still frustrated that I never was taught to maintain a bicycle, and at this point it would require someone with great patience to teach me.

JA: But it did stick with me, in terms of just being able to tinker. Because that was one of the first projects I ever tinkered with, and a lot of it was [with] Jo’s guidance. Even though we were both kind of new to it. At the time he worked on his own truck and his dad’s motorcycle I believe. But this was before we were sixteen.

MA: I have no idea when the first time I repaired something was, as girls were not encouraged to learn to use tools when I was a child unless they were for cooking, cleaning, sewing, or other household chores deemed acceptable for girls to do. None of

these interested me, and sewing was actually something I hated. My eyes were so bad they put me in bifocals in second grade to see if it would help, but gave up when I continually tripped on steps. Threading a needle was torture for me.

JA: You know, when you're with a group of people, or with a friend, then it always makes it more memorable—working on something jointly.

MA: I do remember a few times that I actually learned to use a tool and was glad of it.

JA: Trying to tinker on your own by yourself, without prior knowledge, is kind of like fishing around in the dark.

MA: When I first got my driver's license and asked to take the car, my father said I could, after I showed him I was proficient with charging a battery and changing a tire.

JA: You don't always know what you're doing.

MA: He showed me how to do both in the driveway. I used to know which color clamp to put where on a battery, but I would have to consult a cellphone to do it now.

JA: Yeah. I think the confidence that comes with being able to learn something new, the confidence to learn how to be in

control of your surroundings, is a huge plus.

MA: I have changed tires on my own when stuck in remote areas, but I always have to jack the car down after I jack it up, since each time I forget to loosen the nuts first. I can tie basic knots, and rope is a tool, I think. I was somewhat dangerous with a knife, but I can build a wicked fire and pitch a tent or put up a tarp.

JA: There's something really powerful about just experimenting with tools. Not necessarily, you know, using it in the exact specific way that it was meant for, but there's many tools that have multiple uses. And learning the ins and outs of various tools is just part of the fun...

MA: I do remember, however, fixing more than one exhaust pipe with wire hangers. I think I surprised Jeff and his brothers when I did that once in Bedford. I can jump-start a car with manual transmission by rolling it, and [I] used to park on hills with one particular vehicle to be able to do so since the battery died regularly. I guess that does not involve tools.

JA: ... figuring out what you can do with certain things.

M: I think the tool I like best may be a good snow shovel. I enjoy getting out in the cold and making a neat path through the freshly fallen snow.



Top: Emily and her mom, Patti, in an archive image, showing their finished cutting boards after a workshop at the Tool Library.

Bottom: Mo assists Caroline with textile repairs. Archived as part of a Tool Library workshop series called "Home Sewn."





Top: Process image of a wood-fired cob oven project: made from earth, stone, sand, straw, and bricks. Submitted to the archive by Jeff.

Right: Images from Brionna that are now included in the Archive. Here [top] she is pictured with her son, working on their flooring project as a surprise for his dad. Second image [bottom] shows the tools they used on the project.





# Trans Boxing

Nola Hanson (Lead Artist), Hill Donnell (Collaborator), and Liv Adler (Collaborator)

In July 2017, I came up with a title (Trans Boxing), and set up some simple parameters: I would hold a boxing class exclusively for trans-identified people. The class would take place in a boxing gym. There would be a trans-identified trainer. All levels of experience would be welcome. No one would be turned away if they didn't have the funds to pay the suggested donation fee. These parameters were powerful, because they directly inverted the typical exclusions found in boxing and sports more broadly.

At the time, I'd been training and competing consistently for two years, and a few different simultaneous life factors—including my decision to start medically transitioning—allowed me to rethink my approach and my engagement with the sport. I began to wonder how I could use my own agency and abilities to make boxing—and potentially, the benefits I'd experienced—available to other people who are not generally included. I also started to reconsider my own position, and reorientated myself to engage with boxing more intentionally as an artist.

I wanted to maintain certain aspects of the existing/dominant system of boxing—the one from which I'd benefit so profoundly—while subverting, critiquing, and tweaking other elements, in an effort to expand the reach and the possibilities of the discipline, its rituals, and the communities created through its practice.

Since 2017, Trans Boxing has facilitated weekly boxing classes exclusively for t/gn/nb people at Overthrow Boxing Club, in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and has partnered with local community organizations and gyms across the country to provide workshops, classes, and lectures. By centering trans and gender variant people, Trans Boxing critically intervenes in the rigidly gendered system of athletics, and reconceptualizes how the sport can be made available to people who have limited access.

More recently, we have started to experiment with shifting the original parameters of the project in order to make Trans Boxing classes more accessible and inclusive. To this end, we've held classes in unconventional locations, like pride centers, art galleries, and public parks, and offered programs to a broader set of participants.

In the fall of 2019, collaborator Hill Donnell initiated a weekly boxing class for members of the Door, a youth drop-in center in Lower Manhattan. The boxing training and facilitation provided at the Door is rooted in trauma-informed care and principles of positive youth development. By emphasizing skill acquisition, community building

and embodiment, Trans Boxing classes at the Door offer a space for young people to have fun together while learning to box. In March 2020, we began offering our weekly classes on Zoom, and have opened them up to all members of the LGBTQ community.

Around the time the stay-at-home order was issued, I started giving out simple exercises to our mailing list. Trans Boxing Conceptual Exercises invites participants to follow instructions and submit documentation of completed exercises that formalize the rituals of boxing training. In addition to providing practical and useful instructions for at-home boxing training, the parameters of the project reclaim the day-to-day experiences of the boxer and position them as conceptual artworks in and of themselves.

Over the past three years, we have developed a methodology that is experimental, disciplined, and responsive. Through shifting some of the parameters of our project, our approach—developed with trans and gender variant people in mind—is made available to people from many different experiences and backgrounds. The fact that trans and gender variant people, as well as people who don't identify that way, find value in what we do highlights the reality of inclusive and progressive practices: they benefit everyone.

—Nola Hanson

*Brooklyn-based educator and Trans Boxing collaborator Hill Donnell recently had a chance to talk with Kay Martinez. Martinez is a Trans Boxing participant, and gender non-conforming Afro-Latinx boxer. Martinez's professional work focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion in higher ed. In this interview, conducted via Zoom on May 6, 2020, Donnell and Martinez discuss what drew Martinez to boxing, the differences they've experienced in affirming versus toxic athletic environments, and what it's been like training with Trans Boxing virtually during the pandemic.*

HILL DONNELL: So how did you hear about Trans Boxing?

in that way and created the space for people to join.

KAY MARTINEZ: I saw a post on Instagram. I was never able to make a session in-person. I tried to bring Trans Boxing to Boston before covid-19. When the shutdown happened, and Trans Boxing went online, I was able to join virtually. So, I'm really appreciative that you all pivoted

HD: Where did you train, initially? And what were those experiences like?

KM: For the past two years, I've been going to franchise [gyms] like Title Boxing, and 9Round. I've also checked out Overthrow, and Church Street Boxing. My experiences in all of these spaces



had been predominantly cis-het. Most of the coaches I've had have been cis men. I'd rarely have a woman who was a coach. I've never seen a trans or non-binary coach in any of these gyms—at least no one who was out—so pronouns were always a thing. While I thought the coaching and instruction was really good [at these gyms] and it was a good workout, did I feel safe or comfortable, and did I have my identity recognized? Absolutely not. They would say toxic things, that I think perpetuate an unhealthy relationship with food, and body image, and working out. I've had some coaches say, like, "Let's work hard so you can earn your dinner!" As if you have to earn food. And, you know, comments like, "Oh yeah, we're working out for our summer bodies."

HD: Based on those experiences, what were your expectations of Trans Boxing, and how did that compare to what you'd found elsewhere?

KM: In trans spaces, I think we're more cognizant of how harmful that kind of language can be. So, I was hoping that Trans Boxing would have a gender-inclusive frame, and a healthier approach to fitness and wellness, and they've absolutely had that. I felt like Trans Boxing would be different because I would have coaches who may be trans, gender non-conforming, or non-binary, and would be more knowledgeable, and wouldn't misgender me or assume my gender pronouns.

Trans Boxing has a totally different approach, which I was hoping for. They've been really great about inclusivity and being mindful about these things.

HD: When did you become interested in boxing? How did you come to the sport, in general?

KM: In November of 2018, I was physically assaulted by a cis white man at a concert in New York. He made comments about my appearance, about my gender, and because I'm also Afro-Latinx, race is inherently a part of it. I never imagined that it would turn physical or violent. He hit me several times and actually landed some punches on my face. Prior to that experience, I had been active in CrossFit, and I played basketball in college, but I was not prepared for hand-to-hand combat. What happened to me, is what happens to trans people of color unfortunately all the time. And I wasn't prepared for it, I never thought it would be me. After that incident, part of the healing process was for me to learn how to box, and learn how to defend myself.

HD: I'm extremely sorry that that happened to you. Not to say I'm sorry for you, but to say that I hear and feel that that was a painful experience for you, as it would be for anyone. So I'm sorry that that happened. But I'm glad that it brought you into boxing, and that boxing has been a way for you to work through some of that experience. Were there any hesitations around showing up to Trans Boxing class for the first time?

KM: For me, boxing was wrapped up with PTSD, and dealing with the trauma that happened. I've been in classes where instructors would say, "Visualize someone you want to hit." And for me, as someone who survived a hate crime, that is not helpful. There have been times, especially in the first couple weeks [boxing], where I'd be hitting the bag and I'd have flashbacks of what happened to me. So that's why the language that instructors use is so important. And you know I had to work through a lot of that stuff in those spaces by myself. So I had cis-het men who were coaching saying stuff like, "Picture you're in a fight. Picture you wanna hurt someone." And I'm like, "That is not OK." And you know, I had to work through a lot of that stuff in those spaces by myself. And so I really appreciate this space [Trans Boxing] where I don't have to worry about that happening.

HD: Has participating in classes had any effect with regard to feeling connected to yourself, your body, and/or other trans/gnc, non-binary, and queer folks, especially during quarantine?

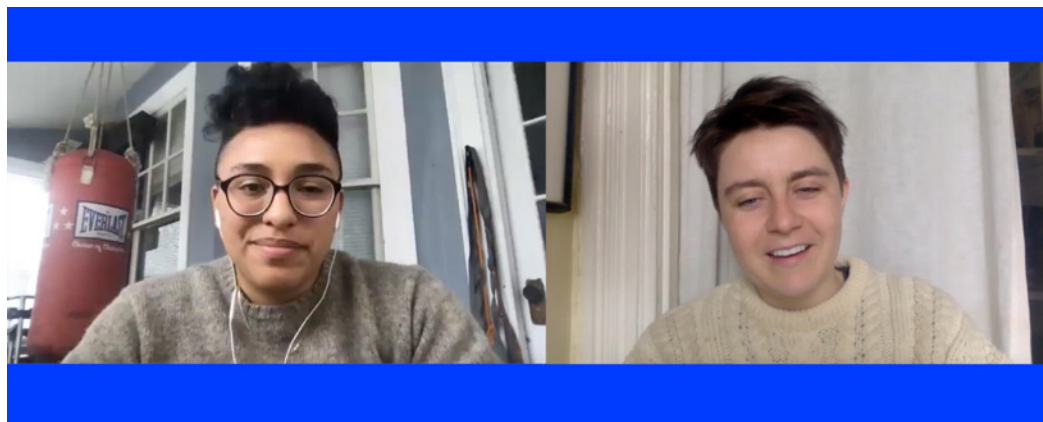
KM: As I mentioned before, no one in the space, none of the instructors, say things that are harmful. No one says anything that perpetuates toxic associations with exercise or body image. It's really affirming, you all are cognizant of these things. You encourage people to listen to their bodies, you emphasize the skills and the fundamentals. I appreciate how all you do that

inherently and organically, as just a part of the space. In some of these other spaces [I've trained at] there's this high intensity, where it's like, "Go really hard!" "Leave it all on the floor!" and that can lead people to hurting themselves. And it's not smart.

For me [looks over their shoulder at the heavy bag hanging on their porch] boxing is a fitness practice and also a mental health practice. It has always been, but in this [covid-19] context, it takes on new meaning. So I think one thing specifically with Trans Boxing, it's Saturday afternoons, and for me—right now especially—there are some times where I just don't want to do anything. I can't do anything.

I'm feeling sad, I'm feeling depressed, I'm feeling anxious, all these things. And having something that was scheduled, something I can plan my day around, and something that I want to do that I would feel motivated to get up for and do. And I don't know that I would do that on my own. So having that there really helps me. It gives me something to look forward to.

HD: That's really great to hear. I feel like each of us really tries to bring that, because, like you shared, we've all been in other athletic spaces where it's a really toxic relationship between trainer and athlete and it just creates this really toxic environment. So I appreciate you highlighting that, 'cause yeah... we think about it!



Top: Heavy Breathing Presents: Trans Boxing, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, California, 2020.

Bottom: Trans Boxing Interview: Kay Martinez and Hill Donnell, 2020.



Top: Trans Boxing Sparring Practice. Brooklyn, New York, 2019. Photo by Ada Jane McNulty.

Bottom: Heavy Breathing Presents: Trans Boxing, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, California, 2020.



# Performance for One Person:

## A series of public encounters choreographed with and for individual residents of Walla Walla, Washington

Tia Kramer with Sabina Rogers

One year ago, I gave birth to my second child, Edie. My work as a social choreographer and performer centers an ethic of care, so it was no surprise that during the sleepless hours tending to Edie, I ruminated on the unseen tending—to children, pets, homes, gardens, and intimate spaces—done by friends and neighbors. The connection between our labor and care was immediate. I felt their lives pressing on mine. I questioned: Which moments of their labors are enacted with pride and which precipitate dread? What gestures do they move through without thought? And where do they find ease? Whether this was the work of a cook at a local restaurant or our seventeen-year-old babysitter, the postal delivery worker or a professor of Medieval Literature, I became deeply curious about the affective dimensions of their everyday lives.

*Performance for One Person, a series of public encounters choreographed with and for individual residents of Walla Walla, Washington* was devised as a mode of interruption. Each performance is researched in relationship with a single audience member and created in collaboration with our shared communities. Woven into the routine of the audience member's life, these encounters unfold over the course of hours or days and often end in one culminating event. They rearrange elements of daily life—relationships, site and community—blurring the line between everyday and performance.

*At Dusk We Walk Home Together, Performance for Guillermo* was the first performance in this series. It was developed alongside writer and performer Sabina Rogers and made with and for our mutual friend, Guillermo. At the onset of this project, Sabina and I had each shared a distinct and memorable space with Guillermo. I met him at a meeting for the Walla Walla Immigrant Rights Coalition, where we then worked together on numerous projects. Sabina lived in his apartment building, directly one story below him. Together we were struck by his deep attunement to the world around him. Guillermo holds an inquisitive disposition. He studies things closely and reflects generously. He is also a remarkable salsa dancer and a very patient teacher (Sabina can attest). After Guillermo said yes to our strange proposition, we visited him at his work and his home. He taught us the most efficient way to crack an egg, as he regularly cracks around five-hundred eggs a day. We sat with

him in the corner of his favorite bookstore reading passages from his favorite books. He took us on a tour of his neighborhood. We asked him questions about his life and he asked us questions about ours.

Guillermo's performance began with a prelude on Wednesday, October 30, 2019, when he received a call from his favorite bookstore indicating that a book was waiting for him. That afternoon, he picked up the book and read it at the store in his favorite chair. On Sunday, November 3, 2019, at 3:20 pm he arrived at a bakery he frequents, early as usual. This initiated a two and a half hour encounter that unfolded at the bakery and culminated on his walk home, around 6 pm. During this interval, performers enacted pedestrian choreography that transformed mundanity into moments of synchronicity, store owners wrote Guillermo notes on their sandwich boards, a pastor delivered a sermon for him, and an empty parking lot was transformed into a constellation of lights. Fifteen community members collaborated in the making of Guillermo's performance; some were his dear friends, others are still strangers to him.

The process of making Guillermo's performance was the catalyst for this ongoing series. It continues to evolve with various collaborators and individual audience members in Walla Walla, Washington. At the time of this publication in May 2020, two performances are complete and a third is being developed for Tia's postal worker, Phillip. In this moment of social distancing, the intimate relational practices that are at the center of this project have seeped into our collective consciousness. This series continues to develop with the intention to explore the possibilities of caring for one another in the face of widespread disruption. We approach performance making as testimony both to the subjective state of individual bodies and to the histories that have molded them. These performances mingle, percolate, and pour into each other. There is no single thread, but rather a meshwork of tangled narratives.

*At Dusk We Walk Home Together, Performance for Guillermo was created in collaboration with Guillermo and David Cosby, Tiffany Cain, Kathryn Padberg, Nhi Cao, Reverend Nathaniel Muhlberg, Julie Jones, Jackie Wood, Phil Lynch, Maddy Gold, Jose Cedeno, Fields Ford, Lucy Evans Rippey, and Joel Barton (listed in the order they appeared).*

*The following is an abridged version of a conversation that took place on November 25, 2019 between Guillermo and Jennifer Bayne-Lemma, a professor of philosophy at Walla Walla Community College. Bayne-Lemma sat down to talk with Guillermo about his experience with this project. Their conversation has been edited for length and clarity by Tia Kramer and Sabina Rogers, and reviewed for content and accuracy by Guillermo and Bayne-Lemma.*

JENNIFER BAYNE-LEMMA: Tia and Sabina have shared fragments of your performance with me, but I am curious to know about your experience. Can you walk me through how it began?

GUILLERMO: This is going to be a little bit challenging for me. I haven't talked to anybody about it. Because how—how do you talk about this? How do I even have the right to talk about this? It's like giving somebody a gift that you don't know how to keep. How to talk to people about this gift that you just got? Especially for somebody that—I consider myself very ordinary. So to talk about confronting something ordinary with something extraordinary. How can you put that together? It's for me—it's very, very challenging.

Before the performance Tia and Sabina already knew a lot of my, a lot of what I do. They know about myself, about my work, what I think, what I like. So before everything starts they tell me we're going to meet at the bakery. I don't even remember the time. I think it was 3. I go to this bakery very often. Sometimes three times a day. I usually sit in the same spot. So I go there thinking that I'm gonna meet them

and we're gonna talk and maybe we're gonna take a walk.

Then I go there. There is a book waiting for me and flowers in my special place. I go to my spot. There are instructions from Tia in a book. There is something I have to read and a map where I'm gonna be walking. I start reading this book that talks about the ordinary. I have it here. [Gestures to the table.] The book is *Ordinary Affects*.

If it's OK, I'm not gonna go into detail. It will take a long time. And it's something that makes me uncomfortable. Because it's hard for me to express.

So I start reading this book. I love to read. I usually go there to read. And I'm there when all of a sudden I see Sabina crossing the street. I'm talking about outside of the bakery. She's crossing the street and she's performing these dance moves or expressing herself in movement. Then all of a sudden I see two other people involved. By that time I'm kind of like, "OK, this is something that I wasn't expecting." And when you are—I'm a very methodical person. I'm methodical and not very optimistic. I don't expect many good things. So when confronted with that you try to

look into your experience for how to act. Maybe in your brain it's like, "OK, I haven't been in this place before." So I really don't know what to do.

JBL: Right.

G: So OK, let's relax.

One of the words in the instructions that has stayed with me for a while is that when you don't know what to do, to ground yourself and see. That's what I did and that's when everything started.

JBL: Is there a moment from the performance that remains particularly vivid for you?

G: I mean. It's hard to pick. There is this one moment. A moment where Tia and I are walking together. We are walking together, in the performance, and then we get to the church. We sit on the steps outside. We look at the sunset. It's the first time I've looked at the sunset on Alder Street. And it's beautiful. I start talking with Tia and it comes to mind that maybe we have met before in another life.

Then I see the doors of the church open. First of all, this is a place that brings me a lot of memories. It is a very special place. The first meeting of the Walla Walla Immigrant Rights Coalition was here. It has in so many ways changed my life. And I consider myself to be very good friends with Nathaniel, the pastor. I see inside that there is

somebody playing music. And the church is open just for me.

So by that time I'm totally overwhelmed. I don't know what to do. I mean, have you ever been in a sacred place? As I talk about this it makes me remember places where I have been—places where you feel there is a presence of God or whatever you want to call it—a presence of something that you cannot understand. And you say, "OK, I'm sorry." "Thank you very much." "I love you." "Just let me pray and I'll be out."

You know how people say, "If you had a chance to ask God a question, what would you ask?" I wouldn't even ask. Probably the only thing that I would be asking is, "Why me?" That's it.

When I saw this, it was that feeling. I didn't know where to sit, what to do. I just wanted to be quiet and listen to them play. It was totally overwhelming. I mean, still the feeling is really hard for me to express. But it is... it is what it is.

And so I listened to them. I didn't know if I needed to interact with them. But I had seen one of the performers before. The person who was playing the guitar. I had seen him before and I knew that he is a very talented musician. And to realize that somebody so talented is doing something for you—something you could never imagine in your life—it's just, there's nothing to compare it to. So if you can, imagine this: an

empty church. No lights and there you are. Listening to this music.

JBL: If you could say anything to the community members and friends who collaborated to create this work, what would you say?

G: Gratitude. [Long pause.]

There is nothing... I have nothing to pay for this. And I know that I'm probably putting it in a very trivial way to say pay, but in my life—in the way that I have been raised—if you receive something, you have to give something in exchange. Just to say thank you. [Silence.] I mean, there are no words for this. This transcends all that I am, and I think all that we are. If I have anything to give to you, I will give it.

The only thing that comes to my mind is to give you a feeling... But how can I give you a feeling or memory of my childhood? One that is very precious, the most precious memory of my childhood. How can I give it to you? How can I just take it and put it in your heart and tell you, "Enjoy

this! This is the best feeling that I have memory of." How can I give it to you so that you can hold it in your heart? To wake it up and feel it again and tell you, "Here, this is the most precious thing that I have."

If I could pay, I would pay everybody with that, to hold that feeling of—of happiness when you don't even know that you are happy. Of being safe when you don't even know that you have to be safe. Of being loved and loving somebody without knowing that you are loving and being loved. But how? How can I put that in your hands or in your heart?

I have no money. I am a cook. But anyway... [He laughs.] Then I have no words or no way to pay for it. Just the usual, "Muchas gracias, muchas gracias." And I'm honored, I'm beyond... not happy. It would be too trivial to say happy. I'm beyond—beyond grateful for all of the people who have been working on this. And now that's all I can say.



Top: 150 eggs for German pancake batter. Image by Sabina Rogers.

Bottom: Parking lot on the corner of Colville Street and East Poplar Street. Image by Fields Ford.



# Prosperity Gardens in Jantzen Beach RV Park

Shelbie Loomis, with tours and conversations conducted in collaboration with Butch and Jodi Hurtline, Gary, Jeanie, Hannah, and Maxine.

I became fascinated with my neighbors when I noticed how they used plants to showcase their creativity and curating their lots with visual cues to communicate their residential status. I noticed it the moment we parked our rig and climbed out of the truck from our long journey. My neighbors used contouring techniques to line the outside of their RVs with temporary and movable gardens should they need to leave. However, since the national emergency, migration has been suspended, making travelers dock for the foreseeable future. The moment created a temporary permanence in which people were metaphorically laying down roots until they felt it was safe to leave. It became important to engage in storytelling and to ask for personal garden tours, all of which showed me that archiving contemporary nomadic culture could be explored and celebrated through plants and art.

Prosperity Gardens in Jantzen Beach RV Park is a socially engaged art project that activates and archives container gardening with RV residents during the covid-19 pandemic. The project engages the residents of Jantzen Beach RV Park, a neighborhood on Hayden Island in Portland, Oregon. Through a series of garden tours, storytelling and art projects, the objective is to encourage hope and sustainability, and to strengthen the social fabric. Through partnership with the Prosperity Garden Network, all gardens are then linked together through a registry to provide Portland residents with solitary support through a common labor practice. The project aims to address social issues like healthy eating, positive movements toward climate change through using recycled materials, and community building exercises during social distancing. As unemployment rates reach new and unforeseen levels, RV residents are spending more time outside to enjoy the sunshine and dirt, and engaging with the RV artist-in-resident's inquisitive questions.

During my casual visits, I asked my neighbors to share their thoughts about the functionality of gardens when living in an RV and what qualifications each garden would have to serve to be able to keep one.

## THE ISLAND WITH MANY SAILORS.

My neighbors described their RVs like seafaring ships, justifying that each item in their RV had to meet qualifications to be able to join

in the journey. Each plant and container should have multiple uses, being light to carry or disassemble, easily stored or can be hatched down during travel. Some travelers carried plants long term but most carried the essentials to be able to create pop-up gardens if need be. I began to see relationships between other art projects that worked with sailing and seeds. The Seed Journey by Future Farmers explored migration routes of ancient seeds by reversing the journey back to the origin with the use of sea ships and artists/sailors to carry the cargo. Through the stories and conversations of each garden, I began to envision RV'ers as sailors voyaging to familiar areas they once traveled to, carrying a plant back home to its origin.

