

**5 Minutes  
2022-2023**

**5** Minutes collects conversations between College of Design graduate students and the visiting artists and art professionals speaking in the University of Oregon's Visiting Artist Lecture series. During the Visiting Artists Lectures, artists, curators, educators, and designers offer insight into their background and their ongoing practices.

As an informal interview publication, 5 Minutes paves the way for a more personal engagement between the visiting artists and the University of Oregon community. Taking place in and around the College of Design, the

**Editor's**



interviews, while structurally flexible, often approach the complex issues around creative processes and offer a meaningful look into the voices of the interviewer and interviewee.

Started in 2014 by Christopher Michlig and Wendy Heldmann, this iteration will be the publication's 9th issue. Through their steadfast support and the input of the wider University of Oregon community, we have been able to form an archive of ideas and conversations pressing to our time.

Noa Taylor, 2023

Intero

**Elissa Auther** is the Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator at the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD). She provides the strategic direction and creative oversight for exhibitions, acquisitions of works of art for the Museum's collection, publications, and exhibition-related public programming. She has published widely on a diverse set of topics, including the history of modernism and its relationship to craft and the decorative, the material culture of the American counterculture, and feminist art. Her book *String, Felt, Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art* focuses on the broad utilization of fiber in art of the 1960s and 1970s and the changing hierarchical relationship between art and craft expressed by the medium's new visibility. Her most recent exhibitions for the Museum of Arts and Design include *Surface/Depth: The Decorative After Miriam Schapiro* and *Queer Maximalism x Machine Dazzle*.

A large, stylized green logo for the name 'ELISSA'. The letters are bold and blocky, with a unique design where the 'L' and 'S' characters have internal horizontal lines, giving the logo a layered, architectural appearance.



**Elissa Auther  
in conversation  
with Sydney Lee**

**Auther**



**SYDNEY LEE:** Your book *String, Felt, Thread* focuses on the hierarchy and divide between craft and fine art, focusing mainly on the 1960s and 1970s. Do you feel like that divide still exists now in contemporary fine art? And if so, how does it show up?

**ELISSA AUTHER:** I do think it still exists. I think it's rapidly changing and I think it's been altered since the early '80s as a result of all those artists working in the '60s and '70s to chip away at it. And by that, I guess I just mean that the art world has changed dramatically, right? And so it might look different, maybe it's perceived a little bit differently, or maybe it operates differently. So I guess that there's two ways that I see it. On the one hand, you have a whole new generation of artists that recognizes that hierarchy and then uses that as the jumping off point for their work. It's been politicized to the point that it's a kind of theme or subject that an artist can pursue. So that's very interesting to see that continue. And of course, that was something established by feminist artists of the mid-70s and on. So I see those artists as a kind of legacy of that activism and intervention in the art historical world and the art world to call attention to the hierarchy as something that's constructed, that still needs dismantling, its effects on the way it narrows our understanding of what can be art or the canon, etc. The other way it

manifests itself, I think, there are artists who work more comfortably across that art/craft divide. They don't carry the same baggage that the elders did in the '60s and '70s and even into the 1980s. They don't have to apologize for it in the same way. I think that there are many of those artists that it just doesn't matter. And that's not to say that it's not operative, but they're okay with it. They see a kind of flattening of the art world. There's many different ways to work. You don't have to come out of a medium specific community like textiles or ceramics to pick up that work. And I think the circles that they're participating in probably don't recognize that as a slight against them in any way. You can't go to an art fair today without seeing someone using ceramics or someone using textiles, not coming out of those medium specific communities. So that's a really dramatic change in the art world. Then, I do think there's still a situation though where people's work can be dismissed as too crafty or not a really serious form of practice. I do think that exists, I'm hard pressed to come up with a specific example that I've seen lately. It might have more to do with just the way the craft world itself has developed over time so that it's an incredibly strong and powerful and vital world. So there's all kinds of exhibitions that cater to that group of artists. There are specific prizes, there are specific fellowships and residencies. So it creates a world where I

ELISSA



think sometimes artists might be pigeonholed in that way. Or it might be recommended to you, oh you're part of that world, you're not really gonna ever show in the big galleries in New York or something. And that's where that prejudice you might still see as operative. I have talked to many students about this because they feel that it's something that marginalizes their perspective and their work when they're working in something like glass or ceramics or textiles. So of course I believe them, I think that's probably true. And it seems to be happening to them in conversations with their peers, where they might feel slighted or excluded in some way because of the mediums they're using. And it's almost as if they're talking to an audience of peers that is not that really hooked into the broader conversations that are happening in the contemporary art world where craft is not something to be ashamed of. It's actually got quite a bit of cultural cache.

**SYDNEY:** That bias is just so ingrained in everything, I guess.

**ELISSA:** Yes, it's a really good example of the way it is, it's totally unconscious probably on some level. And to dismantle that requires experience, getting out there and really seeing what's going on and seeing the incredible diversity of work that's being shown, that's being represented by galleries, etc. It's much, much more

open than I think it's ever been.

**SYDNEY:** My second question really related more to your curatorial work. What does your process look like in the beginning efforts of curating a show? For example, are you focusing on one idea at a time, or does one thing influence another in a kind of cyclical way?

**ELISSA:** I am often driven by certain ideas I've been working on for a long time as a scholar and as an art historian, so that's one way. I'll start working on some concept, or I'm working on a scholarly article, and I start to look at artists whose work seems to be responding to it or bringing something new to the conversation or doing something really radical in relation to the idea that I'm thinking about. So that's one way, and an exhibition might evolve out of that. And I'll talk today about some examples of that. Another thing that happens a lot is that I just like to look at a lot of things, read a lot of things, I just consume a lot of cultural media. It's almost like you have a rolodex in your head and there's all these artists there, and you're like, I just really really love that. Doesn't connect to anything I'm working on right now, but there will be a point where I'm gonna reach out to that artist.

**SYDNEY:** Right, you stock it away.

# Another



ELISSA: Yeah, completely, it happens all the time. And it does, they cycle through. I keep big files of clippings, which is very old fashioned, I know. But I'll go back through them occasionally just cleaning and be like, oh my god! I just did something with that artist! I forgot that I have pulled that out of such and such magazine.

SYDNEY: That's so special.

ELISSA: Right? But it does come around, it's really remarkable. And who knows, there could have been something percolating there. I'm just drawn to something on a visual level, but that might have been connected to some broader cultural phenomenon or event or idea that intrigued me at the time that I wasn't there to pursue it yet. So it happens that way. And in terms of one project leading to the next, that does happen. And I'm kind of on the tail end of a cycle of that happening. And now feeling like, okay, I've done this, I don't really know what else I want to say about it, I'm gonna move on to something completely different. So it's kind of a real shifting of gears and requires a completely new sense of consuming. Because I've been producing, producing, producing, now I've got to take time to consume more and balance that out so I can move onto a different concept or a different initiative that might be connected to the new museum even, because those are things that

I think about now more than I ever did as a scholar. As a scholar you really do pursue your own interests. But once you're working with an institution, of course there's a brand and also a historical mission of that institution, and so you want to work very closely with that in order to meet that mission and then enhance it or expand it in some way. So your thinking can become very guided in that respect as well. I think I'm really going into a phase, that phase is what I'm thinking about now.

ELISSA





**“Because I’ve been producing, producing, producing, now I’ve got to take time to consume more and balance that out...”**

**Author**

**Alex Da Corte** (b. 1980) was born in Camden, New Jersey, and lives and works in Philadelphia. His explores the nuances of contemporary life in his videos, installations, paintings, and sculptures, which are often united together in richly-hued, dreamlike environments. With a keen attention to color and form, Da Corte draws from a wide range of sources, including popular and consumer culture, art history, and modern design. Throughout his artistic practice, figures such as Eminem, Allan Kaprow, and the Wicked Witch of the West stand on equal footing alongside objects both commonplace and fantastic. Touching upon notions of identity, intimacy, and taste, Da Corte's work reimagines the familiar in wholly unexpected ways. His work was included in the 2019 Venice Biennale and the 2018 Carnegie International in Pittsburgh. Past one-person exhibitions include the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, the Secession in Vienna, MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts, and the Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne. Da Corte was selected for the 2021 Roof Garden Commission at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. *Mr. Remember*, a solo survey exhibition spanning 20 years of work, opened in 2022 at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Denmark.

ALEX



**Alex Da Corte  
in conversation with  
Lily Wai Brennan**

**Da Corte**

LILY WAI BRENNAN: I do have one icebreaker question for you. I'm curious if you have a favorite character, if I can call them characters, you portray or worked with or find yourself returning to? And if so, why?