During the summer of 2020, as traveling becomes less restrictive, Prosperity Gardens in Jantzen Beach RV Park will be exploring home-made, collapsible garden kits that can match the lifestyle and qualification of each RV resident to have their own garden regardless of their stationary status. The participants will then stay in touch via social media and other means as they document their prosperity gardens on the road. This is an example of one of the activities that will be explored.

## THE PARTNERSHIP.

Through partnership with Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr., and Kirk "Greener" Rea, I was invited to explore a larger formalization of organizing people and their gardens and bringing value to the labor being conducted in social isolation. The Prosperity Garden Network (PGN), sponsored by City Repair Project and Village Building Convergence, is a decentralized project that allows artists, community activists, and grassroots movements to register their gardens as a means to cultivate land and community. The Jantzen Beach RV Park was invited to be one of the first neighborhoods to register. What felt important during this time was to retroactively claim citizen uprising gardening as an artistic conduit to bring attention to the lack of government preparedness, support for each other through labor for our families and neighborhoods, and then be rewarded by the produce grown. The registration was simple, asking basic need questions, the square footages of the areas being cultivated, and a drawing of the garden.

Prosperity Gardens at Jantzen Beach RV Park has just begun, and has been scheduling events into the summertime and harvest time. The RV Park has been measured, and a drawing mapping out all the spots that have gardens will be registered. Throughout the upcoming months, the RV participants and I will be exploring re-creating projects like Seed Journey, gardening performance, garden tours, soil and plant exchange, and a safe community dinner where all can come back together to celebrate our harvest. Just as seeds planted in the late springtime, the project will continue to grow and adapt to the needs of the residents.

*The following is a conversation between Shelbie Loomis and Gary and Jeanie, Jantzen Beach RV Park residents. They are speaking from inside their RV during a light spring shower.*

SHELBBIE LOOMIS: Maybe we can start by talking about where you came from up to this point?

JEANNIE: We had decided six years ago to transform our lives and become movers and shakers of this world. We wanted to travel, to see the different parts of the country, I guess. It was a decision we pondered for a couple of years and just decided to go for it. We got rid of everything. Sold everything, and what we didn't sell, we divvied up to our children. We just decided to hit the road.

SL: I would imagine that you came to that decision after you raised a family?

J: Yes, our children were grown and we were already grandparents by that time. And that's when we traveled between Florida and Washington State so frequently because we had a daughter and grandson here, and a daughter and grandchildren in Tampa, Florida... I miss having a "home base" but yet when we are in Washington, we have our daughter here and in Florida, we have our daughter there and that becomes my second home. And we treat it as such.

SL: So living in this culture, can you talk about the people that you have met?

J: You meet all types of people from all facets of life. Because you are basically living in...not a trailer park per se, you meet a lot of people that are just passing through. We don't really become lifelong friends with them but they are friends that we stay in touch with via social media. So yeah, we met a lot of different types of people. Some are living the lifestyle that we do, some that are full time.

SL: Something that has come up with some of my interviews has been that a lot of times you have to select items in your life that have multiple uses. So people start to have reasons for having plants, what would be your reasons?

J: I like plants. I like feeling like I have roots, even if it's for five or six months. It gives you that home feeling. It makes people that come over feel welcomed. I have always had houseplants, and as you can see I have plants in here [gestures to the front of the RV cabin] I just recently started putting things outside and if it's still there when we are getting ready to leave, of course, I keep my houseplants with me but what I would have outside, I would transfer to my daughter. We are doing tomato plants, we might plant more herbs and veggie plants like a little garden or something... To me the plants at least make it feel more

welcoming than to walk up to a motor home that has nothing on the outside.

SL: With the current situation, what I have been thinking and researching about Victory Gardens and people in the 1930s when the United States was going through the Great Depression, the US government told the citizens that their civic duties were to plant Victory Gardens to help create morale and to supplement rationing. You mentioned that you are giving plants away to your family, have you thought about it as a means to feed your family?

J: Honestly, no. What is happening is so surreal still to me. It's hard for me to wrap my head around... this whole thing. I am doing it [gardening] to give myself an outlet, does that make sense?

SL: Yes, I mean I think that I feel that way and a lot of people feel that way—that gardening and being outside are very therapeutic—to think about something else other than the craziness.

J: Exactly, I mean I sometimes feel like I can't get out and do the gardening that I want to do here so I will go to my daughter's house and do some yard work there. It is very therapeutic.

SL: Tell me about some of the plants that you have in here?

J: Some of these plants I have had for many, many, many years, and I keep cutting them. Like

the two big plants up front, they were given to Gary not too long after we were married and that was many years ago. I like simple things, simple hardy plants that don't take a lot of care like the orchid I have behind you. The one over here is perfect because it's one of those where you don't have to water it because it's silk. [We all laugh together] The big one does have some meaning to us because it was given to us by a dear friend many years ago and I keep cutting it back, repotting it, giving them away.

GARY: Some of the people in this park have a cutting of this plant, it's over forty years old.

SL: When you travel do you leave your plants right there? [Gesturing to the front of the RV driver's dashboard]

J: No, I actually take them all out and put them in the shower when it's a traveling day. It is the best way for me to secure them and when we stop somewhere I can water them. And when they are in the shower, they get the sun. They don't move around because they all fit in there perfectly. Just enough plants that they fit in there perfectly and they are secure.





Top: Gary and Jeanie's garden, photo credit Shelbie Loomis.

Left: Portable potatoes in Home Depot buckets. Photo credit Shelbie Loomis.





Top: Alice and Mike's garden. Photo credit Shelby Loomis.



Bottom: Jodi sharing her rosemary. Photo credit Shelby Loomis.



Top: Maxine's garden. Photo credit Shelby Loomis.



Bottom: Pansy making a home between the cracks. Photo credit Shelby Loomis.



# A Field Guide to a Crisis

Justin Maxon in collaboration with Aaron Ochoa, house manager at Sage Sober Living Home.

*The following is the statement used to secure funding from the National Geographic Society's covid-19 Grant.*

With the covid-19 crisis, we are reshaping our collective understanding of what crisis is. For the first time, the privileged many are confronted by an existential threat and questions of our own mortality. For those navigating the transition from substance use and incarceration to sobriety, these are familiar lines of questioning. Before the coronavirus pandemic, there was already an epidemic affecting millions of people across this country: the opioid crisis.

A Field Guide to a Crisis replicates and subverts the institution of the “expert voice,” in the context of a crisis, within the framework of a “Field Guide,” by uplifting the stories of those who have prevailed in their lifetime over grave inequity in their access to safety and care. The Field Guide will activate a population of formerly incarcerated individuals at various stages in their addiction recovery, currently residing in sober living homes in Eureka, California, as storytellers whose experiences uniquely qualify them as educated voices on grieving the loss of community amid crisis. Eureka is my hometown and has become home again. My story of substance abuse lies here, as does my recovery.

Each participant will be given the same series of weekly creative assignments over the course of the project to serve as agents of curious investigation that will cultivate a living, nuanced, and multi-dimensional perspective that examines what state-mandated social distance means to a population of people whose broader community has long imposed social distance through the form of stigma and state violence. The project will generate unconventional spaces that will build inclusivity, community participation, and the value of person and place.

This digital archive of stories offers a space to bring together populations that before covid-19 were already physically and socially distanced through the social and political tools of otherization. The archive will be used in a public awareness campaign to generate dialogue that uplifts their unique perspectives of how substance use impacts our social and physical landscape, and to foster a more holistic understanding that replaces a stigmatized stereotype of substance use and user. The campaign will include a Field Guide publication distributed locally for free, posters wheat pasted on buildings and displayed on billboards, along with public service announcements.

—Justin Maxon

*A conversation with Justin Maxon and Aaron Ochoa. Ochoa is the local organizer who helps recruit participants, deliver supplies, provide support, and ensure momentum in the project.*

JUSTIN MAXON: How long have you been living at the Sage Sober Living House?

AARON OCHOA: I will be at the Sage house for two years this August.

JM: And what's your current position there?

AO: I am the current male house manager.

JM: What are your responsibilities there?

AO: My responsibilities are counseling, if people are having a hard time testing, making sure people do their chores on time, drug testing. It's not part of my responsibilities, but I also offer rides and help people if they need help.

JM: So how can you choose to take on that role?

AO: I chose to take on the role because it helps me be more accountable for my actions. And to be someone that other people look up to.

JM: How long have you been in that role?

AO: Since November 2018.

JM: How do you feel your experience in recovery has prepared you for the covid-19 crisis?

AO: As an addict, I would typically isolate myself from others, including loved ones, you know, like for days at a time and not really go anywhere. So that's helped with the social isolation that is part of the covid-19 crisis.

JM: How does the social isolation now with covid-19 compare to your time when you were using?

AO: It's similar in that both are very lonely but different because while using people that I cared about didn't want me around. "If you're like this, I don't want to see you." Now with covid-19 people want to be around you, "I really like you, I want to see you," but we are isolated to be cautious. Most people aren't used to not having people that you are close to in your life.

JM: Did the loneliness during your abuse make you a stronger person?

AO: It made me more self-reliant.

AO: Being lonely in my addiction was completely different because sometimes you have those feelings of, "Oh, fuck them, they don't understand, I'm all right, it's them that has a problem," but then sometimes you see a loved one and you feel worse about yourself." During covid-19, you don't have those same feelings involved. It's not like they don't want to see you because they

don't like what you're doing in your life.

JM: The isolation that you feel now in covid-19 is nowhere near compared to what you felt in your period of use? It's small fries?

AO: Yeah, exactly.

JM: The difference with covid-19 is people are isolating more by choice, not isolating because everyone that cares for you told you you have a problem, and they don't want to see you anymore until you're not using, like my kids choosing not to call and me choosing not to see them, like me actually avoiding them.

JM: You've done the hard work of being alone? The hardest?

AO: Yeah.

JM: You spoke about how your period of substance use prepared you for covid-19, but what about your recovery?

AO: Well, being in drug court during my recovery forced me to be accountable every day, do what they wanted me to do. So in a lot of ways that prepared me—responsibility. If the best remedy every time I go out, when I have to use a credit card machine, or when I pump gas, is to use hand sanitizer or wear a mask in public, those are easy things that are our own personal responsibility that we kind of expect everyone to do. But you see sometimes a lot of people out

there that aren't abiding by these guidelines.

JM: Yeah. You look at all the people protesting or gathering en masse and just going out into public, as if this is just a bad dream that they will wake up from.

JM: So, you've dealt with having your life controlled, following procedure and guidelines established for you, it's almost become second nature?

AO: Yeah, I'll forget sometimes but it's become completely second nature to me.

JM: How do you see covid-19 opening up a space for people to see each other as being connected beyond our differences? We've gone very quickly from I to we.

AO: An I statement would be like, it's not just I wearing my mask when I go to the grocery store, it's we wearing a mask when we go to the grocery store. It really has put everyone at the same level no matter your social status or your good looks. Yeah, in some ways it's leveled the playing field.

JM: How do you feel that it has benefited people on the fringes, like people who are substance users that are normally viewed as being not valuable to society?

AO: Maybe there is some common ground and they feel the same as everyone else, maybe they don't feel like people are looking at them as much. Because we've

gone from I to we, our health is tied together.

JM: Do you think that now people on the fringes are somehow included back into society? Like, is there an opportunity for them to be more included in the social fabric?

AO: Yeah, going from I to we makes a big difference. Someone with a completely different social status for their entire life might

never relate to another outside of their own experience, now they might actually relate, they might see the other in themselves.

JM: Indeed, in our collective grief as a society, now is an opportunity to include voices previously never admitted possessing expert knowledge, into the collective dialogue around how we build a better future beyond extraction, the I, to inclusion, the we.

*\*Project is in progress, approximately one month into the process. Some of the content will eventually be transformed by the participants into imagery that resembles the identifies of a field guide (i.e., simple hand drawings). All photographs were captured by me with the participant serving as artist director.*

#### Assignment #2:

Part 1: Take multiple sheets of paper. Each sheet has undergone the pressures of change from its original form. The piece of paper takes the place of your body. How has your body been impacted throughout the different traumas you have experienced? Using glue and paper make a sculpture showing the kinds of force that your body has endured by?

Part 2: Photograph your sculpture in a scene that best illustrates your idea:



"I was homeless for four months before I had to go to jail. I went to jail for using. I was homeless because I moved from Rio Dell when my landlord sold his property. I never found another place to live because I decided to use all the time. I've been at Clean and Sober Living for four years and have been clean for four years."  
 —Stephanie Essig



"My chest...The place in my soul where love and laughter once lived, dark and empty void, no heart, aching lonely wretched hole, my chest."  
 —Michelle M. Mille





“My scared eyes teddy bear. The gathering of animals excludes me because to them I’m an outcast with dreams of being somebody someday that will be famous.”  
—Cecilia Langan



“The pressures in my head.”  
—Aaron

# The Green New Real

Addee Kim, Carrie Brownstein, Eric John Olson, Harrell Fletcher, and Salty Xi Jie Ng

Created in the wake of the covid-19 pandemic and subsequent economic shutdown, the Green New Real began as a space for gathering evidence of a possible future. While we continue to collectively grapple with the global trauma of the pandemic, we created this project to ask how we can use the insight gleaned during this time to reshape our ecological imagination and the world around us.

Our ambitious goal is for the Green New Real to be a global gathering space for news articles, data, discourse, and everyday evidence of positive changes in the natural world and people’s lives as a result of recent global shutdowns. Climate change is a long-term issue that affects all of our well being and, just like covid-19, it disproportionately harms marginalized populations and exposes economic and racial inequalities. How can those of us with the privilege and ability to do so adapt to using fewer resources? How can we translate our goals into legislative action? How can we encourage the institutions we engage with to also change? And how can we move forward with an approach that is more sustainable to all populations on earth?

The everyday evidence is here: less consumption, decreased air and car travel, and regional food sourcing is helping improve air quality and reduce CO2 emissions, while also reminding us how much we share the earth with animals. Now is the time to move forward with a more thoughtful state of living. Together, we can build a global case for the Green New Real.

To start these conversations, we have invited people to participate in a number of ways:

## DISPATCHES

We invite people in different parts of the world with a variety of perspectives to reflect on this pandemic and how it is shifting the way we see ourselves and our relationship to the natural world. How have the personal, political, economic, cultural, and environmental responses changed both what feels possible and what feels beyond possibility? As the world works toward relief and recovery from this global crisis, which changes would you like to see continue in society and in your own life?

So far, responses have been shared by comedians, students, inventors, scientists, journalists, professors, filmmakers, and historians.

The covid-19 pandemic has revealed an incredibly broken system in every way, but has allowed a time of pause for our earth and for all of us to reevaluate our structures, our political systems, habits of living, and to be grateful for one another. I worry that once this is ‘over’ everyone will be scrambling to get back to the way things were and forget. I worry that the birds will once more be drowned out by the planes and cars and busyness. I worry that the sea air will fade without notice. We need to carry this gratitude and care with us. We cannot forget.

*Evelyn Frances is a musician, songwriter, and yoga teacher living in Brooklyn, New York.*

It’s complicated for a woman because so many of these good environmental practices, this consciousness, dovetail with a kind of totally engaged domesticity that, for many of us, it has taken a lifetime of willpower to overcome. To assert that the best use of me is not necessarily in the kitchen or even the home; that I might prioritize my work without being a bad mother or wife. I’ve been able to ‘do it all,’ have this career and be there for my child, with the help of the cleaning lady and Amazon and food delivery and lots of other little short-cuts that now are less quick and more dangerous—for other people and me. The point is that many of them always were, in terms of the environment. This cost was always there and global warming is much starker, less recoverable than this pandemic. So I am muddling through these issues, as a mom, feminist, full-time working artist.

*Miranda July is a filmmaker, writer, and artist.*

Unlike covid-19 (at the time we wrote this), climate change has a vaccine now. That vaccine is a clean energy infrastructure. We know what it looks like—massive electrification with wind turbines, solar cells, electric vehicles, heat pumps, and a much-expanded and bidirectional electrical grid to glue it all together. Incredibly, if we make the commitments to electrify our infrastructure at the scale required, we will lower the energy costs of all Americans, especially if we can accompany the project with an appropriate set of financing mechanisms that will make the future affordable for everyone.

*Saul Griffith is an inventor, a MacArthur Fellow, and the founder and CEO of Otherlab.*

## ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

People are also invited to share images and videos of anecdotal evidence of the “green new real” that they are seeing in their day-to-day lived experience.

## 2020 PEOPLE’S MICRO CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCES

We are launching the People’s Micro Climate Change Conferences as the first in a series of prompts and participatory projects where we invite people to use their creativity to address the larger contexts of climate change and the Green New Real.

In response to the cancellation of the 2020 United Nations Climate Change Conference as a result of the covid-19 pandemic, as well as the failure of our nations’ leaders to follow through with the Paris Agreement, we are calling on people from around the globe to host their own “micro climate change summits” with friends, lovers, family, coworkers, and neighbors. It is our hope that these group climate agreements may serve as accessible road maps for people to organize around, and as blueprints for elected officials and private sector decision-makers to find their way toward a less carbon-heavy future for all.

## A COLLECTIVE MANIFESTO

In place of an interview between the project creators, we have invited our friends, family members, community, and social media contacts to respond to a call for a collective manifesto reflecting on the project and its questions. You too can share your declarations at: [thegreennewreal.com/collective-manifesto](http://thegreennewreal.com/collective-manifesto)

Given the context of personal or political responses to the pandemic, complete the following sentence with something new you plan to do that will contribute in any way to helping the climate change crisis.

As lockdowns ease, I will...

Plant drought tolerant and native plant species to save water, as I live in an area with low rainfall.

Encourage my employer (a large audit and consulting firm) to work with clients remotely by default and only fly to client sites as a last resort.

Learn food preservation traditions from my grandma and build her a home garden.

Build new ecologies centered around local farms and makers, which encourage bartering and discourage hoarding.

Be mindful when shopping to purchase products that have little to no packaging material.

Catalogue all the plastic bags in my home, give them names (maybe), and use them for the rest of my life.

Try to convince three people a month to reduce their meat intake.

Close any of my credit cards that have ties to the fossil fuel industry (i.e., divest).

Power my home with only renewable energy sources.

Support national legislation to put a price on carbon.

Support environmental justice and indigenous organizing efforts to shrink the fossil fuel industry.

Be more politically active in my local government to encourage small-scale changes in my community that make big differences for the environment and the people.

Oppose with my vote and voice any business, industrial, or political initiative that does not include some awareness to reduce carbon emissions.

Cancel my Amazon Prime account and attempt to shop exclusively in my local stores or direct from suppliers when necessary.

Drive less and spend more time appreciating walking and biking as transport.

Continue to understand and promote the concept of civic intelligence, an active collective capacity in which people everywhere can participate in research and action that incorporate creativity, reason, fairness, and compassion towards social and environmental goals.

Commit to always having a reusable tote, trying to remember to carry around reusable utensils and straws, and to use my own cup when ordering my daily coffee.

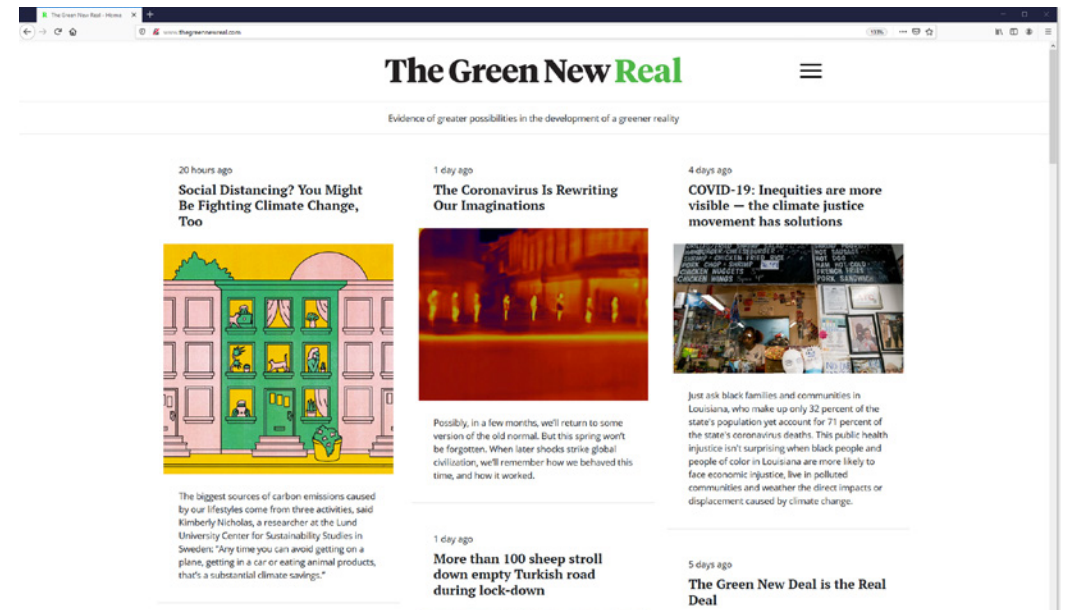


Research the links between local actions and global effects and help minimize current and future negative effects on economically depressed and otherwise marginalized communities as we move forward fighting for climate and social justice.

Do my part to help create and maintain global networks in which people can share knowledge and cooperate effectively in ways that leverage our collective efforts.

*Signed Addee Kim, David Jimison, Devon Midori Hale, Doug Schuler, Eric John Olson, Evelyn Frances, Evelina Miropolsky, Jessica Olson, Paul Hlava Ceballos, Peter Steller, Salty Xi Jie Ng, Sola Yoon, Zeph Fishlyn, and others who wish to remain anonymous.*

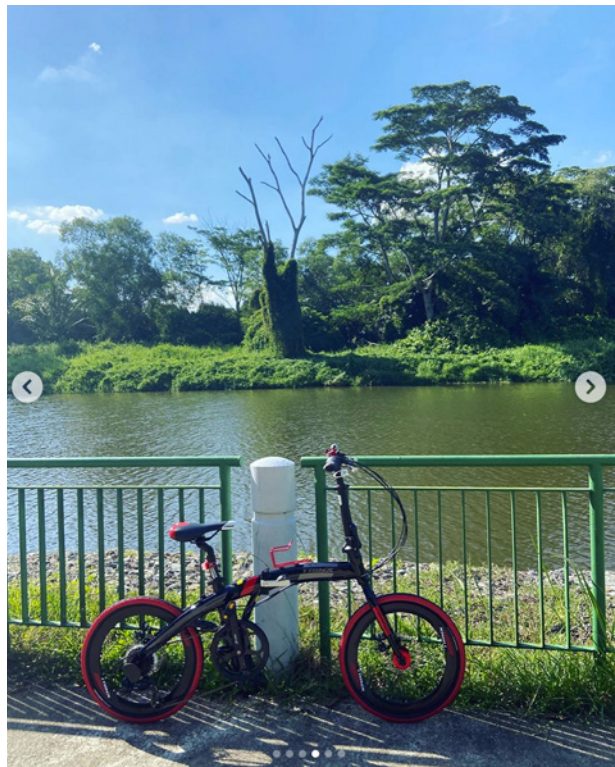
*The Green New Real would not be possible without the help of many, many people. Special thanks to Cleveland Leffler, Tom Leimkuhler, Sarah Minnick, Jordan Rosenblum, and all the contributors.*



Top: Altered image of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement celebration.

Bottom: Screenshot of the Green New Real website (thegreennewreal.com), 2020.





**greennewreal**  
Seletar, Singapore

**greennewreal** "My bicycle has become my best friend during the pandemic. It helps me take a breather from living with my family once a day and get my eyes zapped by so-green-it-hurts jungles and roadside plants. Yesterday I did something I have never done. I cycled the furthest from my home I have gone on bike. All my life I usually cycle only around my neighbourhood for fun (or go to other neighbourhoods and rent bikes there); travel around the country for purposeful things is done by car or public transport. I ended up in the next next neighbourhood or you could call it the next next next next, depending on how you look at it. I observed the reservoir sparkling, giant shrubs of tropical bougainvillea in the

Liked by **lucyfreya** and 70 others  
APRIL 19

Add a comment... [Post](#)



**greennewreal**

**greennewreal** "Since the lockdowns, elk have been taking over in larger ways. One week for a few days, about 100 elk took over the local high school football field. I've been noticing a lot more animal activity as I go for a hike at least once a week. Lots of snakes have popped up where I have not seen before. The bunnies are also now free to live without humans trying to capture them. I also went surfing and a baby grey whale jumped up out of the water about 15 feet from me, two times. This was surprising and I caught the wave that came after it jumped both times. The guy I was surfing with said never in his whole life has he seen a baby grey whale jump that close to a surfer. This was arguably the most

Liked by **ericjohnson** and 74 others  
1 DAY AGO

Anecdotal evidence by Brianna Ortega, 2020.