ALEX DA CORTE: It's great question. I would say that the character that I turn to the most, that I therefore think is my favorite, is the Wicked Witch. But not necessarily, because I don't think about this. I never think about this. It's interesting that you said that about characters, because I don't think of them necessarily as characters or caricatures. And I also don't necessarily think of it as drag. Which is to say, of course it is drag, and it is costume, but I think about it more in relationship to haunting or possession. So it's a different kind of metaphysical transference of the body, or a persona. But the Wicked Witch is the one that appeals to me the most.

LILY: Why is that, do you know?

ALEX: The Wicked Witch, or witches—green witches—it seems so fixed or it seems so, so common. So that is also really beautiful, because then it becomes something freeing, because there's no pressure to be specific about the whos and whats of it. But I also am very interested in Margaret Hamilton and The Wizard of Oz and that depiction of the Wicked Witch, because

her relationship to that character was very fraught, her experience of playing that character. I was very interested in the labor and the kind of intense, physical sort of brutality that that role demanded of her at the time that she made it, because of the make up, because of the special effects, all of that. So something about that specific one I return to, and I don't know. It's not that I feel like she was done dirty, but I also do think she maybe was done dirty, and I'm kind of interested in reclaiming that for her.

LILY: Yeah. There's someone you'll meet tomorrow. Her name's Mary Evans. She self-identifies as a witch, I'm sure she'd love it.

ALEX: Oh great.

LILY: I think you should bring this up to her [laughs].

ALEX: Wait, wait I do, too. I call myself a witch. Yeah, that sounds great. I feel like we're in Oregon, there's probably a lot of witches here.

LILY: Yeah, there is. There's something with this culture, like spirituality's like a big thing. But definitely.

ALEX: Sure. I trust in witches, I trust in nature, you know.



ALEX

LILY: Okay, to go off that, you do play a lot of these possessions in your work, and I was curious if there is a significance to that, or are you just more interested in playing that role in your work?

ALEX: Well, yeah, I think there's definitely a significance to it. They're never incidental or completely happenstance. I really began with—the first one I ever did actually was Michael Myers. And I think that was because I grew up in the town that the film Halloween was set in, and Michael Myers's character actually in the first film isn't called Michael Myers, he's just called The Shape. And I like this idea of a being or body being amorphous, or transient, or mutable and not fixed. So then I was able to occupy a character, because if I had that mask on, no one can say I was not that character, and no one could prove it otherwise. And I think from there, the other bodies that I've occupied have been sort of a result of cause and effect, sort of like it was presented to me as the possibility to enter that person in a kind of, again, metaphysical way, or that transference was possible and then I did. So it never felt like I was like, I'm choosing you! It wasn't about colonizing a space, but rather like a Freaky Friday moment where two portals open and I just scavenge another body.

LILY: Yeah, that makes me think of, I'm blanking on his name, but the person

that plays Big Bird.

ALEX: Carroll Spinney.

LILY: Yes, and I remember you talking about him a bit in a few interviews and this idea of a transient body, playing multiple roles. Do you think that has a relationship with your own practice?

ALEX: Yeah, you know, I've always been really interested in, well, two things. One, the invisible labor and what it looks like for Carroll, or for Jim Henson, or other makers behind what is very recognizable. Living their days and not being stopped on the street because they're the person that played Miss Piggy or Kermit or whatever, but that they were like completely invisible but then they can also be so simultaneously known. And that labor is so valuable. I feel as someone who is a maker in the studio that I'm part of that kind of history of invisible labor, and occupying both the invisibility and this sort of the mask, which is maybe like the artwork. It's a shield or something that performs outwardly as an avatar. And so I relate, I do relate to Carroll's work, I relate to people behind the scenes, I relate to my mother, you know, who worked really hard, raising a bunch of kids, and I don't know if she gets that much credit. But I think about that labor all of the time.

LILY: I saw you talk about invisible labor a little bit. I think it was maybe in your conversation at the Met about your garden exhibition. I don't know, that intrigues me because you're also a person that collaborates with a lot of people. Do you ever think about the invisible labor behind your own work?

ALEX: I do often. I acknowledge that my work doesn't happen through just me. Like, I'm on the front end of things, having to find the context and the meaning and the words to ascribe to the hows and the whats of it, you know, that's like one kind of labor. And then there's also the labor of actually making, and I'm part of a whole community of people who do that. And I think that oftentimes the community of people that are making the works arrive at the studio and they make work, but they're never even asking the whys of it. It's not on their shoulders, it's on my shoulders to do that and to give a context. We're not just working in a vacuum. And so we're all in conversation at the table, figuring out who does what. It's like the way you make a movie, or the way you make an album. It's a whole big group of people making one thing, but then we'll have an outward face, a strong tone, or something.

LILY: Yeah, that's what I like about your work. I feel like you really appreciate the labor that other people can bring to the

table. I don't know. I think some artists prefer taking charge of everything. So that's something I always appreciate in your work, like having room for that collaboration to happen.

ALEX: Yeah, I value all of the artists that I work with, and they're all so talented. And you know, like I can't do everything, and I don't even claim to. I also recognize that I'm in a privileged place, a lucky place where I am asked to come to a talk for this and that. It's my responsibility to recognize that the work has value, and also recognize the way in which the work has value is because all of these hands and bodies are part of it, you know. And even if not everybody's not showing up to the same talk to hear that, there's not enough time, is to acknowledge it and to appreciate it and respect it and not discount it. You know it doesn't happen—our lives are not our own. Our lives are not our own. I can say it over and over again, it's a shared experience. And so one day I'll go, and the work might stay. If it does stay, it's a product of many people's lives, and I think that's wholly a good thing.

LILY: Yeah. I wanted to end with a fun one. I'm taking a Venice Biennale art history class right now. And it's really actually intense, it's about conversations regarding globalization. And, like, I don't know, that's not my question. My question,

ALEX



because we haven't talked about it in my class at all, what is it like to be invited to go? For a lot of people, I feel like that's end-game in an art career.

ALEX: Well, I mean, all invitations, the invitation to come to Eugene, you know, any invitation as an artist is like a total privilege. It's not guaranteed, and so it's an honor to be asked all across the board. You know, if you were asked to go to dinner, it's an honor to be asked. It's like you don't know the whys necessarily, and I work hard, but there's no guarantees. I had been asked to be in the Carnegie, and that was very exciting. That was like, well, I was gonna make a portrait of, like the whole country and think about like, you know, if it's called the International House, make one whole portrait of the world. Because I'm only just one body. That was so daunting and I made this really complicated film called Rubber Pencil Devil that had many lags and many references. But then, when the curator asked me to be in Venice and extend that, I then started thinking about how the body will be both very micro and focus on these esoteric things that might be just about one cell. But then also, how do we zoom away and look at a more global way that we're occupying the world? So I modeled the show, my experience in that show as two different parts. That year, the curator decided to have everyone do two proposals, a proposition A and proposition

B. And so we did two things, and sometimes artists chose to make them related, and sometimes not. I made mine this kind of micro/macro thing. And it was completely surreal and weird and an honor to be in that space which has such a crazy long history. And also with all these other artists, to sort of see what artists were both geographically placed near you and also what is this portrait of this time? At the time, that curator named the show May You Live In Interesting Times, and it was based on a kind of fortune, sort of like a curse. That was like a three-part curse, where one of the curses, or one of your fates that this little script said was 'may you live in interesting times'. Which is, and this is ahead of the pandemic, which is another crazy thing. But I do think that participating in the show like that does yield for very interesting times, which is to say both good and bad. It's an interesting chance to give pause to your work and think about why you're working and understanding that many many people will experience the work, and that again, our lives are not our own. We're responsible to defend the work, and own up to the work, and recognize how it also has a voice outside of ourselves.

# Da Corte

**“I like this idea of a being or body being amorphous, or transient, or mutable and not fixed.”**

**Alex**



**“It’s my responsibility to recognize ... the way in which the work has value is because all of these hands and hobbies are part of it...”**

**Da Corte**

**Jim Drain** was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1975 and attended the Rhode Island School of Design (1994-1998 BFA, Sculpture). Drain was a member of Forcefield, a collective that merged music, performance film and installation into one. Forcefield was active from 1996 to 2002 and was part of the Whitney Biennial, 2002. Drain has had solo exhibitions at the University of Florida; Locust Projects, Miami; and the Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas, Austin. Drain has participated in group exhibitions at MOCA, LA; the Fabric Workshop, Philadelphia; Serpentine Gallery, London; Depart Foundation, Rome; and the 7th Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon. Drain was one of two recipients of the 2005 Baloise Prize and was recognized with artist Bhakti Baxter for creating "best public art projects in the nation" by Americans for the Arts in 2015.