Collective Manifesto drawing by Lucy Freya Korn, 2020.

# Be a Local of My Life

Brianna Ortega with participants Sarah, Morgan, Stirling, Andrea, Sean, Neil, Will, Mindy, Emily, Max

*Note: Specific town name and surf spots were eliminated from this article for personal privacy and respect for locals. This town and the surf spots within have a lot of localism. Being a surfer in this community, I could get in trouble for naming the exact town and spots. Not only that, but I want to respect small surf communities and to protect the privacy of the residents. The participants live in artist Brianna Ortega's community, a small beach town on the Pacific Northwest coast.*

For my project Be a Local of My Life, I sent out an e-mail to community members inviting them to participate in a local tour to explore five specific landmarks that have significance to me. Our community is situated in a small town on the Pacific Northwest Coast. In the e-mail, the community members were invited to go to each of my personal landmarks and take a photo there as documentation of going to the place from my memory. After working through the personal landmark tour, the community members e-mailed photos back to me, along with a written response to each memory. Once I received these responses, each community member received a certificate for being a "Local of Brianna's Life." Inspired by both surf localism and locality, Be a Local of My Life explores what it means to be a local person in a community. In this project, community is defined as the people you come in contact with and have relational, verbal, social, or object exchanges with on a recurring basis. How do intimate relationships with a place shape a community? How can our identification as a local be shaped by memory-based knowledge instead of only site-specific factual information about a place? How does power, memory, and time influence a community member's journey to becoming a local? The Assembly event centered on Be a Local of My Life will detail the project, open up discussion on what it means to be a local, with artist Brianna Ortega and guest feminist surf and surf localism researcher, Dr. Rebecca Olive, from The University of Queensland.

—Brianna Ortega

The following is Orettega's e-mail to participants detailing the artist's personal landmarks.

1. The grassy corner of [blank] street and [blank] street. I spent a lot of days and nights out there on the grass, sometimes just sitting in the sun, sometimes having a BBQ, sometimes talking to Neil the neighbor and I used to live at the house there.
2. [Blank] surf spot—the house next to the public restroom. This house I first went inside of in 2014 when my friend Joey was friends with Travis. I then became friends with his surfer-surgeon sister 4 years later. One night we went inside after surfing and ate food, one of which was a salad with nut dressing on it. I am allergic to nuts, so I had to grab new lettuce out without the nuts.
3. In the ocean at this spot in the water and directly across from the fluorescent yellow house—a whale jumped here in april 2020, about 12 feet from me in the water, two times. I caught the whale's wave on my surfboard both times. I tell people I survived the whale of 2020.
4. [Blank] Beach—follow the trail here to the beach. Walk all the way to the highest point of the dune looking at the waves. This is where one time someone asked me if I had meth. I also spent many times watching sunsets here with my friends and roommates on empty nights where the sky looked like a different shade of pink each time.
5. [Blank] Parking lot—this parking lot is only for people who surf [blank] surf spot. My roommate and I went here in her car one day wearing big jackets so nobody could identify who we were. The surfers in the parking lot questioned us immediately upon arrival and I told them I was from the clouds above Astoria. You cannot go to park at the parking lot unless you are a [blank] surf spot local.

Neil's replies to Brianna's prompts.

1. I moved here in 1979, first living on the end studio in the gray building on the south side of [blank] street then into my present house January 1980. So that corner has been part of my life for four decades. Of all the people who have come and gone in the duplex on that corner you, Will, and Sarah have been the friendliest.



2. Travis and his sister April [Cockcroft] were both students I worked with at the local high school. April still has the high school pole vault record at 10' 1". Their mother, Lyndi, spent some time working and volunteering in the counseling department at the high school.

3. Having lived here so long, I have been at [blank] surf spot parking lot a billion times and not until this last April, did I see a whale. Maybe we saw the same one!

4. I could not begin to count the number of sunsets I have watched from the end of that trail leading to the beach. This goes the same with runs and walks I have started or ended at the place.

5. I have been to the [blank] surf spot parking lot on rare occasions. The surf spot here resonates with me because while staying at a hostel in Jeffreys Bay [world renowned surf spot] guests and staff learned I was from this town we live in right now, and I was quizzed about our surf spot here. It was then that I learned about it's reputation. Also, sadly, of the reputation of surfers' hostility towards other surfers not part of the "[blank] surf spot community."

*The following conversations are between Brianna Ortega and participants who live in her community, a small beach town on the Pacific Northwest coast.*

*Brianna speaks with Neil, a participant of the project and a neighborhood friend. They discuss what it means to be a local, localism in surfing, and the project, Be a Local of My Life.*

BRIANNA ORTEGA: How did the project go for you? You were the first person to respond back with memories, so I ended up asking everyone else to also respond back with memories.

NEIL: As soon as I read your personal landmark tour, I came up with a memory or experience immediately for each one. It didn't take me any time at all because I've been here so long—fifty years now. So much was

really salient to me in particular when you talked about going to a family's house that I know. I particularly like the connection when it connects to people. It's that small world thing.

It was also interesting that you saw that whale out there in April. I was sitting right out here. I saw a spout. Then a flap. Then another blow. So then I walked out to the end and the policeman came along and told me that I

couldn't be out there. And that's OK. So there were all of these connections. I really liked Be a Local of My Life. Anything where you can build and dignify your community—that's great.

BO: It's cool how everything can overlap with people. So you've been here for fifty years. Do people think of you as a local here?

N: I think it would depend on who you talk to. I haven't really thought about that. I work with one fellow in particular. He was born and raised here, went to the high school, and also taught here. So I guess he would be a local. You know, I don't know.

BO: So do you consider yourself a local here?

N: I consider this home. But a local? I think I've been here long enough to earn half that tag. But, I've also been gone a lot traveling and coming back. I haven't had anyone say that I wasn't a local—or say that I haven't been here long enough. When I came here, I made a commitment to stay for five years. It's been a long five years. [Neil said earlier he has lived here in this community for fifty years].

BO: With this project, I asked, "what does it mean to be a local of someone's life instead of a place?"

N: Yeah, a local of someone's life. And how they are a local to the community. And if you're a local

to someone's life, you share experiences at geographic points. How many years have you been here?

BO: Honestly, I haven't been here that long—only eight years surfing here total and I was in Portland before here, so only about four years. But even when I lived in Portland, I'd work at the local surf shop here in the summer. In 2014 is when I started building relationships with people in this specific community.

N: So I've been here fifty years, and you've been here for five years, I'm a local of your life, and you're a local of my life, even with that forty-five-year difference.

BO: What makes someone a local? Is it the shared memories they have in a space? Or is it just their knowledge of the best restaurant in town, or the hike over there?

N: Is it longevity? Is it local knowledge? Is it the number of people you know? Or is it who you know? There could be a lot of definitions to that. It isn't important to me to be known as a local. Because wherever I am, the majority of the time (ninety-five percent), this is where I belong. When I'm traveling and riding a motorcycle in the Comoros, this is still where I belong. It makes all the sense in the world that I'm at this place. I count my blessings and I know I am lucky to be able to do it. Being here just seems logical.



BO: I feel the same way about here. It is my happy place. At least for now. Or maybe my whole life, who knows.

N: Yeah, and you can have a happy place and leave it. And get to another happy place. When I travel, wherever I am, that's my happy place. But consistently, I can't think of a time when I didn't want to come back here. Back to your project, it's a circling of the wagons. Who is in my circle? Who has these shared experiences?

BO: I loved reading your memory about [blank] surf spot. A lot of people here who don't surf don't know about it. It is amazing you were in Africa and someone talked about the localism of [blank] surf spot here.

N: Yeah, I was in Jeffreys Bay, South Africa and they knew about [blank] surf spot here. That was 2012. They didn't really talk about being territorial. Of course now there are so many surfers. I was talking with a friend of mine who has surfed here for a long time and he used to surf [blank] spot here. He said there would be several surfers out and it was very territorial then. He said he was a knucklehead for being so territorial, and now he looks back on his behavior and thinks 'that wasn't very nice.' But now there's so many surfers that they are overrun. He says he doesn't go out there anymore because there are so many new people that go out there and they don't respect

the surf edict or take turns when they catch the waves.

BO: I am not a local anywhere because I grew up moving a lot. So with surfing, especially spots like that, they won't let you surf those types of spots if you weren't born there.

N: And it seems so strange to me. Incongruent. It's interesting how people think they can own the ocean... nature. I think if people were more tuned in and thinking outside themselves, they would think differently. They want to claim a piece of the ocean.

BO: It's interesting. I can't surf spots with an aggro vibe because I'm so sensitive to people. So, going back to Be a Local of My Life, did it make you think about anything else?

N: I thought about how I could share my own personal landmark memories with others and who I could share that with. I was asking myself: who are my neighbors? And how would I identify them? It was thought provoking. It was fun.

BO: Wow, I just saw a guy get a good wave. Maybe it's still good out there. Maybe I'll surf tomorrow, too.

N: When I was out there this morning, there were a couple people. One on a paddleboard. He rode a long wave.

*Brianna Ortega speaks with her friend and participant Sarah, who talks about her feelings of participating in Be a Local of My Life.*

BRIANNA ORTEGA: The corner of your house was a personal landmark of mine. How did you feel about people coming to the corner of your house to take a picture?

SARAH: It was interesting when we looked out the window and someone was stopped and hopped out of their car to take a photo of the street sign. We thought we lived somewhere famous for a second. We realized that it was just the project going on. So in a way, it made us feel special that this street corner was a place of significance in your life, and clearly mine as well, as I live in your old house.

BO: How did the project go for you? What did it make you think about in your life?

S: It made me recognize the fact that we definitely have a lot of overlap in the places that we frequent around here. It made me realize that a lot of these places mean a lot to a lot of people in our lives. It was interesting hearing stories from others in the same spots. It was nice to find out about the connections people have in the places that you also connect to.

And how you might not know the stories of those places and how it is along your daily path anyway. So you could be passing that spot on a regular basis, and you could know that person, but you could never put the whole story together. So it is pretty neat when you can connect all those dots. It was cool to hear about Neil's story of going to South Africa and hearing about the surf spot in our town.

BO: How did you feel about the certificate?

S: It was really nice. It was worth it to be certified as a local. I enjoyed it. It was nice that it was all in this neighborhood. It seemed like they were uniting features in our lives.



Images taken by participants responding to the prompt *Personal Landmark Memory: [Blank] Beach.*



Neil Branson's certificate.



# Proyecto Bathhouse

Carlos Reynoso

Proyecto Bathhouse is a community-led archival and storytelling project facilitated by Carlos Reynoso. Reynoso uses social media platforms like Instagram as a tool in collecting content, stories, and objects as research in preserving bathhouse culture in the West Coast in the United States. In this community-led project Reynoso works with participants and members of a community manifested through bathhouse culture. The project intends to is to further empower community, discuss queer sexuality and intimacy, and preserve bathhouse culture. Through preservation, the archive will be available virtually and as an exhibition that can travel and be seen by the community that helped create it.

*The following is a shortened conversation with Illia Yakovenko that took place on a screen on my laptop yesterday in my garage.*

CARLOS REYNOSO: Hello, Illia.

ILLIA YAKOVENKO: Hey.

CR: So I wanted to have a conversation with you about a project that I've been working on. I have talked about this project in class multiple times and I wanted to chat with you because I consider you a part of my secondary audience. The reason why I bring this up to you is because I really want to find a way to bridge the content of this project with the art community. I consider myself a facilitator but also a participant with Proyecto Bathhouse.

IY: That sounds good but can you kind of describe the project a little more?

CR: Oh, yeah, of course, so a brief description of my project that

I want to chat with you about is Proyecto Bathhouse. It's a research-based archival project, it's community-led, and I consider myself a participant as well. The project is archiving Commercial Sex Venues (CSV) and places of sexuality. The project started with archiving bathhouses in Los Angeles and Portland and on the West Coast. I was really drawn to the CSV when I used to work in sexual health with queer communities. My role in these spaces was as an educator. As somebody who worked with patrons of these places, I provided education on sexual health, and also did STI testing at bathhouses in Los Angeles. Through that experience I kinda started to formalize this project and decided to use social media, mostly Instagram, as a tool for research. I like collecting stories,

fragments, objects, photographs content I can use to tell a story of these spaces. I am really interested in this project and have enjoyed building it and allowed it to evolve. In our new reality we are living in, I feel that for two reasons. I feel that these places may be lost because of covid-19. And I also feel that sometimes humanity is stripped from sexuality within these spaces for various reasons like marginalization of those communities as queer individuals, because of the AIDS epidemic. Through storytelling and archiving these spaces I want to bring humanity back to the CSV.

IY: Can you tell me more about these spaces—like what kind of significance do they have on queer and gay culture?

CR: Yeah, sure, so CSVs weren't built only for queer and gay communities. The term that we use in sexual health is "man who has sex with man" (MSM). Historically in bathhouses only masculine or you know "Cis presenting men" could utilize them for having sex, building community, and to escape their day-to-day lives, but not all of them identified as gay. The spaces look like traditional spas with showers and steam rooms, some even have like a masseuse you know. It looks like a conventional spa. Historically, before the gay rights movement, gay men could be outed if having sex in public—you could lose your job or be arrested. This was a time when sex in the bathhouse was safer than in an alleyway,

park, or restroom. During the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s, a lot of these places shut down. Most of my research for the project is in the United States and my project focuses mainly on the West Coast. Cities like San Francisco, New York, and Chicago closed down all or most operational bathhouses due to the AIDS crisis but a lot of the bathhouses in Los Angeles stayed open. As a result, that allowed the bathhouse culture to evolve and allow various queer identities in—not just cis-men. That evolution unfortunately all lives in the pre-covid-19 world because I don't know how the bathhouse will evolve post-covid-19 or if they will even exist.

IY: So, I have several questions. I don't know what to start with. What's interesting to me is you also mentioned humanity has been stripped from sexuality. Can you clarify that more, because I don't want to make assumptions.

CR: So, humanity stripped of sexuality specifically in bathhouses/CSVs. I feel that is because of the marginalization of gay/queer communities and because of the AIDS epidemic. Pre-AIDS epidemic and in the 1960s, there was a surge of sexual liberation within gay men and I feel that during the 1960s there was experimentation with sexuality in general. In the 1980s, and post-AIDS epidemic, that all shifted and gay sex was something that was feared, similar to how we feel today with covid-19 and in touching others. That's

where I feel that humanity was stripped from gay sexuality. Because of marginalization, I also feel humanity at times is stripped from gay and queer sexuality. Because the rejection from family, society, and community can evoke shame, guilt, discomfort, and self-hatred in meeting a very human need that most have.

LY: Stripped away, so in response to this like status quo or kind of expectation of sexuality in creating these spaces that are used for having sex and in building community. And for those that have never been to these places, it's like not just a place to have sex in, it's also a community for some and a safe space as well. I am also curious how this is manifested and how do these places become community for the patrons? Can you provide some examples?

CR: That's a really good question. I think that is a really great question but kinda tough to answer. Well not all CSVs have that piece, but I think having that sense of community is important, when I think of my role in this project and when switching my role as a patron visiting these spaces, I feel I am a part of a community because it's a physical place and because of consistency and familiarity. You see the same people, some you may have sex with or not, and you see the familiar staff that are there to keep you safe—they have condoms and resources and a layer of safety is created due to that consistency. Also, you go to these places and you see others like you seeking

sex and intimacy and apart from consistency a sense of belonging also is created. I feel familiarity and consistency are how it's manifested.

LY: So, you are working on an archive of these spaces and I am interested in what your methodology is in creating content for this project, you mentioned you visit these places in person. What is your methodology?

CR: It's not just going to the bathhouses in person. I also collect stories and experiences. I use Instagram as a platform and research tool in collecting content for the archive—eighty-five percent of the content collected comes from social media. I also feel that I have an advantage because I have been a part of the bathhouse community for a very long time. I don't see myself as an outsider or tourist, I feel like I am a part of the community.

LY: How do you make sure when sharing the content for the project or showcasing the research that people are comfortable, and how do you make sure you are comfortable in sharing this content?

CR: That's a really good question. I've spent a lot of time inside these spaces as a health educator. Or someone who is familiar in approaching people that are experiencing shame and guilt but also knowing that feeling firsthand when talking about CSVs and gay sexuality. There have also been times when I have

been presenting this project and I feel vulnerable because I am talking about my sexuality. When approaching participants and collecting content for the project I am very transparent that I am an artist and what my project is about. Also, if a participant shares a story, experience, or image I always ask for permission to use it in the archive.

LY: So, I have another question: generally archives have a specific aesthetic...

CR: They're not sexy...

LY: Yeah, yeah, right, not sexy. What's the aesthetic, not sexy. They're old pictures and their purpose is to archive the material. My question is how do you see the aesthetic for this project?

CR: I would love to have a traditional exhibition; I would like to blow up images that I have received from participants and hang them in the exhibition space. I would also like to screen short films of interviews of participants sharing experiences. I would also like to have objects, like fragments from these bathhouses. I've thought about having maybe like a sling from a specific bathhouse like from The Slammer in Los Angeles. The aesthetic has been shaped by the aesthetic of the CSV I visit regularly; it happened organically. I didn't choose it, the images for the project incorporate the space and are sometimes gritty, overly sexual, and at times dirty or unkempt. I hope that answered your question and thank you Illia for letting me have this conversation with you.

LY: Of course, thank you...





Carlos Reynoso, at Fantasy arcades,  
Portland, Oregon, 2020.



Anonymous blow job at Taboo,  
Portland, Oregon, 2020.



# RECESS! Design Studio

Kim Sutherland and Jordan Rosenblum

RECESS! Design Studio is a creative agency housed inside of a classroom in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School in northeast Portland.

Working with third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade designers, the studio serves as one part classroom, one part creative agency, and one part artist project. We work as the in-house studio for the King School Museum of Contemporary Art (KSMoCA), where regular design services include posters for exhibitions and lectures; signs for classrooms; and promotional material for school events.

The ambition of the program is to have a full-service creative agency directed and run by elementary school students.

Since its launch in the fall of 2018, RECESS! has worked on several large-scale projects. In collaboration with the school administration, school parents, and student copywriters, the studio created a set of posters championing community residents as a long-term installation in the school cafeteria. In spring of 2019, the studio collaborated with Adidas to explore the design of a new school brand.

In the classroom, RECESS! students develop classic graphic design skills—creating experimental typefaces, designing business cards for student entrepreneurs, and learning about visual literacy and making meaning through text and image. There is a lot of good old-fashioned drawing in the mix, too.

Through project-based learning, RECESS! also explores the role design plays in society—looking at the power design has in shaping kids’ (and adults’) lives. This includes an ongoing project to create interpretive signs written by student-designers that will be installed at the school. The signs interrogate the architecture, history, experiences, and culture of the school from the students’ perspectives.

RECESS! is codirected by Kim Sutherland and me, in collaboration with visiting artists and designers, and RECESS! designers.

—Jordan Rosenblum

*The following is an abridged version of a conversation that took place on May 8, 2020 between Rosenblum and third-grade RECESS! designer Joanna about graphic design, being a student, and how we structure classrooms. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.*

JORDAN ROSENBLUM: If some random kid, let’s say like a four-year-old, came up to you on the street and asked, “Joanna, what’s graphic design?,” how would you respond?

JOANNA: I would ask him how he knew my name.

JR: [laughter] You’re right.

J: I would then ask him how he knew I did graphic design.

JR: [laughter] Let’s say you were wearing a tshirt that said “ask me what graphic design is.”

J: Graphic design is the way people write, and about typography, and, I guess, the design of graphics.

JR: If we got rid of the word *graphic* and the same little four-year-old asked “what’s design?,” how would you answer?

J: Design is just something someone designed. It could be a drawing, or a pattern, or the way someone writes. Someone created it.

JR: I agree, it can simply mean “someone created it.” I often struggle with answering the question of what design is myself. It’s a big—and kind of weird—question. I also might have responded

the same way you did at first, which is “design is design.”

J: Design is kind of hard to explain. It’s not really a thing.

I don’t want to say that it’s just one thing, because there are a lot of different ways to explain it.

JR: I think at its most basic, what we are saying is that it just means that someone thought about it, and made it.

Let’s talk about the sign project we were working on back in February. We were working on a project where we were creating new signs for the school, and we were asking the questions, “What would I want people to know about the school?,” and “what don’t people know about the school?” I’m bummed because I was personally excited about the project...

J: And now we can’t do it. [Due to school closures in response to the covid-19 pandemic]

JR: I hope we can soon.

J: So do I.

JR: Are you hoping to get back to school soon?

J: Yeah, for once I want to go to school.



JR: [laughter] One of the signs you were working on said “Anonymous Note Wall,” and you wanted to install it near the teachers’ entrance to the school. Why did you want to create that sign?

J: [in a spooky voice] “To leave notes for teachers”

Signs tell you something. You make a sign and put it somewhere, and to each person who sees it, it can mean something different.

JR: This might be a weird question. Do you think it’s ever possible that everyone understands something the same way?

J: [Pauses] No.

At school, you think something is very clear, and then someone doesn’t get it. And, you think, “how do they not get it?!” But they just think differently.

JR: Totally. I have that experience too.

J: When I think that way, I tell myself that they are probably thinking the same thing about me—“How do THEY not get it?” When I think something about someone, I just tell myself that they’re probably thinking the same thing about me. And it reminds me not to judge them that way.

JR: That’s really beautiful.

J: I like to observe what other people are doing or thinking.

JR: I feel like there’s some kind of art or design project in here. I don’t exactly know what it is.

Let’s go back to this imaginary conversation with the kid on the street. How would you describe to that same child the difference between art and design?

J: If that same child asked me something again, I’d say “Go find your mom.”

JR: [laughter] Fair enough. Do you think there’s a difference between art and design?

J: I feel like art has design in it and design has art in it, but they’re not the same thing.

It’s like if you put two paints together. They touch each other, but they’re not together.

JR: I’d like to talk a little bit about the classroom. What is your ideal classroom? If you could design your own classroom, what would be in it, and what would you do in it?

J: When I’m older?

JR: Let’s say you could do it right now. Let’s say the principal came to you and said, “Joanna, I’m giving you this classroom. I want you to have whatever you need for it, and to do whatever you want in it.”

J: Well, because I’m a child, I still know what other kids feel. I tell myself that when I’m older, I really want to remember what it’s

like to be a child. If I became a teacher I would know how to help them. Other kids would probably say, like, “an ice cream bar!” I would still make it a teaching place. Except in a way that’s more entertaining. Because right now it’s just... school.

Right now, in a class, everyone gets the same assignment. But people think differently from each other, so some students don’t understand it.

I would design it so that each kid could have their own section of the classroom, so they could fill the room up with their ideas and what they’re thinking.

JR: Cool, so each student would have their own studio or something.

J: Yeah, because all together you’re kind of forced to think the same way.

JR: That would be awesome.

If you could do anything in our RECESS! studio, what would you do? If you had free rein...

J: I would paint myself blue.

JR: [laughter] Just because?

J: Yeah. [In goofy voice] Or yellow.

JR: One or the other?

J: No, I’d paint my hair blue, and my body yellow.

JR: Nice—a classic color combo.

If you could tell people one thing about RECESS!, what would you want them to know?

J: It’s fun.

It’s like we are all working on the same idea, but you kind of get to do what you want with it. It’s in the school but it doesn’t feel like “just school.”

JR: I’m glad to hear that. Will you promise to tell me if it starts to feel like “just school”?

J: Well, OK, but I don’t think it will.

Even if it’s just boring school art I’ll still like it. Because it’s art.