**Jim Drain  
in conversation with  
Sydney Lee**

**Dreila**

**SYDNEY LEE:** Your work is an intersection of craft and sculpture. What is it like to be working in both of these practices with all of their overlap and their differences?

**JIM DRAIN:** I would feel limited to just choose one. I try to be really expansive. Like, my idea of being an artist when I was in high school was to be a painter, and suddenly I realized all the things that were out there that sort of represented how I saw myself as a human being. So I was like, why would I stop at painting? And why would I stop at sculpture? Then, why would I stop at weaving, or knitting? How wide could I go? But there's a discipline and a rigor behind both that I also want to recognize and see and study and understand that there has been so much work put into areas of craft and areas of sculpture. So recognizing that work that's come before me has been really important. So to say, I want everything, you have to understand that there are people before you that have made that space for you to want and include. And there are also just different communities and ways of engaging within each. There's an understanding of different rule sets that live in different areas. But ultimately I look for building community in the work that I do, and I love the idea that the art work that I do in engaging with the community. I think the craft world especially is very inclusive. Usually [laughs]. But, you know, if you want

to, like, learn how to dye fiber, you can find a video and you can go to a shop and they'll tell you and even show you sometimes.

**SYDNEY:** Be excited to tell you.

**JIM:** Yeah. So I love that aspect of it. And I love seeing amazing painting and sculpture, and appreciating that.

**SYDNEY:** Well, speaking of working with communities and working collaboratively, does collaboration come naturally to you? And how does the process of starting a new collaborative project look?

**JIM:** I compare it to being in a band, where there's a drummer and a bassist and a lead guitar and they're all making music together. And I really gravitated to that space early on when I was in school and really felt comfortable in a community space and working collaboratively. You can get so much done. There are downsides where your ego has to be, like, put adjacent to what you're a little bit, and that can be really frustrating. But it pushes you to really verbalize and stand behind your ideas, too. So I love that. And I speak about it in terms of a third mind, which is like a term that Brion Gysin, the poet and artist — he worked with William Burroughs on the Dreamachine. He talks about the space of the third mind where when you're collaborating, you're getting to a place



that you wouldn't get to by yourself. And that is always fun, that space of discovery is so cool and that happens through collaboration. Part B of the answer, too, is that you're never working by yourself. Whether you're in grad school or an artist working at an exhibition space or museum, it's a collaborative process every single time. Not just with the people in the gallery, but also just the people that have enabled you to be there. Just recognizing that is really important for artists.

**SYDNEY:** My final question pertains to color. I was just looking at your website, and I'm also someone who is drawn to lots of saturated color. It seems like you are. So how does color come to play in your practice and where do you source those color inspirations from?

**JIM:** The short answer is that clothes really informed my sense of color. I remember the first time putting on a Columbia jacket, and understanding what happens when you wear lots of color to your body. Tomashi Jackson is an artist that looks at color in a different way and is a person of color, and who looks at Joseph Albers and his color theory in relation to civil rights, at the intersection of civil rights and color theory. As a white male trying on color, I sort of didn't understand the words that I was even saying, of what it means to wear a color, that so many people

are wearing color all the time. So for me, I haven't landed on a space of why I use so much color other than understanding that it feels like I'm having a dialogue with the work where just the more saturated a color is the more it's speaking. I just love the play that color provides within sculpture. The more glitter, the better. The more beads, the better. The more adornment. There's this talk where Fred Moten talks about adornment in terms of Zora Neale Hurston's writing, where adornment is about adoring as opposed to decoration. Decoration has this, like, negative connotation, but suddenly having Fred Moten talk about that space of decoration being something of love and value, and that's kind of the way I approach color, too. It just feels like there's love and it sort of reflects my sense of what humanity is and what's possible for humanity.

**“...why would I stop at painting? And why would I stop at sculpture? Then, why would I stop at weaving, or knitting? How wide could I go?”**



**“You’re never working  
by yourself..it’s a  
collaborative process  
every single time”**

**Drelin**

**Edie Fake** is a painter and visual artist whose work examines issues of trans identity and “queer space” through the lens of architecture and ornamentation. Fake’s work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including solo shows at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, NY and Marlborough Contemporary, NYC, and in group exhibitions at the Museum of Arts and Design, NYC and the Institute for Contemporary Art at VCU in Richmond, VA. His collection of comics, *Gaylord Phoenix*, won the 2011 Ignatz Award for Outstanding Graphic Novel. Fake’s latest projects include mural installations for The Drawing Center, NYC and BAMPFA in Berkeley, CA. He is currently represented by Western Exhibitions in Chicago and Broadway Gallery in New York.

Edie



**Edie Fake  
in conversation with  
Ashley Campbell**

**Fake**

ASHLEY CAMPBELL: I wanted to start by asking about impossible places. What is an impossible place for you?

EDIE FAKE: Well, I think the truth of it is that no places are necessarily impossible, but that they can feel like impossible places before they're visualized, or they can feel like unbuildable or unexplainable spaces. There's so much of my work that fell into this groove of architecture, and drawing architecture and painting architecture. And I was thinking about queer space and queer history and identity, that there's so much of those spaces that seemed and still continue to seem unrecognized, unrealized, undefinable. And I felt there was a beautiful connection with visualizing spaces for these things that make what once seemed impossible possible. I think the background of that is growing up in a family where I didn't feel recognized or seen as a queer trans kid, and learning to move around that through visual language rather than language that's spoken or written.

ASHLEY: Right, I think that's a really beautiful approach to it. I love this idea of approaching the impossible as a way to find the possible. It's really interesting. And the acknowledgement of the fallibility of language. I saw somewhere that you wrote something like it'll be language's embarrassment in the future to not have

understood.

EDIE: Yeah, I mean I think that the shortcomings of language are that there needs to be this kind of openness and flexibility towards it. There's always weird windows into that. Like looking at how the introduction of emojis into texted language, there's a really interesting, I don't know, little poetry bomb in the middle of something that is very standard. But the carving out of—you don't have a word for it in this language. There's these things where like we've kind of settled around something but also I think keeping it weird is really important.

ASHLEY: Yeah, it's really interesting because I feel like there's a rigidity around language even though we engage in these types of things all the time.

EDIE: Yeah, and I feel very deep in myself, like I have trickster instincts, especially with language, like I love wordplay and jokes and double meanings and innuendos and things. And I don't know, it seems like a really hard time for language right now. There's a lot of people insisting on littleness and clear definitions of things. For me, part of queerness and part of my work is kind of paradoxical nature of things, and finding ways to get that across without robbing it of its meaning. So often I find that if I wrote about something

it would be just like, whoosh, flushing it down the toilet. Or anything that's significant about that to me is gone because I've had to articulate it too much. Visually I find it much easier to throw everything in the word salad in my brain, onto the work.

**ASHLEY:** Yes, actually because I know you do graphic novels and comics. Do you find when you work more in a narrative format, do you find it to be more expansive or kind of limiting as opposed to creating an image?

**EDIE:** Oh, it depends on where I am in my life, I think? Because sometimes, with comics and graphic narrative especially, if I'm gonna do it, it kind of hits me like a lightning bolt, where I'm like, I got it! I know some of the big movements that will happen in this comic. And when it falls apart, it really falls apart. I've had comics as kind of a main part of my practice for a long time, and I think that it hit one point, I had the thought of I'm just making the same thing over and over and over again. And after I recognized that, it just sort of crumbled in my hands [laughs]. It was like finding a vase and it just crumbles to dust in your hands, and you're like, oh, uhh, I don't know what to do! I don't know how to glue this together. It comes and it goes for me, I guess that's the long answer for that.

**ASHLEY:** So, I guess when it

comes to making a painting, and you're imagining one of these impossible spaces, do you plan it out? Or is it something that's more intuitive as you're going through and creating the composition?

**EDIE:** I kind of visualize the big things about it very small. It's the same for comics, too. If I have an idea, I'll sketch out something that's tiny, like a thumbnail is literally like a thumbnail-sized sketch just to get the basic shape of the thing. But then as I work on it, I let it surprise me. I like to understand that I have a root to go back to, of ideas I was thinking about to get it on the paper. But also, I think there's a powerfulness in the making of something that adds meaning and also kind of clarifies maybe how I feel about something. And also what a drawing can do, just technically, a little bit of magic sprinkle where I don't understand.