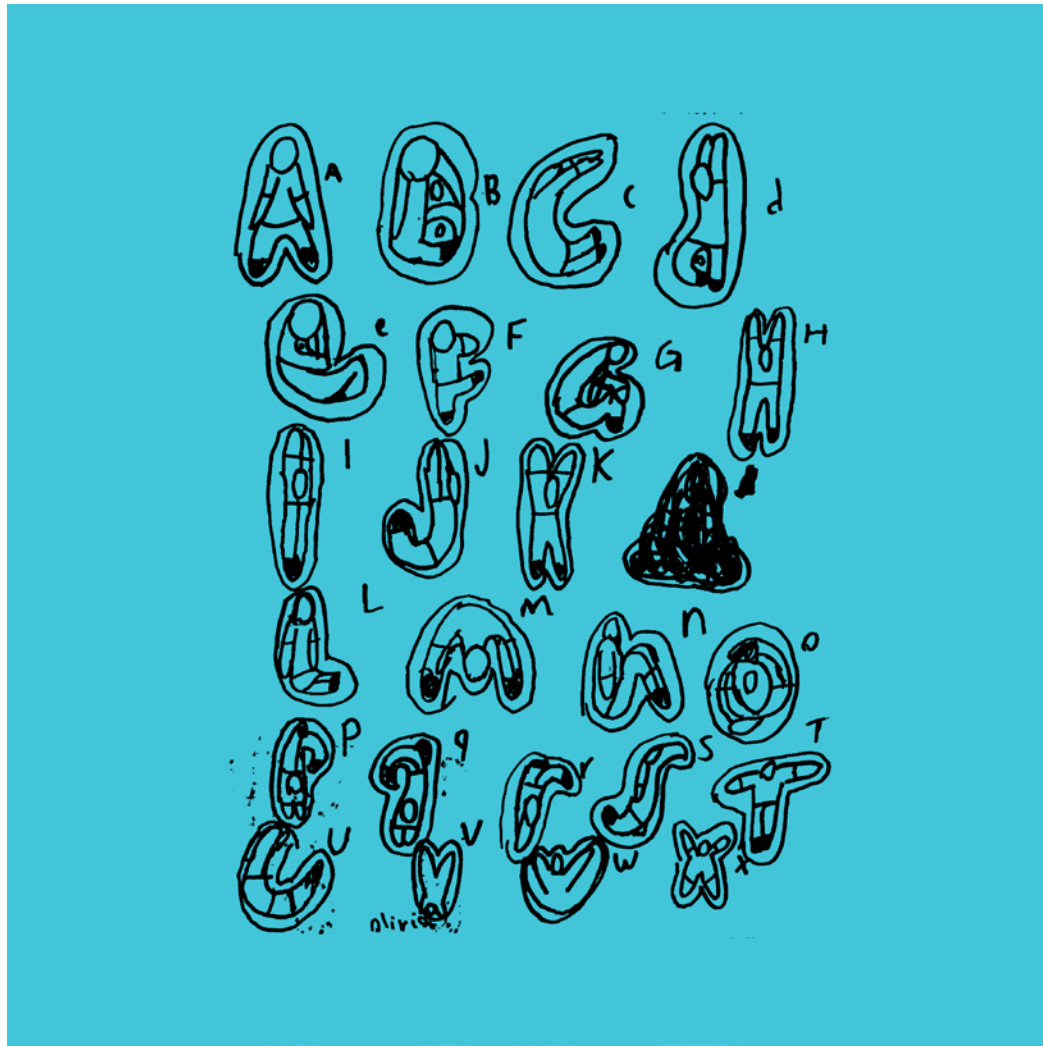
Top: Posters designed in RECESS! installed in the King School cafeteria.

Bottom: Students survey and choose typefaces to work with on a project.



Poster for the KSMoCA lecture by visiting artist Helen Reed.





Experimental typeface developed by RECESS! Art Director Olivia.



Experimental typefaces developed by RECESS! designers.

# Afro Contemporary Art Class at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School

Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr.

The Afro Contemporary Art Class (ACAC) is an artist project that I teach at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School in northeast Portland. The mission of the ACAC is to help young people of African descent learn more about the histories and contemporary contexts that shape their lives, culture, and social realities. These ideas are explored through the study of contemporary artists and creatives as a conduit to—and a lens for—thinking through a range of experiences related to the African diaspora. The investigations begin with presenting an artist’s work to the class, teasing out the underlying contexts in the work, and then learning about the people, events, and outcomes surrounding those contexts. Then we engage in discussion, the reproduction of artworks, and embodiment of activities related to the various courses of study.

During the course of study, the ACAC worked closely with the work of artist Emory Douglas, who oversaw the art direction and production of the official newspaper for the Black Panther Party. The investigation of Douglas’s artworks inevitably included a lot of Black Panther collateral. For this reason, we began to study the Black Panthers proper, with an intentional gaze on their mutual aid work.

We invited Kent Ford, a former Black Panther who helped create and facilitate the Black Panther Breakfast Program in Portland. From this exploration we decided to reproduce the Black Panther Breakfast Program at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School for students and community members alike. The ACAC collaborated to facilitate the event in February for Black History Month programming at the school.

*The following is an interview with Paige Thomas, the primary staff member who helped facilitate ACAC programming at Dr. MLK Jr. School.*

ARTIST MICHAEL BERNARD STEVENSON JR.: So Paige, I’ve been thinking about how your gaze is fascinating because in my work with young people, the nature of my engagement with them is limited. And that any given young person, let’s take the student I mentor, for example, highly

values our relationships. But in that, I’m neither his mother or grandmother, and so I am not privy to a more intimate, self reflective rapport that young people have with some adults in their life. And while you’ve never actually attended the class, you’ve mentioned to me various

anecdotes about what the individual students are experiencing. Your position is also unique because you’re trained as an educator while I have no specific understanding of traditional pedagogies. You sit in this place where you have a vivid awareness of that and you practice those things. And so while you’re not present for the process of the Afro Contemporary Art Class, you are aware of its results.

An additional layer is that you’re not an artist, and that you are not approaching the project from the lens of assessing it as an artwork. You are approaching it from the lens of assessing it as a teaching tool. It’s for these reasons that your most initial response to anything is valuable to both me as an individual practitioner or collaborator, and for an outside audience. All in all you stand embedded in this very unique position that makes me curious about your understanding and perception of the project.

PAIGE THOMAS: Cool.

MBS: A good place to start is with this quote from an e-mail you sent me. You said, “It’s really nice to be thinking about this project right now. So many things feel defeating right now. And thinking back to the work you did with the kids is a reminder of what is being accomplished.” And in that one sentence it points clearly to you having feelings about the project.

PAIGE: Yeah, it was interesting because I feel like this was one of

the things that was going on in February, all these different projects and events, including the Black Panther breakfast, that all happened in February and then March happened. So I feel like we had all of this great engagement by our community, right. So you and your work feel like one of the things that I really appreciated or felt like the project accomplished was bringing together lots of different facets of our school community into one space, and which I think we’ve always strived to do. But we’ve had varying levels of success with.

I feel like when I looked around the room on that morning in terms of community engagement we saw all different folks, folks from our school community, folks from the different school programs from our Mandarin immersion program from our English Scholars Program. There were parents there, there were kids there. There were just community members that were there, there were members from KSMoCA. So I feel like all different facets of our community were really represented in that one space. And I think you know already that the event was a really powerful thing and something that I think we’re all missing right now is that community and trying to figure out what this community looks like when we’re not able to gather in that space. And I think the other thing is, how do we make learning authentic for kids.

You know, meeting kids where they’re at but also making the



learning meaningful and connect it to where they are coming from and about their community. I feel like that's something we're trying to figure out now too and I felt like the Afro Contemporary Art Class was really successful in starting to get kids connected to their community and to their history and connecting to things they might have already known. But at the same time it's really broadening and opening them up to things that they maybe didn't know yet and the responses to those things artistically by different artists that they certainly haven't learned about yet. I think that it's those kinds of authentic experiences for kids that we've been trying to figure out how to create looks like the reproduction of the Black Panther Breakfast Program.

So thinking back to how successful that was, and how we're trying to figure that out now, it feels a little defeating. But it feels really heartening that we were at that place where we had built a system in which kids could engage in a project like that and showcase it to their school community, it felt really empowering.

MBS: There's a lot of interesting things your response brought up for me, especially when you were talking about community engagement, all these layers that you've specifically laid out. I'm curious about your perspective on the kind of pedagogical value of an experience like the reproduction of the Black Panther Breakfast Program.

PT: Yeah, I think that's the first thing that popped into my head was the shared experience. And a shared reference point, I think is something that's powerful about an event like that.

I think the other thing was getting everyone in the same space and being able to talk with each other, both formally and informally, about their experience. Even though I wasn't able to sit and be in that space for those conversations. But when I was in and out, I had a sense that there were those more formal acts of sharing and speaking and then there were less formal interactions happening at tables. All of that builds community and builds bridges and builds shared experiences that we want to build because those build on each other. And we can continue to encourage those conversations to continue in those relationships to continue to build and that's what you need in order to move forward. In this work here at King School we're keeping the dream alive, and you need those foundational pieces in order to move these aspirational goals we have for our students. We need to have strong community and strong communication and and events like this is what is instrumental in building that community.

MBS: I like this inclusion of informal conversations because I've always loved the term "it takes a village," which has always resonated with me. I remember that there was a student named Aswan who was from Somalia

and was working with KSMoCA. She always felt like this interesting barometer for me. And also students from South America, who had an educational situation that for them was maybe not classroom oriented. And I think about that even generationally, like, for decades or centuries, you would go to the market and learn to count, you know, that kind of highly valuable real life experience. I consider myself to be a neurodiverse person, and for me the structure of a school is not an inherently beneficial learning environment for me. The best way for me to learn is experientially and through anecdotal instances. And so I think a lot of my work has those qualities just because of who I am.

As I work with kids I like leaning on those things as a way of producing value for the young person. I have no formal training in the traditional education world. I'm not even claiming a high level of awareness which is again why your perspective is so interesting to me.

I remember one day in class we were studying Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during Black History Month and someone blurted out that he was assassinated on this date. At the time we were reading a comic about Kent Ford [written by Sarah Mirk and illustrated by Khris Soden.] And in the comic, Kent Ford sees it on the news and was like, "oh, man," and through this it was linked. It's real-world experience, someone's personal experience of the assassination.

And then one of the students said, "I learned this in class today." Sharing this factoid learning an instance where it was embedded in the context we were discussing. It creates this pedagogically relevant shared experience. Putting the students in touch with their local community history and the lived experience of people they know and how that is embedded into their experience.

PT: Or what was in place in order for that event to have happened. And what were the long term ramifications, both positive and negative, that came after the context, like you were saying.

MBS: Yeah, exactly that! I have begun to classify myself as an educator. And the reference I made about being neurodiverse, and my rejection of school as a young person and as a student. I was talking to a professor recently, and they had mentioned that I'm a rule breaker. And I kind of pushed back on that, I said, "I think I just exist in a way that is in opposition to rules that other people made. I don't think I'm intentionally like running through trying to break the rules." That being said, I approached this class with no certain knowledge, like, I didn't have a book full of facts. It was more like, I kind of know about this stuff that the students have only a vague idea about. Approaching the class with a bunch of questions and from a position to just receive questions from the class and seek out the

answer using Google or some other method on-site.

This has me curious about some specific anecdotes. Do you feel like either my positionality as a male presenting person or a black person or an artist person, if that influenced the classroom container and if there's specific anecdotes that you are aware of with individual students that may point to a correlation between the class or those positionality components to the student's experience as a learner.

PT: Something that was powerful and moving for me was our field trip to the Portland Art Museum. And when we got there, we were greeted by Ella Ray, and we went to a meeting space with her. And it was really amazing to be in this big art institution that traditionally has not always been a place that has been welcoming to everyone in our city, but that this is everyone's space. And to be in that meeting room where everyone, other than myself, and I maybe should have excused myself, but to have it be a space for all these young kids of color being led by two successful people of color. I was really moved by that and I thought that it was really powerful. I don't know if that's my perspective as a white woman noticing that but it would have been interesting to ask the kids if that was as impactful for them.

And then just moving through the museum watching them interact with the pieces by Hank

Willis Thomas which are such big encompassing artworks. You could really see the kids moving in and out and interacting and around those pieces. I think that was really powerful. As you mention, school is a very white space, the structures all come from that colonial culture, right. So I think there's always power in bringing in people that are not the traditional white female voices that often dominate those spaces. And I feel like we are trying to make sure that we elevate and lift up those voices as much as possible. And when we aren't able to necessarily reflect that in our teaching staff to partner with as many community partners as we can that elevate voices that are not part of our school community.

MBS: The anecdote about the museum is interesting, and I think it's important that people who have white positionality are valuing that experience. It's not something I was thinking about in the moment. But it's possible that Ella Ray was noticing it, or also maybe the students, because I think that is not something that's lost on people who are of Afro heritage. People who are needing and wanting specifically black spaces without fully understanding that need.

I actually didn't spend much time working with any of the students one-on-one. I might see them in the hallways and in passing. But really the time that was designated for us to be spending time was in the class structure. So I'm

curious if you have experienced any instances where a student had shared something with you that happened in class.

One of my own, I remember it was actually the last day I was at King before the closure. I ran into one student and he excitedly shared "my mom said I can bring my art kit to class!" And I was like, that's great. And it was interesting, because he was so excited about the class and wanted to bring this thing he loved to it. Then I said, "well, we're not gonna meet this week, because everything is kind of shutting down. And then he was like, "that's not fair!"

So that was this specific anecdote of my own. where, you know I could tell that the student was hyperengaged in the class and that the class was producing some form of specific benefit, even if it was not educational. Or they were not seeing it as educational. Yeah, so I'm curious if you have any anecdotes of your own.

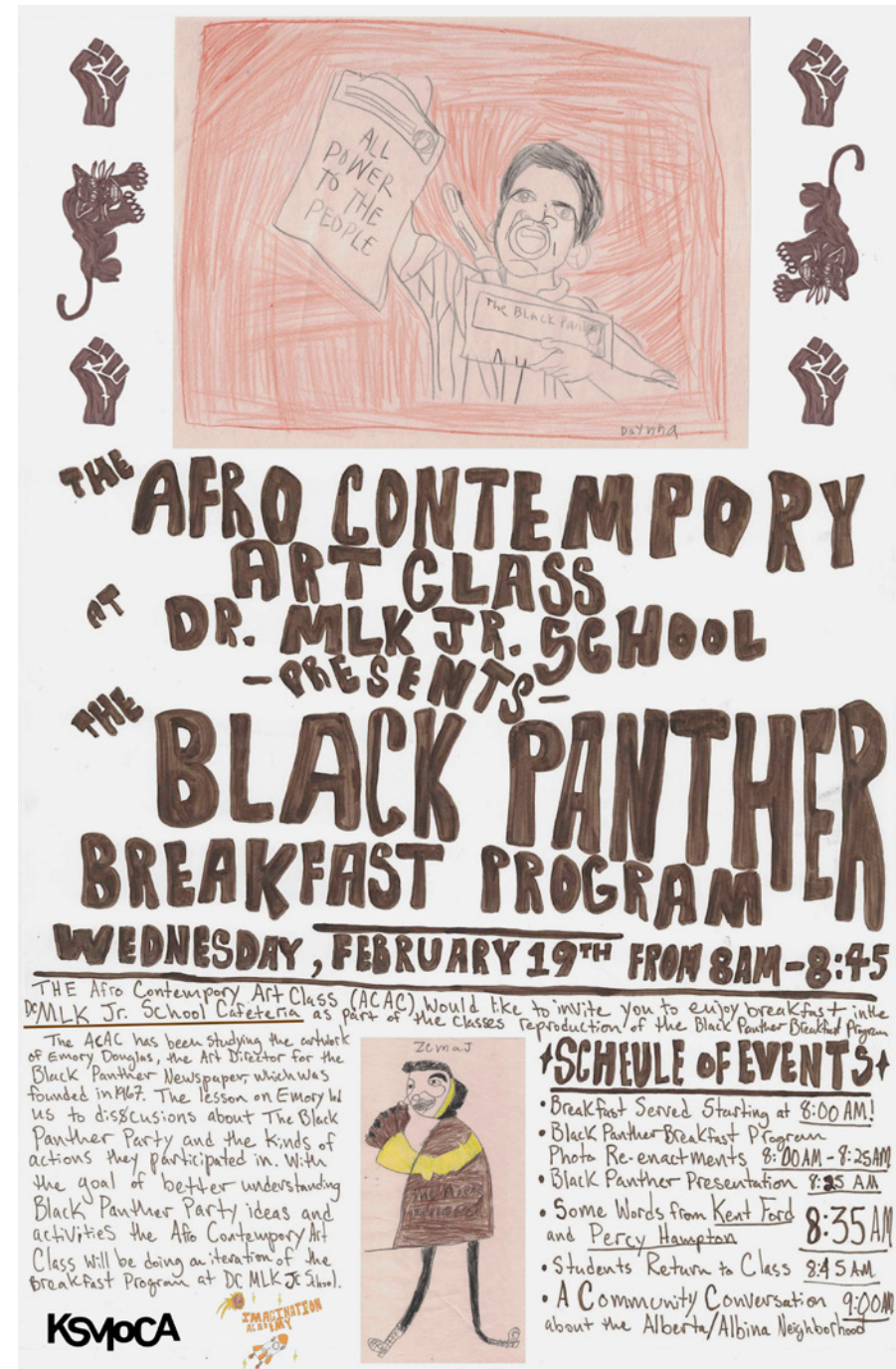
PT: This image comes up in my mind again, because I feel like you talked a lot not necessarily only about the art or the content, with one student in particular about his communication and interactions with others and just talking him through how that shows up in spaces. And I know you talked with him a lot about sharing the space and noticing how much airtime he was taking up. I remember having those debriefings with you about those conversations you

were having with him and then with me as his teacher in class, being able to reference those conversations. And it wasn't me necessarily giving him that feedback, right? So instead of that feedback coming from me as a white woman, it was feedback that a mentor had given him that he was able to connect with and process it like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, I've talked with Michael about that, like I get, I get how I'm showing up in this space." And, I feel like that was really powerful for him to have another voice sharing with him about how to communicate and be in learning spaces and just spaces with other people generally.





A reproduction of a sign based on an archival photograph found of an old wooden sign promoting the Breakfast Program made by Daynna and Karmyn at the entrance to the school.



Promotional flier for the Black Panther Breakfast Program at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School reproduced by the Afro Contemporary Art Class featuring artwork by Daynna and Zemaj.

# East Portland Art + Justice Lab

Roshani Thakore in collaboration with O82

The East Portland Art + Justice Lab is a transformative space that cultivates engagement, leadership, and change agents by hosting programming, art-making activities, festivals, discussions, and events integrating the values, knowledge, and experiences of three different entities: the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO—a culturally specific grassroots social justice organization); ROSE CDC—a community development corporation investing in affordable housing in outer southeast Portland; and new tenants living in forty-eight units of affordable housing. These three entities are housed under one roof called the Orchards of 82nd. As the neighborhood gentrifies, the Lab was created as a conceptual container to intentionally develop relationships between these entities along with long-standing community members to create and keep cultural memories and the social fabric of the neighborhood intact.

The Lab's main site is at 8118 SE Division Street at the intersection of 82nd Avenue, across the street from a corner store on one side and Portland Community College Southeast on the other. The project was officially born in January 2020 when, at a community gathering, we hosted a logo design contest and Mazzy, the four-year old daughter of local artists Alex and A'misa Chiu, submitted a design that won the most popular vote.

Before covid-19, tenants could drop into the Saturday Open Art Lab Studio Hour to hang out and make some art. Since many of the tenants were new to the area and to each other, we created a Tenant Portrait Series using self-portraits of tenants and backgrounds to display in the gallery lobby of O82.

Since the stay-at-home order went into place in March 2020, we decided to continue the Tenant Portrait Series online in an interview format. The first portrait is with Felecia, the mother of Zahmi, who is a birth and postpartum doula. She just received a SE Uplift Grant for her Black Birth Matters Project. During the stay-at-home orders, she has lost work but has been sewing masks and teaming up with her community for an online storytime for kids.

—Roshani Thakore

*Here's an excerpt from the O82 Tenant Portrait Series with Felecia:*

ROSHANI THAKORE: Thanks for joining me, Felecia. I wanted to know what culture means to you?

FELECIA: Culture means a lot. Right now I'm creating my culture through spirituality and manifestation and I want to show my son the world. I want him to experience different countries, I want him to experience different languages, I want him to know that he is loved and that he can show love and I want him to be able to express himself however he wants to. And most of it is geared toward food, art, music, and language really. That's my culture I'm creating right now for him and for me. Also birth work is a part of my culture so it's all intertwined.

RT: How did you get into being a doula?

F: Well, my birthing experience made me become a doula. The whole experience of how I was treated throughout my pregnancy, especially for being black, was crazy. At first, I knew about systemic racism, especially in hospitals and dealing with birth, but I didn't know the extent of it. That was a rude awakening! I do not want anyone to feel that small or that their feelings don't matter during their birth, because it does! This is your birthing experience... you're bringing life

into this world. You shouldn't be stressed, you shouldn't be treated as such in this special time.

RT: You're completely right and I think it's amazing that you transformed your traumatic experience into providing care for others. Since covid-19, how have you been doing? What have you been witnessing in your community? How have you been supported?

F: I've been seeing a lot! ROSE CDC is offering free lunches every day... folks are donating money and food and just helping out... it's been kind of nice. I mean it's sad because this whole situation has happened, but I feel like it's brought us a little closer, to be honest.

RT: That's really great you're seeing so much! Who's supporting you during this time and how have you supported others?

F: My family and friends have been supporting me with my mask making and helping with my son. I'm about to start a pregnancy support group with my Black Birth Matters project and I got an SE Uplift small business grant for it so they are giving me funds to give the childbirth educator classes. So I'll be starting the pregnancy support group and also a child birthing class after I get certified.

*If you'd like to support Felecia, you can check out all of her talents at [genesisawh.wixsite.com](https://genesisawh.wixsite.com). Her masks can be found on Etsy: [Essence of a Goddess LLC](https://www.etsy.com/shop/EssenceofaGoddess). To watch the complete interview, go to: [roshanithakore.com/projects#/east-portland-artjustice-lab/](https://roshanithakore.com/projects#/east-portland-artjustice-lab/)*



This year, the Lab received generous funding from the Oregon Arts Commission and through Metro Community Placemaking Grant. Along with the Tenant Portrait Series, we are designing a Curatorial Committee to cocreate and organize art events from tenants and local community members within the lobby and common spaces at O82 and an artist-in-residence fellowship with three local artists and three residents as collaborative pairings to create new works focusing on housing, transportation, and education.

#### PRACTICE

The East Portland Art + Justice Lab came out of my previous work, the Orchards of 82nd Art Plan, Living Culture: Past, Present, and Future. I was invited to design a conceptual framework of what the art and culture would look like for this brand-new building in East Portland. I saw it as an opportunity to center the unique social capital of that site. Located in the most multicultural area in Portland, the Lab could act as a platform that amplifies the knowledge and resources available in areas of resilience, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity, and resourcefulness directly by the people themselves.

As it now has a heartbeat, and as I am now an official employee at APANO, I have been using my role to take a lead in implementing these concepts with community members. It is a rare opportunity to be able to practice my practice as an employee of an organization. Because of that unique nature, I am calling my work at APANO an artist residency with the parameters of the residency to be determined by life.

To distinguish my time at the office working at the Lab, I created lab coats to wear when I was doing any work for the project. The coats have crowd-sourced Asian and Pacific Islander movement leaders silk-screened on the back to consider what one is able to do if you knew your ancestors had your back. On the front, there is a handmade patch cocreated with my mother with the words: Dream -N- Scheme. Work includes outreach to the residents, meetings pertaining to the Lab, designing materials, touching up the murals, etc. It seems to be a good signifier blurring the artist/employee roles at the office and an attempt to reimagine roles and work.

As I mentioned, during covid-19, I have been continuing the practice from home and have developed other ways to stay connected and to prepare and shape the future through our online portals.



Elisee the Mysterious' Tenant Portrait, 2020.

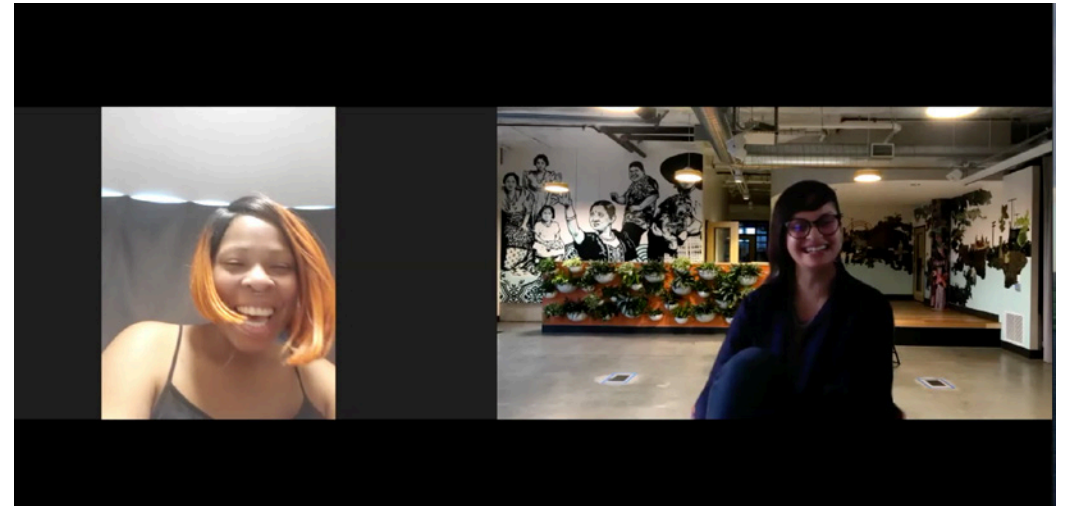




Elisee the Mysterious drawing at the Saturday Open Art Studio Lab, 2020. Photo credit: Roshani Thakore.