**ASHLEY:** Love a magic sprinkle.

**EDIE:** Yes.

**ASHLEY:** I feel like your art is really generous and vivid, so lush in the color. Do you have a specific intentionality with the colors that you use?

**EDIE:** Every one color has something special in the world that it can bring, and that seems like a really ineffable pro-

cess where I don't quite get what colors that'll bring for me, like, the ASMR feeling, basically. Kind of like, yeah, these colors, wow. And so I make a lot of word notes about visual colors, and then try and put some very special things into the work to kind of summon back those places. It also seems like in the past few years my work has really settled on kind of a palette with soft borders. Something where I'm like, oh, this feels so prude, what I paint and the colors I see when I really see something. It's a combination of recognizing what colors you're really seeing and also being open to what colors the world delivers. Not delivers, but that I encounter.

ASHLEY: Do you feel like living in the desert inspires your color palette at all?

EDIE: It does and it doesn't. I feel like I moved there and thought I'll start making desert art [laughs]. But at the same time, I think there are definitely things that I kind of broke down in my artwork that I really appreciate, where I learn so much from architectural material, and also urban color palettes. And now it's like, oh, what do things look like when they're next to each other? Mostly like plants and sand and things. So there's an undeniable shift in color palettes, but I thought it would be weird to have it exactly like, I'm gonna have it look just like this!



Edie

**“I think there’s a  
powerfulness in the  
making of something  
that adds meaning and  
also kind of clarifies  
maybe how I feel about  
something.”**

**Falke**

Inclusively and theoretically, **Julia Fish's** work can be characterized as both site-generated and context-specific: in temporary projects/installations, and in the on-going sequence of paintings and works on paper developed in response to a close examination of living and working within her home and studio, a 1922 brick storefront in Chicago. Research interests include related disciplines of architectural history, theory, and music notation. Fish completed BFA and MFA degrees in Oregon and Maryland, and has lived and worked in Chicago since 1985. Curated exhibitions include: The Renaissance Society, University of Chicago; Galerie Remise, Bludenz, Austria; 2010, the Whitney Biennial; and ten-year solo survey : bound by spectrum, DePaul Art Museum, Chicago, 2019-2020. Her work is included in collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; Denver Art Museum; Museum of Modern Art, New York, among others. Fish is represented by Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, and David Nolan Gallery, New York.

# Julia

**Julia Fish  
in conversation with  
William Zeng**

**Fish**

**WILLIAM ZENG:** Looking at your work, I see it's very much concerned with formal qualities like light, surface, edges, textures, patterns, composition, rhythm. I know people feel very complicated around titles, but do you consider yourself a formalist?

**JULIA FISH:** I pay absolute attention to form, but I don't consider myself a formalist. No one's ever asked me that question. In part because the nature of what is being scrutinized has changed pretty dramatically, but over a long period of time. So my beginning to current, I should say. And the subject of the work, whatever it is that's exciting me and is of interest has its own form. So there have been instances where the challenge has been to try to forget certain kinds of formal habits or ways to resolve something and go for, look for, something that's peculiar and particular to the thing that is the subject. The reference, I should say. There's the reference, and then there are larger subjects.

**WILLIAM:** Yeah, I've read different interviews with you where you have this deeply observational approach and it's also a durational one.

**JULIA:** Duration is a part of it.

**WILLIAM:** Yeah, so it's this slightly but constantly evolving thing, and trying to

keep track of it. So it sounds like the form is more embedded in the thing rather than larger art-formal constructs.

**JULIA:** Uh huh. That was so good. It's the word duration. I do not believe it's in my conversations. It's implied, of course. But I want to emphasize that you are very good to bring that verbiage into the front of my work.

**WILLIAM:** Yeah, and I did a year at SAIC in the post-bacc program.

**JULIA:** When was that?

**WILLIAM:** It was actually 2020, so I went through most of the year, and then in the final three months, everything was out the window. That's part of how I ended up here, just what do I do, you know? But yeah, I took a class that was really important to me on vernacular art and architecture. It's playfully named "Better Homes and Gardens", after the magazine. It took place at the Roger Brown Study House every week. I don't know if you know Lisa Stone, the curator.

**JULIA:** Yes, I do.

**WILLIAM:** She just stronghold, like an institution to herself.

**JULIA:** You're lucky, very fortunate





to have that.