Top: Aydin drawing at the Saturday Open Art Studio Lab, 2020. Photo credit: Roshani Thakore.



Bottom: O82 Tenant Portrait Series screenshot with Felecia and Roshani, 2020.



# KSMoCA International Art Acquisition Committee

Illia Yakovenko in collaboration with Jalene, Vito, Leilua, Elfrid, and Ana

KSMoCA International Art Acquisition Committee (IAAC) is the group of five Dr. MLK Jr. School students—Jalene, Vito, Leilua, Elfrid, and Ana—and one Portland State University student—Illia—who together participate in the expansion of the King School Museum of Contemporary Art (KSMoCA) collection with international art. Students meet twice a week over the lunch break at King School to learn about art, art institutions, and international artists, pick the artworks they want to have at KSMoCA, and write letters to artists asking them to share their work with the museum. Priority is given to artists from the countries the students' families are originally from, creating an opportunity for students to learn about their cultural heritage and history through art. The group occasionally hosts guest advisers on international art—artists and art professionals—and visits Portland museums and art institutions.

KSMoCA IAAC kicked off in February 2020 just a month prior to the temporary shutdown of the school due to the covid-19 outbreak. The committee held a number of meetings in which students were introduced to international artists and their methods of work. Students have experientially learned some of the methods by making similar artworks themselves. Initially the committee was supposed to organize and present an art exhibition of students' work and the donated international artworks at KSMoCA at the end of the school year, in June 2020. But the pandemic has impacted the plan, rendering it impossible to continue in-person meetings. Yakovenko, as a KSMoCA IAAC facilitator, has outlined a plan to continue the work remotely, which includes delivering preassembled KSMoCA IAAC art kits to students. In this plan, each art kit is dedicated to three international artists and highlights their work. Students are provided with supplies and prompts encouraging them to produce their own artworks in response to artists' work. First outcomes of this exchange are going to be presented and discussed during Assembly 2020.

—Illia Yakovenko

*The following conversation with artist and fellow student Carlos Reynoso took place over Zoom on Thursday, May 14, 2020, after Art + Social Practice class.*

CARLOS REYNOSO: Could you tell me more about KSMoCA IAAC and some important details that are not in the general description?

ILLIA YAKOVENKO: I think KSMoCA IAAC has two main elements. There is the conceptual part which is about King School students collectively researching international artists and encouraging them to donate their works to KSMoCA's art collection. It includes reproduction of some formal institutional elements of an international art museum, research and review of artists and their works, collective decision-making processes, exchange of correspondence with artists, curation of the museum collection, work acquisition, and exhibition-making. The committee consists of students whose families have relatively recent immigration experience so conceptually students could deepen their knowledge of art in the places they are culturally connected to and further learn about the culture, history, and current sociopolitical conditions of these places. Another part is experiential. To me it's really important that there is an experiential component and students can enjoy the process and have fun while we learn. I don't want to impose the conceptual framework on them and make everything happen solely in favor of making the work appear conceptually solid and vivid for the tertiary audience. I want to

ensure that students enjoy the process while learning new and exciting things. So I came up with this idea that when we learn about an artist and their work, students reproduce some of the techniques and methodologies that the artist used to create the work. Let's say if the artist makes pencil drawings then we try to do similar pencil drawings with students.

In my opinion, if approached right, the conceptual framework can create opportunities to enrich participants' and collaborators' experience and strengthen pedagogical qualities of the artwork. So I try to bridge the artists' work that they produce in response to their local contexts to the reality in Portland and the United States. As an example, right before the lockdown, I showed students an artwork by Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan. The work *Protection of Plants* (2014) is a series of collages with buildings that were affected by the war in Eastern Ukraine. Photos of shelled and ruined buildings were used as the background on top of which Kadan superimposed images of various plants. Before the school went on shutdown, students and I were about to reproduce the collages using a similar technique and images. But I was also curious how to reproduce the meaning behind the artwork in relation to students' own experience or specific local Portland realities. So in this case, I was going to

use images of gentrification (thanks, Zeph Fishlyn) or spatial injustice in Portland caused by city development and urban renewal programs. I planned to give students images of flooded Vanport and neighborhoods affected by the Southern Auditorium urban renewal project downtown, the Emanuel Hospital expansion in Albina, and so on. In this case, students would have made collages by putting plants over the images from Portland's present and history not only mechanically reproducing the technique but producing new meaning by relating the work to their local context. This process of reproduction and production of meaning would have been accompanied by conversations about these meanings: about the war in Ukraine and about the American history and present of displacement, racial segregation, spatial injustice, gentrification, and so on.

CR: What is your role in the project? Do you see yourself as a facilitator or a participant? You've mentioned that you are planning to invite artists from different cultures you're not familiar with. If an artist from Mexico or from Central America were to come in, you're going to sit with the kids and learn with them. So in those instances you are learning together with the kids. It is a powerful thing to a student because you're learning as opposed to kids just assuming you are an expert who holds power.

IV: For me it's definitely an opportunity to learn about artists,

their works, and places they and the students are coming from. But I'm also responsible for the facilitation of the whole process. And I feel a certain level of unconfidence with the latter part. The way I just described KSMoCA IAAC is rather the way I imagine it, almost an ideal description of it. But in reality, because of the pandemic and lockdown, I haven't had enough time to actually implement it and build necessary relationships with the students. We had an opportunity to meet prior to the lockdown only about five or six times. I had some time to introduce them to key ideas and artists but it just feels like we haven't spent enough time together to lay the groundwork. It feels frustrating to publicly talk about an artwork that involves collaboration with other people when you feel that you haven't actually done much together.

CR: Well, I think that you're facing a lot of areas that you have no control over. You know, with what's going on globally and with just how our reality is. When was the last time you had an interaction with the students that are part of this project? How can you build those relationships with all of these barriers in place? The artist in Ukraine that you mentioned does collage work. And it seems this type of an interaction where hands on approach to these kids would have been the best and the most impactful. Knowing that and being aware of that, how would you create those connections and how would you work with those

barriers to continue to evolve this project and to make sure that the kids that are a part of this project really understand the connections or the methodology that you're trying to teach or have them experience?

IV: I think the last interaction I had with them was more than two months ago. I've come up with a plan of how I can keep working with students in quarantine by assembling art kits and sending them using the mail or just dropping them off on their porches myself on my bike. I even have a plan of what I will put inside the kits. Things such as basic art supplies that students can work with, an introduction letter from me, information about three artists and their artworks, prompts with how to reproduce some of the works and all necessary materials for doing that. So if, let's say, there is a collage-based work then I'll include materials that would allow students to make collages at home. I'd also like to ask students to write questions to the artists and share their impression about the artists' work. Then I'll pick up the results on my bike. I'll collect their work and send some of it to the artist together with student's questions and reflections. But even though I have this plan outlined, I feel like I don't have enough energy to implement it. Especially now because of the pandemic and its ripple effects. I'm dealing with maintaining my legal status in the United States, ability to stay here for the summer and ensure

that I'll be able to continue my studies next fall. All of that gets even more difficult because of my financial insecurity. I also keep having other classes and working on assignments. And there is this pressure with the Assembly and this publication on top of it. I hit my limits of emotional and productive capacity and it just feels like I can't really do everything at the same time. That's why it feels very frustrating that instead of actually working on the project and building dialogue and relationship with students, I have found myself in a position where I must prioritize conceptual packaging and representation of the yet-to-happen work for the tertiary art audience.

CR: I could see how that feels. This project hasn't happened to the extent that you were hoping that it would happen. But that doesn't necessarily mean it can't happen. You're handling everything really well and you're gonna get all this stuff done. You're doing great!





KSMoCA IAAC students in response to Nikita Kadan's *Protection of Plants*, 2020, collage.



Circle 150



# ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE

For the 2019–20 school year, the MFA Art + Social Practice cohort decided to experiment with a Guest Artist Residency. For the pilot residency, we decided on having a short-term residency with New York City-based artist Autumn Knight and a longer term relational residency with Oakland-based artist David Wilson. The following are conversations between members of the MFA cohort, and the artists-in-residence.



## Reflections with David Wilson

*I had the chance to meet David at his studio in March (right before the California shelter-in-place order) to talk art and dream up the in-person visit he was planning with the cohort. Since the travel was canceled, we wanted to have a conversation online reflecting on this Artist Residency.*

—Roshani Thakore

ROSHANI THAKORE: Our class was introduced to you in Berkeley, a year ago, on our class trip when we visited the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. It's been very interesting as an experiment to have you as one of the guest artists-in-residence in our program after learning specifically how you were talking and thinking about your practice at the museum and how your role was specifically as a guest artist.

DAVID WILSON: What a pleasure. That meeting was serendipitous in a way. Larry [Rinder] had planned to meet with your cohort when you visited the museum. And then I think the day of, he e-mailed me to say, "Actually, it might be more interesting for them to talk to you and have a conversation about your involvement with the museum. Any chance you can make it?" Larry's way of inviting me was very much not as a director asking someone to do something and much more of just, this could be interesting. And I agreed that I felt like it would be interesting to meet you all, but I kind of went back and

forth. I happen to be in a period of trying to say yes more than no.

And then our conversation actually was a rare one for me in terms of discussing this form of art that I am exploring within the museum, with people who think about this kind of thing a lot. I don't dwell too much on my role and just kind of do the work that I am doing. So it was actually a very rewarding and productive feeling, which is a sign of being in the right conversation. Sometimes you find yourself saying something for the first time out loud, or realizing something as you're talking and like, "Oh, yeah, that is how I feel." So anyway, I enjoyed meeting everybody and it was a sweet thing to have you reach out afterward in your own moment of sorting out some work things and get to talk a little further. It was just an extremely natural evolution of a relationship with you all, which again, to me is the best sign of something being the right fit, you know?

Then when I spoke with you and Jordan [Rosenblum] about participating as an Artist-in-Residence, there was just a sweetness to how

you were framing it in terms of having a sense for what maybe the aspiration is, but not truly knowing what the form should be or needed to be. In some ways, that freed me up to just think about what would satisfy my curiosity about working with you all and being involved with you all, and develop a working style that would be both fun to create on my end, and hopefully stimulate some conversation on your end. So it was unique.

RT: And honestly it was an experiment, because we had a different structure in our previous years about inviting guest artists into the program to do "intensives" with us. A thing that I was interested in is that your format of engaging with audiences for an institution seemed very relevant for all of us in our work—specifically in the way that there's a personal intimacy in your practice as well. For example, the Art Lab at the museum, with its very own publicly accessible risograph machine, is an intentional space for visitors to have a dialogue not only with the museum but with other visitors participating in the Lab's projects. That, you know, it's like that touch. And also knowing that our program is very collaborative and how with your project, *The Possible*, you worked with a number of collaborators, as the concept of the project itself. For me, I was curious how that could translate to fifteen people in another state with a chance to build something relational.

DW: Yeah. And it was cool that you all were picking up on how I consider my involvement with the museum an extension of the art projects that I've done, specifically centered around ways of communicating and a tone and a physicality to that communication.

My greatest attention in this museum project lies in continuing to extend invitations in the manner that has been a personal tradition and pleasure throughout all the projects that I've done: making print invitations and thinking about putting physical things in people's hands as a way to build a connection and a relationship. And for myself, the making of those print things is a deep source of pleasure.

So yeah, that came out in our first conversation and helped me reflect on what feels central to the museum project, translating intimacy to a larger scale. And rather than aiming at an audience or a community that I am a part of directly, applying it to the museum's open community of participants and audience and public while still trying to find a way to feel inclusive with that touch of care and specialness that happens when you make something for someone. And we, you know, at the museum, we do a lot of producing print invitations and flyers and things that get mailed out and we have this tradition of sending out newsletters.

So our conversation about being in residence got me excited about

it scaling way in, and paying attention to this practice not as a means to an end, but just for the sake of itself, and to get in the mix deeply with the fifteen people in your cohort as a pen pal. For me, it is a great joy just to create packages, and then to know that they'd be opened and engaged on the other end by you all was inspiring.

In the past this kind of correspondence has served as a way to build collaborative conversations in organizing an event and plugging everyone into some kind of common space or occasion, weaving in each person's ideas and background. So there were definitely moments along the way here where I was thinking, oh, maybe this will lead to doing something in an event form with all of you.

But not knowing what would make sense in the end as a "goal" kept me focused on just sending these little care packages and transmissions to, you know, stoke the relationships and stoke the conversations. So it's kind of funny and appropriate that no "thing" could happen in the end, given the current state of life in a pandemic. There was no need for it to be toward something else, the communication was just a reward, I guess.

RT: Yes, I have to say just generally to be able to build a durational time with a guest artist for a year has been beneficial for all of us in terms of receiving and also considering and experimenting and different aspects of our work.

I know that when I was doing the invite or the launch for the Art Plan in January, I appreciated your feedback and talking it through with you. Creating an invitation and giving it directly to the people highlighted an important aspect of the work that I really want to be doing. That has been a huge shift.

So we should probably unpack the concept of an artist residency and artists-in-residence. It comes up in our program a lot. At the museum you were being paid and seen by the director of the museum as a guest artist. To have that position at a museum I think was interesting. I'm just curious about your ideas and thoughts about artist residencies, especially now since some artists are considering this quarantine time as being like an artist residency at home, too.

DW: Yeah, I feel like it's good to distinguish between an artist residency and a commission, which, you know, they're often mixed a bit in terms of expectations. An artist residency generally could be thought of as a place or situation for an artist to explore their work. A little bit open ended, perhaps a little less product or result oriented. Often residencies do mix in some expectation of a result, which can be a bit more on the commission side, depending on how external or internal the expectations are. And again, naturally, there is a way that those things do make sense to be intertwined. But you know, there's certainly some

residencies that are just like, "here's a studio and here's time and maybe a stipend and that's it." And then there's, you know, ways in which you are "in residence" in terms of being somewhere new, or engaging within a context outside of your studio or wherever you typically work.

So, yeah, I haven't done too many residences in general, in part because I feel good about having figured out how to structure myself around periods of focus or shifts of context. Like what you're saying about quarantine forcing a quality of focus, in a strange way. I've kind of structured a lot of my life around that concept of giving yourself space and removing yourself from other things to do that. And for me, not wanting to be away from my family or partner for too long is a good reason to find ways to incorporate residency-like thinking into more daily practice. I have done a couple residences, one being a very informal thing, which was basically just a week on someone's property alone making drawings and swimming in a river. So that was nice. And then I've done a lot of self-imposed residency periods, you know, just taking time out, often structured around a project. And then I did the Facebook Artists in Residence, at the Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, which was interesting. I was technically the first artist in that AIR program alongside another person named Jay Nelson. So that was deeply on the "new context exploration" side of things with

a commission expectation. Anyway, that is a whole other thing to talk about.

At the museum, orienting myself around the idea of a residency is important to remembering the creative potential of how I engage my role. I think part of what you do in residency is you push yourself and try new things and you explore, you don't just check the box and be done. Yeah, it's a choice to be in engagement mode. Being an outside voice is also part of the value of being an artist-in-residence, inserting yourself into a situation or an institution and trying to share your work, or exercise your instincts within a new context and be available to have conversations.

In this case, it was similar in terms of you know, being able to just try and exercise my instincts within the context of your program. As a group, you are all deeply engaging the kind of ideas that relate to how I work in ways I haven't even considered, so in this situation, it's fun to just kind of offer things your way and see what comes back. Figuring out a format for myself that felt like a way that I was excited to participate was a really productive first step. I was excited to come and visit at the end of the semester, and was excited for the potential of getting to do some projects all together, but I'm appreciating that my experience of this residency felt substantial even without ever sharing space. I felt very much like I was doing something with you all



throughout the year, so I don't feel like it was a missed experience, it was almost like the visit would have been the icing on top.

RT: Could you talk a little about the process of how you make time for art to fit within your practice?

DW: I guess what I meant before has something to do with identifying that as an artist, in the most basic way, you are deciding how you work and what that means.

And then from there, it's up to you. I think it's helpful to stay connected to the authorship of that decision. For some people, I think it's helpful to structure struggle into their way of working, there's just different ways that people get traction. But I had a feeling pretty early on that was liberating, which was that it would be nice to need as little as possible to get at the work that I want to do or just be able to work. For me, that meant pushing my drawing instinct and practice, by choosing to not work in a studio, but work outside and carry materials and focus more on what I love about walking and exploring and drawing from observation. It helped me strip it back a little bit. Because I do think that most people would agree that time is the greatest value in working and just in general. So I try to structure myself around ways to experience time richly, which I feel is the mentality with which you ideally approach a residency.

It's something we talked a lot about regarding scoring

throughout this year, something that I think a lot about and other people do as well. But for me, the idea of scoring helps structure time to have those very rich experiences and get into the feeling of a place or a time. I've done things like a twenty-four hour walk or trying something that is an experience that I imagine will be valuable or at least, stimulating. It can be radical just to carve out the time. I think even a very short amount of time can be extremely fulfilling when you close off everything else and just sink into something. And yes, I think to choose how you work, to choose ways that stimulate your work regularly, is part of what it means to be an artist. I think it's really important. And like you said, to not feel like you're waiting for someone to give you permission. It's good to check in with yourself about what you need or want out of an experience, and if it's time and space, then you are like the holder of that currency. Right? You know, with this museum project in some ways it's a process of self identifying and reaffirming for myself like, "I am an artist in residence within this context, it doesn't really matter to what degree that is perceived, but it does matter in connecting to the feeling of experimentation and engagement."

RT: Yes! I really liked what you said about time is the most valuable thing. And being able to practice your instincts.

So thank you again for being flexible and understanding about

putting your energy and creativity and thinking about what our in person gathering would be. I just want to at the very least name that and be appreciative of that because it does take energy to adapt. We're all trying to figure all this out right now in human forms, but also like creative forms. And so I'm just curious about how you've been navigating this pandemic. How have you been spending your time? Are you thinking about work right now? I know that a lot of different conversations have been coming up in the program about production and pause and just kind of... recalibrating. So yeah, I think hearing about where you are with things would be nice.

DW: Well, it is interesting, in my engagement with the museum, there's versions of the same conversations happening at all the scales, from individuals to institutions, they're thinking about how to adapt and how to retain what they thought of as their work. You know, there's sixty-plus staff members who used to think in one way, and now they are all running toward the one website person realizing that the website is actually the museum now in a way that no one would have ever thought. But it brings me back to our conversation about what a residency is, and just trying to have a rich experience of the work that we're doing—to push yourself a bit. The extreme nature of what's happening right now is pushing everyone, and pushing a mirror in front of everybody.

Trying to figure out how to continue what you were doing but inevitably there's a lot of why, how, when, you know? All those big questions are happening, which is cool, especially with museums when generally it's this mega train momentum where every piece is moving, and it takes so much to change course. So to have this time, amid the tragedy and the fear, is actually radicalizing. People seem to be moving between thinking that there's some weirdly ecstatic and liberating parts of this experience and then there's the deep terror parts.

It's all very disorienting. You know, I was talking to Jordan a little bit about having developed instincts to avoid orienting projects around the digital space and now, obviously, there's such a push to just jump into it because it feels like that's what's available. It's hard when the way that you want to work is not available, especially in terms of organizing around gathering people in person. It can leave you feeling a bit lost.

I think the self-compassion to hit the pause button is important: to reflect, maybe rest, and take a moment to take care of yourself and address some of the "why" questions. Ideally so that then you can offer things from a really strong source of conviction and excitement and love and not just because, you know, this is what you do.

So, anyway, with that in mind, I've been in a daily practice of

walking to a site in the Oakland Hills and working on a watercolor page a day, coming together in the end as a larger piece. I had set myself a time period from the first week of January until basically the last week of April to be working on that. So that saw me through the first free fall into quarantine, was very helpful as a grounding force, and nice to just feel productive amid all the uncertainty. I certainly am someone who feels better when they're productive, and there's different ways I can feel productive. But that felt good.

And then the museum stuff has been strange. It's gonna play out over time—there's already conversations about not having any public programming through the fall for sure. So that's enough time that there needs to be some new thinking. But again, I feel good that there's this tradition of correspondence to work deeper into. It feels like it's the time to exist in that realm and continue to balance some of the digital thinking. So I'm excited about that potential, and to be commissioning artists to contribute to mailings and do more in that format.

It's funny that we've like, you know, been seeping our life into the internet, and then it's just really all in. I think it'll be especially nice, when so much will be online, to have something physical to send and receive. That feels affirming and, as you know, in my own community I've been sending out a little quarantine newsletter print. Which has been

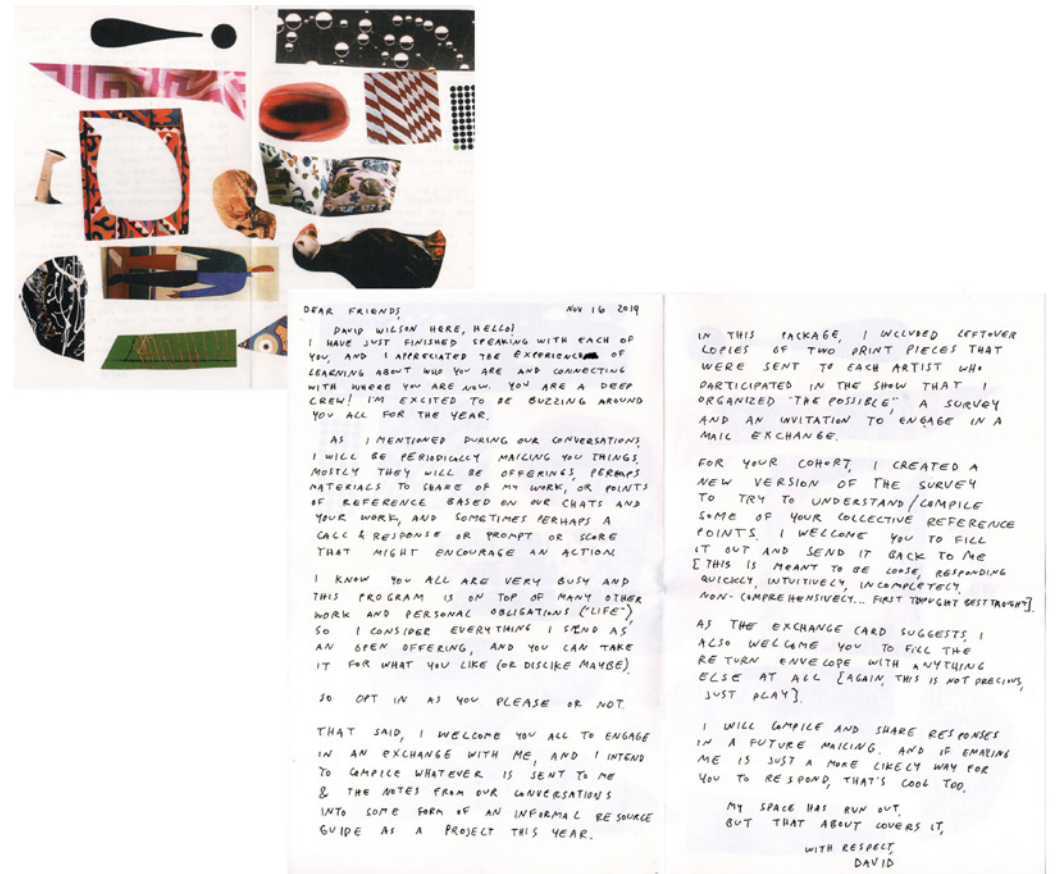
fun to think about the tools I have available, with my tiny little home photocopier which is obscenely inefficient for doing an edition of even two-hundred... I've ordered toner cartridges like three times already which is absurd but feeling good. I actually think having this engagement with you all helped warm me up to this more intimate scale and be ready to just turn that on. You know, communicating and sharing and caring for the community. I mean, I really even haven't had that much energy to be talking to friends on the phone. I've just been hermitting. Yeah, hermitting even in quarantine terms.

So that has felt really nice as a little lifeline to send out. Even just writing people's names down in the address has been rewarding, as a way of just, you know, feeling connected and inspired by those people who are in my world. And again, I can thank the cohort for keeping that alive.

R: Yes, that certainly resonates. Relating on an intimate scale during this time. I've been keeping my life very small these past few months since I was in San Francisco. Seems like such a long time ago...

Thank you again for your time and energy as always, David! It's been a pleasure reflecting with you and we really enjoyed having you as our artist-in-residence.

D: Cheers!



Letter from David to the MFA cohort.





## The Gift is Hearing What's Happening Now: A Conversation with Autumn Knight

*The following is a conversation between Zeph Fishlyn and Autumn Knight on April 24, 2020. Knight is an interdisciplinary artist working with performance, installation, video and text. Much of this discussion is focused on Knight's project Sanity TV, an improvised participatory performance in the form of a talk show.*

*More on Autumn Knight: [autumnjoiknight.com/](http://autumnjoiknight.com/)*

ZEPH FISHLYN: How do you think about your work in relationship to social practice?

AUTUMN KNIGHT: The foundation of some of my work lies in principles of social practice. I'm from Houston's Third Ward; I did my first series of works at Project Row Houses. It really laid the foundation for a lot of what I knew art to be. Many of the black artists around me in Houston worked with Project Row Houses. I think a lot of us have that energy in our work. It was sort of a way of life also.

For example, we discovered a news article listing "the 25 most dangerous corners in America," and one of them was in our neighborhood. So my husband and I created a Sunday social event on that corner [*Sunday Social*]. Friends came, people nearby came and staff affiliated with Project Row Houses also joined us. Jimmy, who does maintenance for Project Row Houses, barbecued. We had a DJ (Zin, RIP) and we got power from a neighbor across the street. It

took place in an empty lot. We made a performance of a good time. We asked people to dress up to hang out on what was basically an empty lot.

ZF: I read a recent interview where you're talking about working with discomfort, pushing boundaries, and intimacy. How do you navigate power and your role as an artist in different situations?

AK: I'm going to triangulate that with the social practice realm, the performance realm, and what I learned from therapy—being in therapy school and also being a client of therapy. As the therapist, you are in this position of power, whether you want it or not. You're there at the service of the client, you're there to help them. But you can't deny this sense of authority in the room, even though you try to share it with the person that's coming to be therapized. So when I think about social practice moments and/or performance moments, I think about not being in denial about

who initiated the encounter, who initiated the contact.

If you step back right away, then people think you don't know what you're doing, that you don't have any authority over the project. But the people didn't create the project, you created the project, right? In the performance space, it's owning that you did create the situation, you did create these parameters. As a choice within that moment, you can step back and give more authority to the audience. This is a sharing, but this is not an equal labor situation. I did do more labor than you in constructing this space, so I can take the space back over when necessary. You hopefully trust that I will do that at a certain point, to keep it moving, and maybe for you to feel safe. It's better for me as a performer to manage the moment.

ZF: Do you feel that there are still elements of social practice that are shaping how you're doing performative work now?

AK: Sometimes I try to combine indirect outreach and engagement while I'm doing some other type of performance. If you go into a space that's not your space, you try to figure out how to get in touch with the people that you want to be in conversation with. How do you build a relationship?

Sometimes I try to combine indirect outreach and engagement while I'm doing some other type of performance.

In fall 2019 I performed at *On the Boards* in Seattle. I asked the curator [Rachel Cook], "Can you connect me with some black people to play dominoes with in the lobby before the performance starts?" As a gesture, as an extension of programming a work or outreach to a specific demographic that I want access to, how do I bring them into this performance space?

Project Row Houses is known for the founder [Rick Lowe] playing dominoes with people from the neighborhood. He does it right on the inside of the door. So it's the first thing you experience when you walk into the space. Also I grew up playing dominoes, so I miss that connection. How do you create a social space that people feel welcome in and with a neutral activity?

The dominoes game was built as a moment for me to be me. In the domino players' first interaction with me I was just chill and having fun. Those people then came to the performance. I imagine that they were able to see what it takes to embody another type of persona—like, "oh, that person is performing."

ZF: You're playing so much with intimacy—with physical closeness, or challenging what people are saying or what they're thinking. That also puts you in a vulnerable position. Therapists have certain boundaries, like OK, we're here for fifty minutes and you give me the check, we do this really intimate powerful



work and then I step out and you step out and then usually there's no other contact. As a performer you can't establish as clear of a boundary, so I wonder if the persona holds the boundaries. You can take that hat off and no longer be that person. It creates the ability to hold a space that's more concentrated and more intensified because you have a certain layer of protection.

AK: Yes, absolutely. There is a protection of yourself, to be able to go even further and deeper and take more risks. Sometimes I do a workshop and a performance, or studio visits and performance, in the same place. In some instances I have had to really delineate the role I'm in, as a person leading the workshop or the person visiting your studio.

I constantly think about what people expect socially. What they want, and how they act when they can't get it. What do people really need? You know? I love watching people. Often if I'm going to a place where there's lots of new people, I'm really comfortable sitting in a corner of a room and watching everybody.

If I listen well enough, then the thing that I say can push the right place, and that will let them know that I was listening. Acknowledging that, in part, a person wants you to hear exactly what they just said. They think that's what they said, but if you're listening, you hear the five layers underneath that.

ZF: You're talking about a one-on-one situation where the goal is to help that one person. It's interesting when you extrapolate that out to a performance situation with a group. Individual people are going to get lots of different things out of a performance, but some of them might feel challenged, some of them might go away mad. If you're not in a therapist role, you don't actually have the responsibility for people to go away feeling better than when they arrived.

AK: In a performance, I need to just put out there the challenge and questions to make you think about your own behavior. I think observing my own behavior too, in the moment, is impactful sometimes—to notice how I'm responding to the room. I feel cornered, or I feel nervous, or this is hard to try to perform for all of you. This is very difficult. I'm going to go ahead anyway. It may make you feel disappointed that you came, but let's work through that together. Because maybe I'm disappointed in you too. You could love me more, or act like it. You could applaud more. So we're both in this predicament of needing more love and attention and forgiveness for being disappointing.

I often say, "I'm stuck!" or "It's not going like I thought it was gonna go!" Let's see what happens! Working with it. Because if I'm really feeling these things, people notice. The larger the audience gets, you feel all their eyes on you. They're looking

at you and they're expecting something of you. I try to speak to it because then I feel like it lets the audience off the hook a little bit. It lets them off one hook and puts them on another. You are part of this moment of discomfort, and you're so relieved that you're not in my position. And I need to make you an accomplice to this feeling I'm having. It requires your presence for this dynamic to unfold. I don't need to pretend that I don't have that feeling. I put a message out there to the audience—whatever feeling you're having, just have it and then move on.

It's all improv. If I feel stuck, then I will check in in the "here and now" with myself and then other people. In curiosity mode or appreciation mode. I try to leave it as improvisational and open as possible, because the gift is hearing what's happening now. It's the one thing that can't be replicated.

Part of it is an experiment in authority—can I influence the thing to happen based on how I perform my absolute desire for the thing to happen, or knowing how it should happen? What if I'm very direct in how I communicate? If the thing still doesn't happen, is it in part because people don't want to take directions from a person like me? As a performer, people came to see how much authority I have in this space.

There's a dance that you do; there's some creativity inherent in finding what would

persuade you. You know, how do I persuade people to stay in this room when I don't know what's going to happen? How do I convince people that I do know what's going on?

I do want there to be some challenge, some discomfort in a flowy space, because I feel like the things that are shifting can't quite shift as quickly if the discomfort is painful. The more I do performances where I'm interacting with people, I learn so much about people and human nature and what things people will accept—behavioral patterns.

When people come back to me later and remember moments from the performance, that feels successful to me. It burrowed deep into the memory. They kept a piece of it with them. They're turning it around and using it for something. I think that's why discomfort is such a tool for me—not pain, but discomfort. Play as a way to distract—this deep, deep work can happen while you are playing.

TAKEAWAYS FROM KNIGHT'S RESIDENCY

*As part of Autumn Knight's AIR with our program, she virtually met with each student in the middle of spring term to discuss our projects and practice. Students were asked to share a core learning from their meeting.*

Autumn offered great insight on the Portland Conservatory as we discussed different methods and techniques that art museums use for community outreach and presentation. We also workshoped her own relationship to her plants and what that says about her life and others. Due to this conversation, I am now focusing on creating a workshop that explores ones' relationships with plants.

—Emma

Autumn was deeply thoughtful, articulate, present, reflective and generous! I feel so completely grateful to have had her insight at this moment when all of us are looking for wisdom in ourselves and each other.

—Tia

I should evangelize my message. Repackage the project up for privileged arts administrators and academics and sugarcoat it in a self-care package to dismantle the future uncertainty driven by white supremacy.

—Eric

She reminded me to think creatively about using forms that I already employ—in new contexts and in new ways—without starting completely from scratch.

—Mo

I felt both seen and validated in my unique experience as the only black student in the program and was encouraged to set intentional and strong boundaries with myself, others, and the art world at large. Much gratitude and appreciation for the insight.

—Michael

What is the danger of the memory? Is it about being a local or is it about power? Who controls the sea—cargo, ships, Atlantic slave trade, etc.?

—Brianna

Autumn observed that folks racialized as white unpacking whiteness is both novel and needed, especially as it relates to performance art. Autumn also observed that BIPOC have been discussing the white gaze for a long time. So what next? How can the work move that discourse another step.

—Justin

“Just finish.”

—Roshani

We explored many different ideas and forms for the Prosperity Garden Network, specifically in relationship to the RV park. We talked about the temporary and nomadic nature of the lifestyle, and to think about the plant exchange that I am facilitating to have the same qualities such as thinking about the containers and how easy it would be to pick up and go with them.

—Shelbie

Knowledge is performative. Knowledge is performance.

—Jordan

She helped me consider the value of being present as a storyteller within my virtual walking project. What can I share about my own specific experience that could provide a compelling thread to follow for someone walking in a totally different neighborhood?

—Zeph

A takeaway I have from my conversation with Autumn is that my individual perspective is important—a unique story that needs to be heard. That escapism, dreaming, thinking about intangible things are important for survival.

—Becca



Zeph (lower left) interviews Autumn.



# EXCHANGES

Conversations with other contributors  
to Assembly and the PSU Art + Social  
Practice MFA Program.

# Books are a Container

*A conversation between Spencer Byrne-Seres and Roz Crews, co-founders of Sunday Painter Press. Crews is a faculty member in the Art + Social Practice Program, where she teaches the third-year publication class; Byrne-Seres is the founding editor of the Social Forms of Art Journal, the Social Practice Program's biannual publication. They're both graduates of the program. This dialogue started with a question in an e-mail from Crews to Byrne-Seres while they were quarantined under the same roof during the global pandemic. They went back and forth until it ended with a question.*

ROZ CREWS: I'm looking forward to reading your thoughts about the powers of publications.

Ever since we started Sunday Painter Press in 2016, I've occasionally caught myself staring into computer screens until the pixels start to melt, thinking about the purpose of a publication. Who is it for? Where does it go? How do I make it beautiful, but more importantly, interesting? Do I have ideas worth spreading? Why would I write it all down and send it off, when my thoughts are perfectly safe and protected in my own head? Through time and communities, who publishes? And how? And WHY?

I've told you before, and I'll tell you again—I'm not a big reader! So why do I want to make books? Where does the impulse come from? Making my own publications has been a way to teach myself how to read and write better. Editing other people's work has helped, too, and I think your editing style has influenced me a lot. Before we go much

further, can you answer four-ish questions?

What is Sunday Painter Press and why does it exist?

Why do you always say that your dream is to own a bookstore? What is the bookstore like in your dream?

SPENCER BYRNE-SERES: Thanks for initiating this conversation, and for bringing up these important questions. I wanted to start by foregrounding this dialogue in the context in which it will be printed. A publication that is attempting to replace an in-person event—Assembly—which has been canceled due to the global pandemic caused by covid-19. In thinking about publications, I really want to circle around the idea of need. I feel like publications are often the product of need—the need to put words down, the need to share ideas, the need to show documentation, the need to collect a bunch of things together that are hard to contain in one place, the need to have authority, the need

to have visibility, the need to have “distribution.” And in this case, the need to substitute being in person together and talking about the work that we do as socially engaged artists.

Sunday Painter Press is a casual imprint that you and I started as an outlet for the publications we make. Its name came out of one of our past projects—Sunday Painters Group—which was a sort of conceptual art club that took place around the city. Each week, a different member of the group would lead the rest in an assignment that emphasized site specificity, resourcefulness, and play. We would meet under bridges, in plant nurseries, at supermarkets, and even at the beach. It was seriously casual practice, as much a social context as it was a context for meaningful artistic experience. And the spirit of that project was kind of embodied the press, under which we continue to publish our publications. In itself it's kind of a conceptual art project, too. We just made a name, a logo, and a website and put some things we were already doing inside of that container, and it just stuck. I'm curious how it functions for you, and what your relationship is to it?

Oh, and the bookstore! Ahhh the bookstore. I think the bookstore is a question. It's a question about economy, and space, and audience, and livelihood. I don't know if I want to own a bookstore as much as I want to be a bookstore. I want to be a comfortable space with things to think about

while drinking coffee, or a casual space from which to observe and think about the world around us. I think I talk about the bookstore so much because it seems like this elusive, impossible thing. How can any bookstore sell hundreds (or thousands) of books a month to people who walk in with cash? Who are these people that buy the books? Artists are so mixed up in personal economics that it's quite confusing to unravel what you are selling from what you are as human. For example, I have a domain name that is my name with a button that says “shop,” and you can go there and buy “pieces of me.” So in a way, the book store is kind of like a thought exercise for thinking about my own personal economy and what I do and don't make, and how I can envision future economic selves. That being said, all of these futures are unrealized, and my own monetized labor exists within the realms of art nonprofits and the university.

That goes back to this idea of audience and publications. I don't sell many of the publications I make, so I wonder who, beyond the direct participants in the project, are the intended audiences for a lot of the books we make?

RC: I never knew you thought of yourself as a bookstore.

I like to reference Sunday Painter Press casually when I describe my practice because it does feel like a comfortable, pseudo-real



container to house our artist projects, but at the same time, I wish it was more than that. I love putting our spiral logo on the publications I design because it helps me feel like I'm contributing to a collection, instead of just making individual, amateurishly designed objects. Having the press has pushed me toward learning how to make it feel more real, more legible as an actual press that could release other artists' books. I often wonder what the economy of that would be—how would we fund printing other people's projects when we can barely figure out how to fund our own? When would we learn how to perfect-bind? Who would read the editions we would make? This brings me to your second question: who is the audience?

Each of my publications has a different primary audience, and maybe they all have the same secondary and tertiary audience... a few examples:

Some things people thought were weird (2016): a participatory drawing project where I asked people to tell me one weird thing that happened to them that day, and then I drew their story on whatever was closest to me at the time. I used the format of a book to make an exhibition of those drawings, and then I gave each person who contributed a story their own copy of the book. The participants were the primary audience.

Next I made a book for my mom (and my dad!), *How do you get rid of a 40 year old bottle of perfume?* (2016): an essay as a portrait of my family with a collection of drawings she made on envelopes, credit card statements, and receipts.

*Can art inspire me to think critically about...?* (2017): a reflection of the graduate school attempts I made at trying to integrate art education into first-year liberal arts college curriculum as the artist-in-residence at Portland State University's Housing and Residence Life (UHRL) Department. It features assignments I cowrote with nonart faculty, plus their student work addressing those assignments as well as essays by influential socially engaged artists and educators attempting to answer my questions about how art fits into our broader shared society. This book was paid for by the UHRL department that sponsored my residency, so I was able to give a free copy to every student, teacher, administrator, artist, and curator who participated in the project (somewhere around one-hundred). They were the primary audience, and the book served as a document of our experience together.

For each of these, I determined a specific audience as I designed the publication and its contents, but once the finished books were released into the world, they found new audiences—primarily they fell into the hands of artists, art appreciators, and students

interested in socially-engaged art. I like that the work forms its own community once it's alive, but as part of my process, I like to know at least some places where it will land when it's first born. It gives me a sense of relief and reassurance that my time and energy isn't being poured into a gaping hole that will just be filled with dirty concrete as soon as it opens.

I like the way you alluded to it already, but can you expand on why you think artists want to make books? I'm especially interested in "the need to have authority."

SBS: Totally. Those are great examples and ways of thinking about audience. One time I made a book for a fish. The fish's name is Herman, and it's a seventy-five-year-old sturgeon that lives at the Bonneville Fish Hatchery. I realize now that the book really was for Herman. It's a series of Yelp! reviews that mention the fish, and I thought it would be interesting to collect them together. I didn't know quite how to distribute it beyond that, and finally I just took a copy to the gift store at the hatchery where he lives to see if they would be interested. They were and bought thirty copies on the spot to sell there. It created this closed loop that I really like—the shop has become the steward of this idea in the form of an object. It's the only place you can buy it, and to really understand the book, you need to go there. Somebody once said to someone who then said it to me about making art that you

need to make "orphans." They were referring to an idea that a person should be able to make objects that can exist in the world without them. I don't love the analogy, but I do think books let us do this for socially engaged projects once they are finished. So often we need to have lunch with someone, and make drawings, and show a video and talk to three other people in order to convey what our socially engaged project actually is. Books are, as you like to put it, a type of punctuation mark on a project that allows us to encapsulate a certain form or part of a process.

The authority bit comes from this idea that by binding something, making it available on a bookshelf in a store, or in some online shop, somehow gives it a sense of "official-ness" that is different from, say, zine culture. It's not that I think that zines are any less respectable than something you can order off of Amazon—a lot of essential, suppressed, and hard to access information has been made accessible through zines and their distributed networks. But bound books have a type of widespread cultural value and importance that we can tap into as artists, in order to leverage, subvert, or otherwise play with people's expectations. Just yesterday I was reading about the "bookshelf background," the preferred at-home Zoom backdrop for TV hosts, pundits, and others. This trope comes, I think, from those lawyer billboards where they are standing in front of a wall of law books saying

they can make you millions off your car accident. They are evidence of how large books loom in our psyche.

I've been thinking, too, about what books are actually good for. We used to say about our old office at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA) that the space wasn't great for any one thing, but it was kind of good at many things (events, meetings, exhibitions, concerts). I think about books the same way. They can have photos, but you will never get the quality of a gelatin silver print. They can have dialogue, but they can't always convey affect and nonverbal communication. They can have diagrams and maps, but they can't [really] convey space. They tend to imply narrative, hierarchy, authorial legitimacy—which we sometimes need to undo with our editor's notes and prefaces. But they can kinda do all these things, so they are totally useful.

Do you think books are precious or disposable?

RC: I do like books as a punctuation mark to put a pause in a project or series of projects, a time to reflect, present, conclude, etc. That idea came from a conversation with Julie Ault, or maybe I read it in a text she wrote. I remember her describing the value of having a chance to pause and think about a project in a new way by collecting all its elements and putting them into a publication. If I had made a note about that moment—the

conversation or the paragraph—when it happened, it could have been a publication of documentation that would repeat exactly what she said, and I could absorb it now in a new way. Instead, I only have my memory to go off which doesn't always provide a clear or concise delivery of past experiences. I guess that's a value of publication—the opportunity to return to something concrete.

I think books are precious. At first when I wrote that sentence, I wasn't talking about mass-produced paperback novels, and I was thinking more about "special" books that preserve an artist's work or thoughts with expensive paper, delicately placed type, linen, and foil. Though now on reflection, those mass-produced paperbacks, that seemed so disposable a moment ago, offer a kind of time travel, totally invaluable. They move from person to person via thrift stores and free piles, and each person has a new and probably indescribable feeling based on reading them. The fact that everyone has a different experience with a book makes each one precious in its own way. It seems like the content and the object, and everything they can do together makes books very non-disposable.

Do you think a book can function like a portable art exhibition? Why or why not? What else can it function as in the context of an artist's practice?

SBS: I think books can be exhibitions. Books are a type of physical space, and just like any physical space, you can put stuff in it and show it to other people. I think you can also experience a book the same way you experience an exhibition. You can RSVP for a book. You can pay "admission" to receive a book. You can get tired and need to sit down while reading the book, or try and find the bathroom after you finish that one chapter. Someone can tell you not to touch the book, or to only get so close to it. They can tell you more about the book, its history, provenance, and fun facts about the author.

But unlike many books, exhibitions are something that by and large are disposable. They are temporary. They almost always have end dates. So it's interesting to think about the publication as a kind of permanent exhibition. Like you were saying, they are concrete things that can be looked back on and referenced. The things we normally forget, or amplify in the memory of an exhibition, we can corroborate or double check through a publication. That excellent photograph, or quote or caption stays put and we can consult it at a later date. That name that gets misspelled stays misspelled, and we're forced to remember how stressed we were to meet our deadline and didn't have time to do a proper proofread. Books are portable, and they are affected by different contexts. The book we find in the free pile and the book we buy at the museum gift store have

different stories behind how they came into our lives. Maybe one is more likely to get tossed into a bag and read in a park, or picked as the solo journeyer on a road trip (which I never wind up reading).

I also think about how books require maintenance. Just like buildings, from the moment they are finished being produced, they begin to degrade, and we are responsible for how the process unfolds. Do we cover them in shrink wrap? Keep them out of the sun? Or do we dog ear them, crack the spines, and write notes in the margins? The great thing is that we can do all of the above!

In my own practice, I feel like books are a container into which I can squeeze a lot of different things. Like I was saying before, I can have the photo, and the essay, and the conversation, and the map and diagram and credits and disclaimers all in a single object that can get shared and passed around. They are also a way to illustrate an idea and to formalize it. The Herman the Surgeon book was a conceptual art project, and the way it was formalized was through the creation of a bound book. There are other ways to do that—rumors, events, conversations, photographs, paintings, essays, etc.—but the book was the strategy I chose for that specific project.

What are your thoughts on this idea of a book as exhibition? What are some of the other uses for books? Maybe in circling



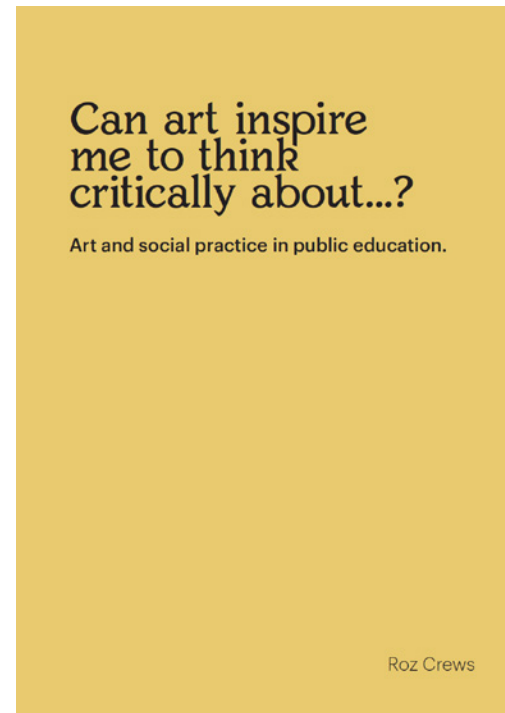
back, how can a small press or bookstore function and facilitate an artists practice, or support the creation of socially engaged art books?

RC: I like your ideas about a book as an exhibition, and I think some of the first exhibitions I attended were books. Like I said in the beginning, I don't love to read the way many other people in my life do, but I do really like looking at photographs. I like books as frames for photography because I can take the photos with me like a memory. It makes me think of wallets where people used to carry photos of people they love. Kind of like a mini book, the wallet opens up and there I am as a baby between the records of my dad's identity.

If we were to make Sunday Painter Press function in a more serious way, working with other artists to produce their books, I'd like to focus on the expanded possibilities beyond poetic, essay, photograph, table of contents, paper, binding. I'd really like to know what else a publication can be, how spreading ideas can be more accessible to folks whose primary mode of communication isn't the written word [but still in the form of a publication]. What other kinds of books are there?

Anyway, we should probably wind down this little conversation. I love you very much.

SBS: I love you, too.



Top, left: A publication created by Roz Crews that looks at the role of art and critical thinking in nonart based university classes through a collection of essays by artists and educators. Published by Sunday Painter Press.

Top, right: Social Practice Definitions is an ongoing collection of pocket-sized publications, each one of which contains an essay about a term used within the Social Practice Program, written by students in the program and based on a list compiled by Program Director Harrell Fletcher.



# Learning Is Like Giving

*Learning Outside the Lines (LOTL)* is a new project hosted by the King School Museum of Contemporary Art (KSMoCA).

KSMoCA is a museum-as-artwork project within the walls of a functioning pre-K to fifth grade public school in northeast Portland, Oregon. It was founded by Lisa Jarrett and Harrell Fletcher who work alongside students, teachers, and administrators from Dr. MLK Jr. School and Portland State University's College of the Arts. The project reimagines how museums, public schools, and universities shape people, culture, and perspectives by cultivating space for art to educate within and beyond the classroom through mutual exchange. Internationally renowned artists collaborate with students on site-specific projects, exhibitions and workshops. In turn, students learn about museum careers as they practice the roles of curator, preparator, publicist, artist, copywriter, registrar, and docent.

*LOTL* originated as a conversation between Harrell Fletcher, Molly Sherman, and Michelle Swinehart, and it has more recently developed into a public, participatory work organized by the KSMoCA team including Jarrett, Fletcher, Roz Crews, and Amanda Leigh Evans. We are collecting stories-as-artworks from people about early educational experiences that deviated from their normal K to eighth grade curriculum, in order to highlight unorthodox ways of learning.

Anyone can contribute a story-as-artwork to the project, and these artworks focus on learners' perspectives rather than teachers' perspectives. Within *LOTL*, the person telling the story is an artist pointing to a particularly influential experience and claiming that memory as an artwork in this present moment. We're thinking of each learner's story as an artwork and are asking each participant to claim the experience as an artwork.

Submit your story here:  
[www.ksmoca.com/learning-outside-the-lines](http://www.ksmoca.com/learning-outside-the-lines)

*In this conversation, Roz Crews (b. 1990), a program manager at KSMoCA, tries to explain Learning Outside the Lines (LOTL) to her mentee Moe (b. 2012), a second grader at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School, over Zoom.*

ROZ CREWS: When the other people that work at KSMoCA and I were suddenly stuck at home without access to visiting the school or seeing anyone at all, we started thinking about the different ways that we've learned throughout our lives. We thought about times when we were your age and unusual learning experiences happened to us at school, and we decided to collect stories about other people's experiences. You and I are having this conversation now because Amanda, Harrell, and Lisa said, "What if you explained the project to Moe? Then Moe, with all the amazing questions that he has, can ask you questions about it." We're really curious to know what you think.

MOE: OK. Roz, how do you do the chat feature?

RC: The chat feature? We're not going to use the chat feature right now, but I'll show you at the end. OK?

M: OK.

RC: Moe, I have a question for you. Do you miss school at all?

M: I miss school a little bit. I miss seeing my friends every day, my teachers.

RC: Do you miss KSMoCA?

M: Yeah. I don't get to do photography class anymore!

RC: I know. But we get to do other stuff together still—like our drawing class! Twice a week instead of just once. What do you think learning is?

M: Learning is like giving... someone teaching you a bunch of knowledge. Someone teaching you knowledge or you teaching yourself knowledge is what I think is learning.

RC: What's the difference between somebody teaching you knowledge and you teaching yourself knowledge?

M: The difference is that you are teaching yourself and somebody, if you're in a classroom or you're in homeschool, there's always someone that's going to teach you something. It's like person-to-person contact, not self-to-self contact.

RC: I like the idea of self-to-self contact as a form of learning. Like you're attracting the kinds of information that you want and not just accepting whatever's been laid out for you as your education that you get, you're deciding for yourself. Do you want me to tell you about the KSMoCA project?

M: Yeah.



RC: It's called, *Learning Outside the Lines (LOTL)* [Moe holds up a sketch of the logo he's working on for the project in front of the computer camera], and it's a collection of artworks-as-stories written by people reflecting on experiences from when they were between five and fourteen years old. The artworks are about times in their school where something unique happened and it was really different from the rest of their school education. And it stuck out to them as important in shaping themselves and who they are now as adults. We're thinking of those moments as artworks. Does that make sense?

M: Yes, it does. Here's something that actually stuck out to me once. I haven't learned that there's a lock-in, but I do know there's a lockout, not a lock-in. That's what was really weird about it when the creepy ladies came.

RC: At school?

M: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Two creepy ladies.

RC: What did that teach you whenever it happened?

M: It taught me if someone comes to you and says, "Do you want candy?" you run the other way!!!!

RC: Well, yeah, that's a really good thing to learn. In your school, what does a normal day look like?

M: Daily, probably between cloudy and sunny.

RC: [laughing] What do you do in class?

M: I do MATTHHHHHH. I have a question—Do you like math or do you not like math?

RC: I like math.

M: I love math.

RC: Yeah, math is cool. How do you learn math?

M: You can teach yourself math and you can be taught math.

RC: What happens at school when you're learning math?

M: I'm taught math.

RC: Do you sit in a chair?

M: Yes.

RC: What else happens?

M: We sit in chairs and then we listen and some people will only hear: "Blah, plus blah, equals plus, plus, plus, plus, plus blah, blah, plus blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah."

RC: What do other people hear?

M: One plus 500 equals 501.

RC: Do you think there's any other ways to learn math besides just listening?

M: Teaching yourself math?

RC: Have you ever done any activities where you learn about math

through something like this: one phone plus one pillow equals a phone pillow [gesturing with objects from the room]?

M: Oh, yeah. It's like: suit jacket plus human equals human in suit jacket.

RC: Maybe that equation also equals fancy human or business-oriented human. It's different from just the sum of its parts. You look so dapper, Moe.

M: Human in suit jacket.

RC: This project is about pointing out different times in our lives when the thing that's normal, like listening to the teacher tell us about math is suddenly different. Something other than the usual thing happens. Does that make sense?

M: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RC: And so, like you said, something unusual that happened was that these two strangers came to the school, right?

M: Two creepy ladies.

RC: Two creepy ladies came and that taught you that you should stay away from strangers, right? Well, what do you think about doing an art project to teach you about reading?

M: Well, OK. That sounds really weird.

RC: Do you think it's possible?

M: That can be possible.

RC: That's something that happened to me when I was in second grade, my... [Moe gets really excited, pointing at himself]. Yeah, I know, you're in second grade now! My teacher decided that we were all going to make videos of ourselves reading books, but we were first going to dress up in costumes that we made out of scraps of paper and fabric and donated clothes that people's parents brought to the school. We dressed up like a character in our book. And then the teacher video recorded us reading from our story and it was like a new way to think about reading. It got me excited about reading, because I didn't have to just sit in the classroom at my desk reading the book, you know? Can you relate to that?

M: It was like, dressing as Superman. Dressing up as Superman in his clothes and all that, blah, blah, blah.

RC: It was like a new way to understand the act of reading and it was very focused on my experience in the class. Have you ever had anything like that?

M: Nope.

RC: I probably wouldn't have known when I was in second grade how impactful that moment was. We like thinking about KSMoCA as an unusual thing that happens in your day, where you get to do something different from your normal stuff

at school. Do you think that's true?

M: Yeah. Even though I've done it for about two years now.

RC: It's pretty normal to you at this point, but it's also different because every day we do something new. Like instead of photography, sometimes we dance in the copy-machine room.

M: The papery copier roomy.

RC: Do you get to do that as part of regular school?

M: No. No!

RC: Our mentor hour is a new opportunity each week. And it's fun. And it's mostly about what you want to spend your time doing, right?

M: Yeah. Wait, I have a good idea. Do you want to do dance class after this?

RC: We could do a little bit of dance class after this.

What do you think about me saying that the time when I was in second grade doing a class assignment is an art project. I'm thinking about that experience now, looking back, and I'm capturing that moment with my brain. I think that is a bit like capturing a moment with a camera. I'm pointing to something the way you pointed at Mr. Monty with your camera to take a photo of him to remember that hilarious face he was making in

the hallway when he was being silly. I'm trying to remember a moment and then saying, "That's an art project." What do you think about that?

M: I like it.

RC: You do? What do you like about it?

M: I like that it's very cool.

RC: Do you like learning stories about people's lives?

M: Yes.

RC: Do you think that learning is important?

M: Yes. Yes. Yessss. Yess. Yess. Yes!

RC: Why?

M: Because if you don't learn, you'll become very, very, very, very not smart.

RC: You think so? What are some different ways you can learn stuff? You've identified that you can learn from a teacher or you can learn by yourself...

M: And you can learn from your parents or an app.

RC: What else?

M: God. Time.

RC: Time. How can you learn from time?

M: Time. You can think about it for a long time. Time actually

helps you learn, because it gives you a long time. A long time.

RC: One of the ways I learn stuff is through trying to do the thing I want to learn about. If I want to learn how to bake a blueberry pie, then I'll just try to bake a blueberry pie. Do you ever do that?

M: No.

RC: How'd you learn to ride a bike?

M: Tried and tried and tried and tried and tried and tried and tried. A few days ago, I actually hurt myself on this finger, this finger, my elbow and my knee, this knee.

RC: Really? Oh, no. Did you fall off your bike? I'm sorry Moe.

M: But at least that one is healed on the side, sort of healing right now.

R: That's really good. I've fallen off my bike a lot, too. During the pandemic, are you getting more opportunities to learn stuff in different ways than you normally do?

M: Yup.

RC: What's an example?

M: ARTTTT!



# Art + Social Practice Archive

Lo Moran, Marti Clemmons, and Rebecca Copper

The Art + Social Practice Archive was founded in 2018 by Shoshana Gugenheim Kedem, Roshani Thakore, Harrell Fletcher, and me, with the help of Cristine Paschild, the Head of Special Collections & University Archives. The archive was founded in honor of the PSU Art + Social Practice MFA program's ten-year anniversary. During the 2019–20 school year we decided to keep developing the project further. I reconnected with Marti Clemmons, the archive's primary archivist, and Rebecca Copper has joined as an additional collaborator on the project. Student interns Eniko Banyasz, Bri Graw, Jason Le, Emily Pappas, and E French have worked with different aspects of the archive, including collections, digital archiving, and social media.

Looking back at the original writing about our archive, we started with the intention to “expand to include socially engaged artists and projects from all over the world.” This made sense as a road map forward; if we are going to collect ephemera from artists and projects all over the world we should also make the archive accessible from anywhere in the world as a resource. That being said, before the covid-19 pandemic hit, we were working toward launching the digital portion of the archive. Now, with our remote world and Assembly happening online for the first time this year, establishing the digital archive feels more relevant and important than ever.

—Lo Moran

*The conversation that follows between Marti Clemmons, Rebecca Copper and Lo Moran is the first published document discussing the Art + Social Practice Archive as we are in the process of establishing it as a project in itself, and touches on ways of thinking about the canon of social practice, nontraditional approaches to archiving, and archives-as-artworks. We've been working on growing an archive that tells stories of socially engaged artwork, while also organizing programming connected to the archive and imagining new ways for supporting and cultivating public, artistic and academic research in socially engaged art, and this conversation captures our emerging visions.*

MARTI CLEMMONS: Do you want to start, maybe not with the archive questions, but maybe with social practice?

REBECCA COPPER: Yeah, I think that's great. What is art and social practice?

MC: Yeah, exactly.

RC: I think it's hard to define art and social practice, because it's not a specific medium where you can say, “I paint landscapes, or I do photography, or fashion photography.” It's not necessarily a medium, it's a contemporary art practice that is a way of creating art rather than what material you're using. And there's so many different ways that social practice is used. So I feel it's really hard to say, “this is what art and social practice is.”

LO MORAN: That's one thing I like about social practice—it's this emerging field that people are still forming the discourse around. What is and isn't social practice is something that's still being discussed and there are a huge range of practices. It's a big decentralized umbrella that

people are working under, which I find exciting.

MC: I completely agree. I have a hard time when people ask what I'm working on and I attempt to describe what Art + Social Practice is.

LM: How do you describe it to people?

MC: It's always different. To me, it's artists creating art for social change. I don't know if that's necessarily true, but a lot of the art that I see in the archive is just so inspiring. It's hard because I follow a structure within a lot of the other different collections in the archive. This one's like this cloud that's floating and ideas come and go within it when I try to explain it to people. I was hoping that you both could give me a definition.

RC: Yeah, I feel like the social change aspect or the activist aspect of socially engaged art is a big component. But, I don't think it's always an element. I don't think that all socially engaged artists consider themselves activists. One thing that is happening now, is defining what isn't

socially engaged. For example, a friend of mine does a lot of work with questioning the relationships of humans to animals. They work with farm animals, cows, horses, etc. They consider themselves socially engaged artists while some people disagree. That's a conversation that I think is interesting, that's happening right now where people have very different opinions on what can be included.

LM: I wonder about the inherent political nature of working in collaboration with people to make art that directly engages with systems of power. With some of the projects, even if they're not activism, the fact of bringing people together feels like a kind of activism. I think about what social change looks like in different fields. Social practice also holds a lot of institutional critique: thinking about what the art world looks like or the larger world, and proposing ways for how we would want to change it with different projects that create moments we want to see rather than what we regularly experience. Even if a person is doing a project about cooking, that can feel like social change to me in a variety of contexts.

RC: Then there's the ethical piece, too. If you're a social practice artist, you have to think about ethics because you are dealing with people, right? Or, if you feel like that's something you are responsible for when interacting with people, then there's a political stance that's taken.

MC: How do you define yourselves? Do you just call yourselves artists? Or is there a little tag to it, like a "social practice artist"?

LM: I realized in my bio, I don't use the words "social practice", but I say "interdisciplinary" and "socially engaged art." I do say it when describing my work to people along with explanatory phrases like "community-based", or "I make art with people." I see a lot of the terms as interchangeable or sometimes different for each project. I could do a social practice project that's not necessarily community-based.

RC: I still feel uncomfortable with calling myself an artist, to be quite honest. [Laughter]

LM: I was there, my first year in the MFA program. I was so fascinated with that, and now I feel like an artist. [Laughter]

MC: [Laughter] Yay, congratulations! I feel the same way, I still have a hard time calling myself an archivist. I mean, there are reasons for that. One is that I don't have my masters. I've been in the field for nine years, I have the experience. I have lots of experience, but I still have a hard time defining myself as an archivist.

RC: That's interesting though, like you were saying that you don't have a master's degree, this fact that these institutions give this kind of accreditation or validation. Should that really matter? So, I don't feel comfortable

calling myself an artist, and I'm now in this master's program, will I feel differently after I graduate? Who knows. But, is that necessary?

LM: No, I don't think so. It's interesting to think about how we let institutions define those kinds of things for us. I see the Art + Social Practice program as a coming together point for all different communities of people. People discuss the institutionalization of social practice; there are museum exhibitions, MFA programs focused on it, conferences, and there are archives forming! So what does that mean? It's a varied field where some people come from DIY backgrounds, some of the roots are in activism, some come from more institutional/academic and conceptual art roots. But if I think, "do I wish there were more art education programs where people were coming together and doing the kind of work that we're doing in our MFA program?" I would want more of those things to be happening.

RC: I can understand wanting social practice to be a more widespread offering in different academic programs. But then, at the same time, in that ideal setting where Art + Social Practice educational MFA programs or even undergrad programs are expansive, I would imagine that academic settings would be more accessible than what they are.

LM: I just met with a first-year student, I was like, "what kind of

art are you interested in making? And they said, "social practice". They were the first first-year student that has said that to me! In general, Portland has a culture for community-based art and social practice, and the undergrad students seem interested. I think especially now as we're trying to find ways to stay connected remotely, strategies of socially engaged art are incredibly relevant.

MC: I think one of those questions can tie into this, talking about academic versus nonacademic and how we view ourselves, is the question about unconventional archiving. That's a whole thing right now, questioning the idea of who's an archivist. If you call yourself an archivist, how do you define that? I think we see that a lot lately with community archives.

LM: Can you say more about that?

MC: As you said, with the artists, there are non-academic viewpoints, nontraditional viewpoints about the archive. Either that or people are very anti-institutional about having their archives in an institution, so they create their own archives for more control. And, also defining their own ways of access instead of having to deal with other people's restrictions, just like preserving their own records for their community.

LM: Do you come upon people that don't want to put their stuff in a public archive?



MC: Yeah, it's common—but also what is common is people just don't feel welcome in certain archives. That's a very broad way of saying it. But you know, having to show your ID when you go into certain archives, having to sign a form. It just seems a little too much for a lot of people, a lot of marginalized communities.

RC: To jump off of what you're saying, Cassie Patterson from the Ohio State University Folklore Archive was mentioning almost the exact same thing that you are talking about. Because it's folklore that is coming from the Appalachian region, Cassie was explaining how the archive focuses on the Appalachian community as their audience. And, even though it's housed within OSU, it has different access points. There is an access point within what she called the "forest," in the town nearby in the Appalachian region where she lives, and the OSU space is just kind of like the reserve or the framework, but it's being accessed outside of the university. The audience isn't the university students or people within academic spaces. It's actually the people living in rural Appalachia. So I mean, just hitting on what you're saying, Marti. It connects. Definitely.

MC: That's beautiful. I love that.

LM: That's really cool. I'm wondering about who our archive is for. It's still at the beginning stages, but that's a good way to think about it. Who is it for, who

can we invite in, and who do we want it to be accessible to?

MC: Yeah, I think those are really important questions.

LM: Is it for community members who participated in the projects? Is it for artists? Is it for academic researchers? How can it be for all different groups of people?

RC: One way to think about the audience is the language that's being used. So, as we're here talking about what social practice is or socially engaged art is, what does this mean to someone who is actually participating in a collaborative project? A lot of times I feel like community members are the ones participating, but then there's this language that's developed for art world audiences at the same time.

LM: I feel like this is a really good thing to think about at this stage of developing things—how can we invite different people in? What does that look like at the archive, Marti?

MC: Yeah, the whole community aspect is something that is missing from the Art + Social Practice Archive. Like the response, the reaction of the participation, so I don't know how that could be included or if that's even a question to have an answer.

LM: Oh, like, how is the community present or connected to the archives?

MC: Also, the art items that we have in the archive, because the audience and the community is such a huge factor of those pieces. But that's not actually the side of it that's collected in the archive.

LM: Yeah, just the documentation.

RC: And normally the documentation is what is presented to this art audience. But we don't actually have the reception, how the participants received the projects. Is that what you're saying?

MC: Yeah, totally.

LM: That's interesting to think about for future projects.

MC: I don't know if there's an answer because it is an art based archive. It's just that this place, this thing happened, and it was recent. It's a current thing. And people had a response to it.

RC: I wonder, though, and this may be totally unrealistic, but let's say there was an art project that involved community members and that the archive listed all of the names of those community members. Then, further down the line, a grandchild of said community member knows that their grandparent was in this art project. They're like, "Let me look up my grandfather, John Doe," or whoever. Then they could access it in that way. Is that a possibility? Then that also goes to crediting. We need to ensure

that everybody is included, given credited or named.

LM: It's interesting to think about how archives are kind of for the future. We're saying right now that this stuff is really important to keep, to collect. It's in anticipation of people wanting to access it.

MC: It's totally out there. I think about a black-and-white photograph that I find and there's no name or date or anything. It's just like, "Come on, just a name or date!" Someone could have just written something down on that photograph. I think creating this archive, you have to think a lot about the future and what that looks like, not only the department, but, you know, as Becca said, somebody's grandchild in the future. I think that'd be really cool.

LM: Has that ever happened to you where someone is coming to the archives in that way?

MC: Yeah. All the time. It's a lot of ancestry but like in terms of ancestry and you know, "oh, I want to look up the house that I used to live in," we direct that to the Portland City Archives. That's more their thing. Usually our collections are neighborhood community based, but there's also like a lot of connections to Portland State alumni and a lot of the grandparent questions are, "my grandfather was a music professor in 1965 or something..." So, it's a lot of that.

LM: Cool.

RC: I was thinking about when you were mentioning how it's kind of weird to think about the archive existing in the future and people retroactively looking back. I wonder, what are your thoughts on this idea of an archive as a living thing?

MC: Yeah, no, completely. When you think of an archive, the number one answer is dust, damp, something hidden away. But no, it's absolutely living. There are always records in the collection where we are asking, "how are they relating to each other?" And then someone comes into the archive and asks a question that brings them to life in a different way every time.

LM: These things are waiting for people to bring them to life in the present. I had a similar question, what does an active archive look like? The field of Art + Social Practice, like growing and continuing, it's like we have to keep up with that in some way, the living archive part of it.

MC: Yeah, I'm questioning constantly because the social practice archive is something that's completely different from what we have in our archives. It's one accession or two accessions of records that come in, as opposed to the social practice archive where it's consistently moving and generating stuff.

LM: Is this the only archive that works like this in the collection?

MC: In terms of our archive? It's the only collection like it.

LM: What do we hope people get from accessing the Art + Social Practice archive?

RC: I think each audience will have different expectations of what they want to get out of it.

MC: Yeah, it depends on who it is. I know a lot of the people that are accessing it right now are professors or faculty. Zeph Fishlyn, they came in quite often last semester. Students from classes came in a few times. There were a few weeks where it was the most used collection in the archive.

LM: That's the exciting mystery of still being at the beginning of this project—how will people use it? I have imaginations of what it would look like to have an artist-in-residence work with the archive and create a project. I'm thinking about ways of inviting different people to use it. Even with these student interns, just talking to them and hearing their perspective on it. There aren't that many opportunities for folks to work on an art archive. It made me realize how much of a learning tool or an access point it could be.

RC: Yeah, even for myself. When you think of an archive, an archive can sound very prestigious and almost intimidating, but having the conversations with you, Lo and Marti, when I first said, "Hey, this is something I'm interested in, can I be a part of

it?" You both said, "Yeah, come on!" It felt accessible and inviting.

LM: I want that to carry through in all parts of the project. How to break down that institutional barrier that people might feel. I think about truly public archiving and community archiving. I'm still thinking about how that all can fit into this. I was excited to create student internship opportunities to invite more people into the project as a learning experience and to help shape it.

MC: That's something we're always consistently trying to do is to get people's perspectives of our archives to change. It's definitely like, "I don't know if I feel like I belong there, I have to have my ID, there's a dress code, etc." All these weird things we've heard from students of all ages. Trying to change that I think is really important. The archives are for you, it's for the general public, it's for students, and trying to get that across has always been our main goal.

LM: That's such a parallel with social practice and trying to break down the barriers that people have to experiencing art, or going to an art museum or a gallery. It's a similar barrier where people don't feel welcome or don't feel like it's for them or that conceptual art can be intimidating. That's a cool parallel actually.

MC: It is. I like thinking about that.

LM: I just had an idea about different archives that people have in their homes. It'd be great to do a project where you document people's various archives. Maybe they don't want their archive to be in an institution, but there could be some sort of reference sheet where you could contact this person to go see their archive if you wanted.

RC: That sounds like a great idea.

MC: Love that. I like the idea of following a map around.

LM: A walking tour of Portland's secret archive.

MC: Oh my gosh, there's something here, run with it! Run!

LM: This can be a whole section of our archive. A section for archive-related, socially engaged art projects. That's a dream I have.

RC: I think that brings up a good point about archiving as an artistic practice. I know, Marti, we were talking about what we label ourselves as, whether it's an archivist or an artist. What if you call yourself an artist rather than an archivist or an archiving artist or something like that? What do you think about archiving as an art form?

MC: That's something I'm really having a hard time conceptualizing. You know, when you think of the archiving degree, the MLIS, it's a Master Library Information Sciences, science is attached to it. So what else could it be besides



science? But I think working with the Art + Social Practice Archive has really twisted my set-in-stone archiving brain and how I approach things; how I approach different collections, now. It's given me different ways of thinking about collections and the archive process. So I think, in terms of that, it is an artistic practice.

LM: In what way has it made you think differently, or what's an example?

MC: Well, the main thing really is just how art has come in. That's something that's completely new. The collection itself is constantly changing, because new items are coming in. It's how we want to format the archive, is it by an artist? Is that by theme? Is it by title? It's those types of questions. Because as new items come in, and some of those items belong to a certain artist that's already in the archive, it's thinking about things differently as opposed to just, "here's a collection: what's in it, what's the provenance and in the original order, and how do they relate to each other and go from there." It's made me rethink the

standards of archiving. Which is great because I'm totally like, "if there's a riot on the street, I'm out there." It's kind of more along the lines of how I think already. It's relatable to me.

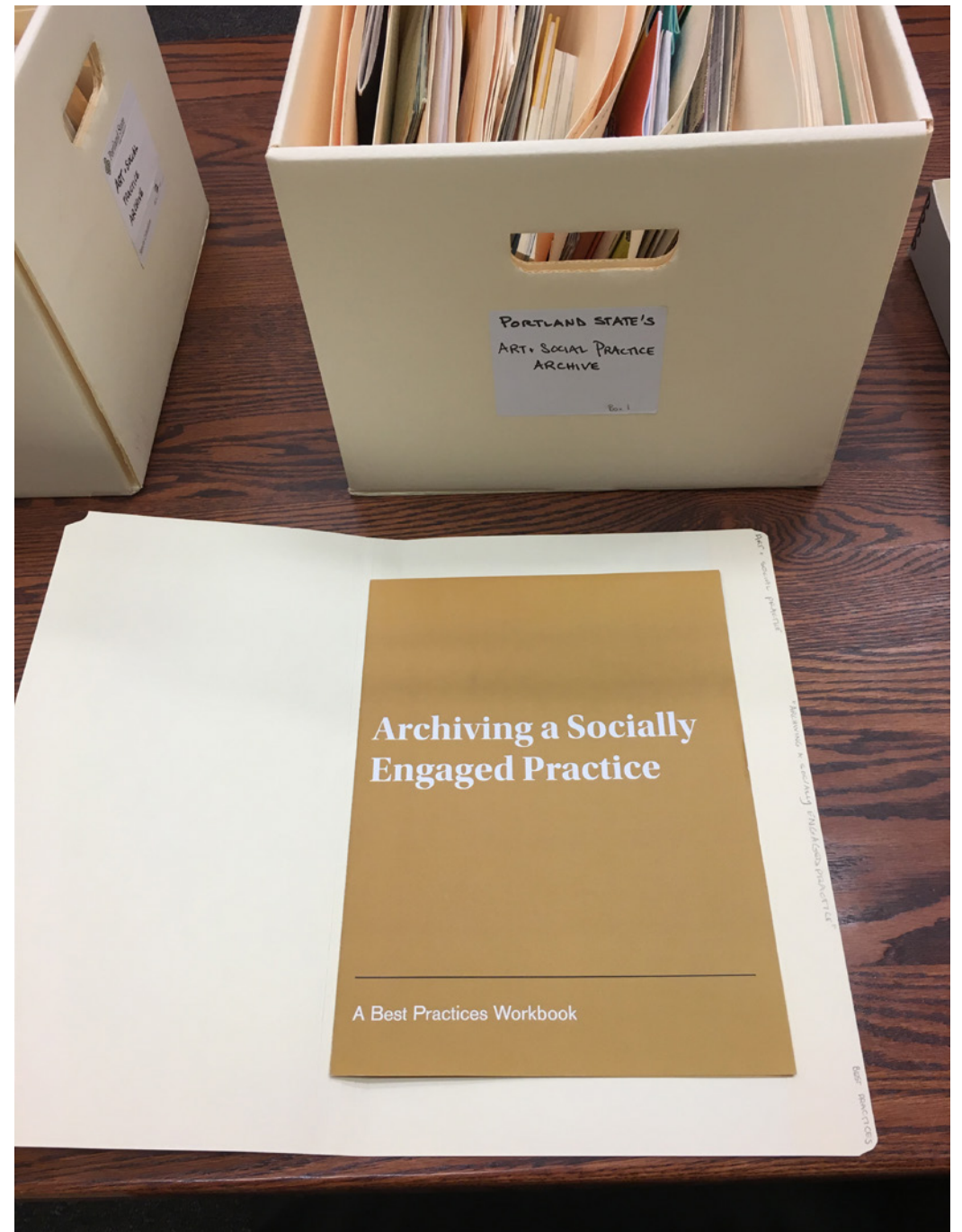
LM: It's been cool to work with you on this, it's nice to have that affinity. I sensed that you were open. Thanks for being open. [Laughter]

MC: You're welcome. Thank you for being accepting [Laughter]. I think because [art and social practice] is such a new practice, that's something to think about. I guess we'll witness in the future how many Art + Social Practice archives in a university format exist and will pop up in the future?

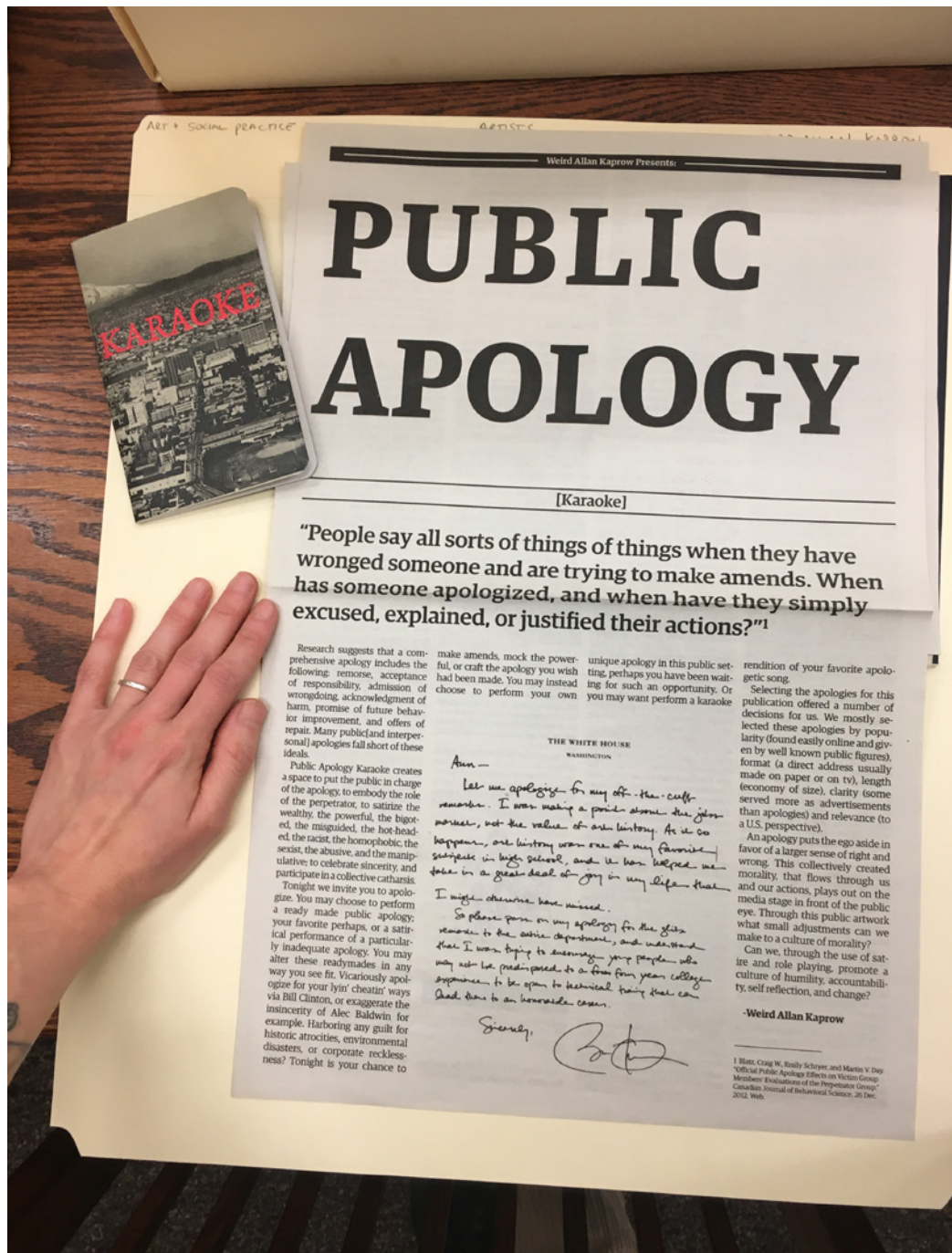
LM: I want ours to be the best one! [Laughter]

MC: Don't we all? [Laughter]

LM: No, they can all connect to each other and then it'll be a great resource for everyone. It's not a competition. It's the opposite. Really, it's wanting to share everything with everyone.



*Archiving a Socially Engaged Practice: A Best Practices Workbook* that was created by Lexa Walsh and is in the Art + Social Practice Archive.



Public Apology by the artist group  
Weird Allan Kaprow in the archive files.

## Art + Social Practice Archive

# Digital Launch

The Art + Social Practice Archive is now hosted on PDXScholar through the Portland State University Library Special Collections and University Archives!

View the archive:  
[pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/archives](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/archives)

Our acquisitions are ongoing and you can submit digital materials to the archive through this link:  
[tinyurl.com/asparchive-submit](https://tinyurl.com/asparchive-submit)

Explore our collection so far:  
[tinyurl.com/asparchive-drive](https://tinyurl.com/asparchive-drive)

We look forward to growing an archive that can be accessed by everyone everywhere!

Email us with any questions at:  
[artandsocialpractice@gmail.com](mailto:artandsocialpractice@gmail.com)



# Biographies

**Jeff Adams** is a carpenter by trade, a tinkerer by nature, and a natural builder at heart. If he's not working on his own projects at home, you'll find him at the Carlisle Tool Library working in the shop.

**Mary Adams** owns and operates Waymaker Company, an accounting and real estate management firm in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

**Liv Adler** (Collaborator) is a native New Yorker, amateur boxer, and renowned trainer with over ten years of competitive boxing experience. They have trained and worked at various gyms throughout the city, including Church Street, Gleason's, and Everybody Fights. In addition to serving as the lead instructor for weekly Trans Boxing classes, Adler provides sliding scale private training for a number of trans/gnc/nb adults and youth, in order to further increase accessibility of high level training and competition.

**Jennifer Bayne-Lemma** is an instructor of philosophy at Walla Walla Community College. She earned her MA in philosophy from All Hallows College in Dublin, Ireland, where she wrote her thesis: "Language Acquisition, Ethical Development and Motherhood: Possibilities and Restrictions for A Productive Dialogue." Bayne-Lemma is a current Ph.D. candidate at Staffordshire University in Stafford, England. She has also taught at the Washington State Penitentiary and Whitman College and is an active member of the Walla Walla Immigrant Rights Coalition.

**Carrie Brownstein** is a writer, director, and musician. She lives in Portland, Oregon.

**Spencer Byrne-Seres** is an artist and culture worker based in Portland, Oregon. Byrne-Seres is the lead artist for Columbia River Creative Initiatives, an ongoing series of projects based within a minimum security men's prison in Northeast Portland. Byrne-Seres also works at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, where he serves as the exhibitions director, supporting the design and production of large-scale installations, exhibitions, and curates the Food Program for PICA's annual Time Based Art Festival.

**Dayna Chandradas** (a Spanish name) is excited to learn and to draw stuff (draws like an angel).

**Karmyn Chandradas** (a Spanish name) (goes by KK) is excited to draw.

**Marti Clemmons** is an archives technician at Portland State's Special Collections and University Archives. She processes collections, creates finding aids, and assists patrons and students with their research process. She also curates exhibits for the library, most recently curating *A Defined Presence: 50 Years of Black Studies at Portland State*. Previously, Clemmons worked as the archivist at Portland Community Radio Station KBOO-FM, where she managed and preserved over 7,000 items of historic audio, and assisted in curating *50 Years of KBOO* at the Oregon Historical Society. She also worked

as personal archivist to experimental and documentary filmmaker Julie Perini. Clemmons is deeply interested in highlighting queer lives within archives and, in 2019, led her first Queer Walking Tour around Old Town/Downtown Portland. Using photographs, advertisements, and personal ads from numerous local archives and collections, she focused on establishments and gathering places that fostered the queer community of Portland in the twentieth century.

**Rebecca Copper** (b. 1989, pronouns: she/her) often reflects on lived experiences through projects that range from socially engaged art to modes of individual creation through film photography and video. Copper is interested in the different ways of knowing, experiential knowledge, and how people are influenced in mediated ways. She is motivated by phenomenology, ontology, and theories around collective consciousness. Copper is currently an MFA candidate through Portland State University's Contemporary Art Practice, Art + Social Practice Program and recently finished a fellowship with the Columbus Printed Arts Center in Ohio. She is currently serving as a research assistant for the Art + Social Practice Archive which is housed within PSU's special collections.

**Adrian** (b. 2010, pronouns: he/him) is a nine-year-old living in Ohio with his mother, artist Rebecca Copper. Adrian enjoys playing the video game *Zelda*, riding his bike, hunting for morels, and reading in his hammock. Adrian has an affinity for collecting things in small containers and often

runs through the small spot of woods in his backyard, and his favorite color is purple. Adrian has received awards such as getting first place in the derby race through the local scouts group in second grade and recently received second place in the film category of a local community art competition.

**Roz Crews** is an artist who makes work about education, friendship, and community formation. She teaches research and social practice classes at Portland State University, and during covid-19 quarantine, she's teaching an intergenerational drawing class on Zoom. She's a program manager at the King School Museum of Contemporary Art, a museum inside a functioning K to fifth grade public school, where she organizes a public lecture series, edits publications, and organizes exhibitions with the Student Curatorial Committee made up of fourth and fifth graders.

**Hillary Donnell** was born in Torino, Italy, and raised on the Southern Gulf Coast. Donnell has spent ten years engaging at the intersections of critical pedagogy, trauma-informed care, and youth work. Their teaching and facilitation practice uses nontraditional teaching methods to engage perspectives on embodiment, community building, and participatory governance. Donnell began working with Trans Boxing shortly after moving to New York in 2017. Donnell holds an MA in public policy from the CUNY Graduate Center. Donnell holds weekly boxing classes at the Door, a youth drop-in center in Lower Manhattan.

**Emma Duehr** (b. 1995) is a project-based artist, educator, and curator living and working in Portland, Oregon. Her work is invested in social engagement, storytelling, and material specificity. Her art practice facilitates discussions about domesticity, intimacy, and empowerment through gardening, craft, and mail. Using the Web, educational settings, and urban environments, her work has attained international participation across the UK, Africa, Canada, Italy, Spain, and the United States. She is the founder and curator at the Portland Conservatory, artist mentor at KSMoCA, a part-time faculty member within Portland State University's School of Art and Design, and the founder and creator of Talking Tushies. She is a MFA Candidate in the Art + Social Practice Program at Portland State University. View her work at [emmaduehr.com](http://emmaduehr.com).

**Nae Dumouchelle** is based in San Luis Obispo, California.

**Olivia Rose Edwards-El** is excited to draw.

**Gracie Allure Edwards-El** is excited to draw.

**Israel Ramone Idongesit Elijah** is interested in clay and drawing.

**Zeph Fishlyn** (pronouns they/them) is a multidisciplinary visual artist dedicated to personal and collective storytelling as nonlinear tools for reinventing our world. Fishlyn's participatory projects, drawings, objects, and installations nurture alternative narratives by questioning, dreaming, distorting, celebrating, and demanding. Their most recent work

explores absurdity, embodiment, intimacy, and playfulness as sources of resilience and creative subterfuge. Fishlyn is also a serial collaborator with grassroots groups focused on social and economic justice and LGBTQ liberation.

**Harrell Fletcher** is an artist and educator. He is the founder and director of the Portland State University MFA in Art + Social Practice.

**Mary Olin Geiger (Mo)** makes collaborative artworks, theater, performance, and the materials that live within those worlds and at their intersections. She is an MFA candidate in Portland State University's Art + Social Practice Program. For more information, visit [mogeiger.com](http://mogeiger.com).

**Guillermo** is a close reader of books, people, and place. He is an organizer with the Walla Walla Immigrant Rights Coalition and the only member to date who has served on every committee. Guillermo is also a beloved uncle, a cook, a salsa dancer, and a soccer player. He lives in Walla Walla, Washington.

**Nola Hanson** (b. 1991) is an artist based in Brooklyn, New York. Their practice includes independent work as well as collaborative socially engaged projects. Hanson is the founder of Trans Boxing, an art project in the form of a boxing club that centers trans and gender variant participants. They are an MFA candidate in the Art + Social Practice program at Portland State University, and the 2020 Artist-in-Residence at More Art, an NYC nonprofit organization that supports public art projects.

**Mekhi Alan Kent-Thomas** is excited to eat the cookies.

**Addee Kim** is a student, farmer, and filmmaker from New York. They are currently living in San Diego.

**Tia Kramer** ([tiakramer.com](http://tiakramer.com)) is a social choreographer, site-specific performance artist, and educator interested in everyday gestures of human connection. Through her projects she creates experiences that interrupt the ordinary and engage participants in acts of collective imagination. Kramer's work has been supported by the Seattle Art Museum OSP Residency, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Henry Art Gallery, 4Culture, Artist Trust, and the Eichholz Foundation but her biggest accomplishment to date is when her five-year-old son said "I'm already an artist, just like my mama." Kramer lives in Walla Walla, Washington, a vibrant community nestled among expansive agricultural fields and the Blue Mountains.

**Shelbie Loomis** (b. 1992) is a multidisciplinary artist and self-proclaimed economist who explores issues of class, labor/housing/food rights and critiquing economic systems of indentured servitude. She explores these issues through the use of storytelling, archiving, drawing, and social organizing. Loomis's socially engaged projects explore grassroots movements of social exchange, nomadic lifestyles through RVing, temporary housing, and self-sustainability through the growth of food. Loomis sits on the Executive Board of Portland State University's Graduate Employees Union and works with Oregon American

Federation of Teachers and American Association of University Professors. She is based in Portland, Oregon.

**Kay Martinez**, MA (pronouns: they/them/theirs) is an Afro-Latinx gender-non conformer. Martinez has over a decade of professional experience directing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in universities and most recently as a consultant partnering with leading tech, corporate, and nonprofit clients. As a writer, they have published research and op-eds on the political climate for Queer Trans BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) in the United States at the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality. They have a MA in higher education from Boston College. They are currently the associate director, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion & Adjunct Faculty at Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professions.

**Justin Maxon** (b. 1983) is an arts educator, award-winning visual storyteller, journalist, and aspiring social practice artist. His work has been supported by the Magnum Foundation, the Alexia Foundation for World Peace, the Aaron Siskind Foundation, the National Geographic Society, Visura, and the Humboldt Area Foundation.

**Brenda Mitchell** is an educator, gardener, and family member from Soix City, Iowa. She is now living in Westwood, Iowa.

**Lucas Mitchell** is a writer, theatrical performer, and jazz enthusiast based in Portland, Oregon.



**Zemaj-Dwayne-Mitchell-Johnson** (Mr. Mitchell or Mr. Johnson) is looking forward to being a movie director and helping create the movie.

**Moe...** In my life I have seen a bunch of hating and violence and punching, and I don't think that's very pleasing to people. I've seen that happen to young children getting bullied, like myself—I was bullied, so I want people to know that just because of your gender or skin color, it doesn't mean you're different, or not the same, or you can't play with them just because of those things. That isn't fair. Why not let other people play with you just because they're white or black or a boy or a girl or both? I'm from Portland, Oregon, and that's where I grew up. I have a new dad who makes music, and he's one of my favorite people in my life. My mom is an artist who volunteers with KSMoCA here at Dr. MLK Jr. School.

**Lo Moran** creates interdisciplinary projects that are often participatory, collaborative, and coauthored. They aim to experiment with and question the systems we are all embedded in by organizing situations of connection, openness and nonhierarchical learning. Moran desires to develop sites for accessibility, and reimagined ways of being together. A graduate of the Art + Social Practice program at Portland State University, they spent 2018–19 as Artist in Residence at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, where they researched concepts of community. Moran is also a member of the collective Public Annex, and performs experimental music as soft fantasy. They take karaoke seriously and try their best to embrace

fluidity and chaos. Moran has recently presented work at Institut für Alles Mögliche (Berlin Germany), Fusion Festival (Lärz Germany), as part of the Arlene Schnitzer Visual Art Prize exhibition at Portland State University (Portland, OR), the Columbia Center for the Arts (Hood River, OR), King School Museum of Contemporary Art (Portland, OR), Portland Art Museum (Portland, OR), a series of neighborhood block parties (Portland, OR), Greensboro Project Space (Greensboro, NC), Art in Odd Places (New York, NY), Disjecta (Portland, OR), Port City Gallery (Portland, OR), and the El Paso Museum of Art (El Paso, TX).

**A Salty Xi Jie Ng** (saltythunder.net) is an artist from Singapore living between the tropics and the United States.

**zariah Nsikak** Abasi Nathaniel Elijah (Leonardo aka Brave Lion) is excited to draw and learn.

**Eric John Olson** (ericolson.xyz) is an artist, organizer, and technologist. His work explores systems of power through socially engaged art practices. Recent work examines cooperative responses to uncertain futures.

**Brianna (Bri) Ortega** (b. 1993) is an artist based on the Pacific Northwest rainforest coast. Through embedding herself in surf culture, she uses art as a tool to explore the relationship between identity and place through questioning power in social constructs and physical spaces. Her work is multidisciplinary, spanning across performance, publishing, organizing, video and facilitation. She is a candidate in the MFA Art + Social

Practice program at PSU. She is the Founder and director of *Sea Together Magazine*, a global project exploring women's surfing. She has shown and facilitated her work in Italy, Portland, SDAI (San Diego Art Institute) in San Diego, CBAA in Cannon Beach, and with Aoka Surf Studio in New Zealand, among other places. See more at [briandthesea.com](http://briandthesea.com).

**Carlos Reynoso** He, Him, His (b. 1984) is a second year in the Art + Social Practice MFA Program at Portland State University. Reynoso uses social media platforms like Instagram as introduction devices and tools in collecting stories and research for his practice, which consists of collected stories from individuals who are followers of Instagram handles set up specifically to promote various projects. Stories collected by Reynoso focus on cultural preservation of queerness, brownness, and belonging. He also creates installations using objects that are symbolic to his intersectional identity as a Mexican immigrant and queer individual. *With Mis Tacones* (2016–present) a food-based socially engaged project Reynoso uses kitsch and symbolic objects he has collected to represent fragments of stories relating to his family home and urban settings from Mexico and Los Angeles. Reynoso is also involved in advocacy work with sexual health, specifically with queer brown communities. These experiences inspired *Proyecto Bathhouse* (2018–present) a Instagram-based community storytelling project that archives experiences and stories of bathhouses and commercial sex venues on the West Coast. As the project evolves Reynoso hopes to

use add film and publications to showcase the content collected by participants.

**Sabina Rogers** is a writer, baker, and performer based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her work has been supported by Printed Matter Inc., the Michael Chekhov Association, and the American Comparative Literature Association. She holds a BA in critical race studies from Whitman College and spends a lot of time figuring out what her neighbors are eating for dinner.

**Jordan Rosenblum** is an artist, designer, and educator based in Portland, Oregon. His projects engage land use, climate change, and agriculture, human relationships to time, and how structures of power function through design. Rosenblum's socially engaged work includes exhibitions, publications, and curriculum. He teaches at Portland State University, and codirects the RECESS! Design Studio (in affiliation with the King School Museum of Contemporary Art), an artist project that explores design with elementary school students.

**Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr.** is black, nonbinary, and practices primarily in America. The Artist collaborates with people to make artwork for the people.

**Kimberly Sutherland** is a designer, artist, and educator. Her projects range from client-based design work to an art practice exploring the interconnections between humans and nature by examining our relationships to place. She teaches design and typography at Portland State University and is interested in decolonizing design practices. Sutherland is currently the design director of the King School Museum of Contemporary Art in Portland, Oregon and has worked at the *New York Times Magazine*, Nike, Apple, and Project Projects with clients ranging from the Museum of Modern Art, Artists Space, and Gagosian Gallery. Her work has been shown in group exhibitions at Disjecta Contemporary Art Center in Portland, Oregon, the Institut für Alles Mögliche in Berlin, Germany, and Greensboro Project Space in Greensboro, North Carolina. She holds an MFA in Art + Social Practice from Portland State University and a bachelor of design from Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Raised among the Canadian Cascades, Sutherland currently lives and works in Portland, Oregon.

**Roshani Thakore** uses art to broaden an understanding of place, uncover histories, elevate voices, and expand a sense of belonging, all with the hope of shifting power. Since 2019 she has been the Artist-in-Residence at the Asian Pacific Network of Oregon, a statewide, grassroots organization, uniting Asians and Pacific Islanders to achieve social justice. Prior to this residency, she received funding from the Division Midway Alliance Creative Placemaking Projects Grant with her project 82nd + Beyond: A

Living Archive. She is a 2020 graduate of the Art + Social Practice MFA program. More information about her work is at roshanithakore.com

**Paige Thomas** received her master of arts in teaching from the University of Portland in 2010. She has spent the last five years of her career teaching and learning at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School in northeast Portland. This year she is leading a cohort of teachers on the school's CARE Team. This team focuses on teachers examining their practice through a racial lens in the hopes of interrupting the achievement gap present for students of color in Portland Public Schools. It also consists of planning and teaching units through a social justice framework—this year teachers are examining themes of identity, diversity, justice, and action.

**David Wilson** is an artist based in Oakland, California, creating observational drawings in the landscape and organizing things. Currently he is involved as a guest artist at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Send something to: BAMPFA Art Lab 2120 Oxford Street, Berkeley, CA 94720 and you will start to receive print projects in the mail.

**Illia Yakovenko** is a precarious cultural worker, a self-proclaimed artist, curator, poet, and spectator, an unrecognized cultural ambassador, and a failed individual. Yakovenko is an MFA student in Art + Social Practice at Portland State University who came to study in the United States from Kyiv, Ukraine, and is currently sheltering in a communal house in southeast Portland.



# Portland State University

## MFA in Art + Social Practice

PSU's Art + Social Practice MFA is a three-year, flexible residency program that combines individual research, group work, and experiential learning. The program's blend of critical and professional practice, progressive pedagogy, collaborative social engagement, and transdisciplinary exploration produces an immersive educational environment.

The ninety credit, three-year course encourages students to shape the direction of their own education and continually develop the program as a whole. Students connect their art practice to research in the field of social practice through electives and community partnerships, promoting cross-disciplinary engagement. Graduating students each produce a public graduate project, an in-depth written text exploring a relevant connection to their practice, and a public artist lecture that surveys their work in the program.

The program accepts approximately five students annually. The deadline for applying is January. Interested persons are encouraged to make arrangements to visit the program.

Assembly 2020

Organized by the Portland State University  
Art + Social Practice MFA Program

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