**WILLIAM:** Yeah. And so, I identified being there and being in the midwest and Chicago, there's this overlap and this deep commitment to DIY, and to a strong culture of home, whether it's a house show or a house museum, apartment galleries. So I'm thinking, do you see your work in this tradition? Because I know subject and content-wise it's so embedded in the interior and in the home.

**JULIA:** Are you asking if that sense of the house museum is driving the work?

**WILLIAM:** Yeah, or part of it. I feel like in the midwest, there's this milieu and culture of the veneration of the home. Part of it's maybe just because you're shut in for eight months out of the year.

**JULIA:** Well, I might distinguish the midwest part, whether it's urban or rural, suburban, in the way these individuals occupy space and understand their perimeter, maybe? Or their neighbor? Relative to the house museum, some of the most remarkable experiences I've had are seeing artworks in the context in which they were made. So the Roger Brown house is a wonderful example of that. Magritte's house in Brussels is that. There aren't many others. When we moved to the Hermitage Avenue house, I had no idea the house would be

the subject for six months or so. It wasn't, and then it was, and it hasn't quit. So it was probably a good year or two before it was, hmm, I guess this is what's happening. A kind of acknowledgment that there was time in history of the house, and there was my increasingly durational experience of the house. And then also, what was surrounding the house was changing. So an early painting was one of the views from the southport window of the roof of the neighbor's house, which no longer exists. Another is the empty lot across the street, which, again, no longer exists, but the large tree that caught my light was there and drove that painting. So I've come to recognize that the house is changing, and the surroundings change. And I had gradually started to use the word archive to acknowledge that that's what has happened, what's already happened. But especially the first several years, it was a kind of, checklist isn't quite the right word because I kept finding things I didn't pay attention to, but it was a checklist in retrospect of the experience of the materiality of what built the house, the things that fit together, that were hand fit, that look regular. I kept getting comments about the entry floor, that it's not a rectangle, it's sort of wonky. The tiles had to fit into the space and they were hand set. When I finally gave my attention to it, it was at least a half-inch or more difference out of squareness. And that was interesting to me, that there was a record

# Fish

in my visual field of another individual having to make on-the-moment decisions as a craftsperson. Probably in the '20s.

**WILLIAM:** Yeah, that's something that I noticed a lot, particularly in Chicago, there are all these idiosyncrasies and all these architectural interior design moments that point towards that DIY or personal, thoughtful craftsmanship and care.

**JULIA:** Also the way they organized the front of their dwelling if it's a house, or what they put in the windows if it's apartments are that sense of projecting a sense of visual claiming. Enhancing their life with a visual way for themselves. And in an urban area, there's one block in Chicago, and radically different from door to door or entry to entry. Where did you live?

**WILLIAM:** I lived in, I forgot the neighborhood. It was by the Trader Joe's, one of them. I took the Brown Line. It's near Kimball, the stop. It's kind of close to Wrigley Field.

**JULIA:** Oh, yes. Apartment?

**WILLIAM:** Apartment, yeah. I was only there for a year, but it was a really important period of time for me.

**JULIA:** The trains, the sense of experiencing the city at a level above, the el-

evated trains, was one of the elements that attracted me. It was a sense of suspense taking the train. The underground is not the same pleasure. The elevated traversing of a city is one of the greatest things about Chicago.

**WILLIAM:** Yeah, and it's so fun when you're downtown, and you're on the second floor, and it's maybe Christmas or something, and they do the special Christmas lights on the exterior and you just see it run by. That's pretty cool. And one last question, are you familiar with the work of Catherine Murphy?

**JULIA:** Very.

**WILLIAM:** Yeah. In my head, I see your work together or in conversation with each other.

**JULIA:** I had to choose to include or not include her work today, she's in probably every other presentation I've given. She's an extraordinary painter. There is a shared interest in scrutinizing something at close range. That's where I feel very compelled to do, and in a general sense what her work offers. And at home, largely. What's distinct in my view is she has a greater expanse of cultural iconography that comes in to the paintings that we can really name. The balloons, or the gingham dress, or things printed and pasted to the

# Julia

wall. There's a sense that the late-20th century and early-21st century visual field is brought into the domestic space, and she embraces that and it's inventive, so inventive. She's committed to a quality of realism that has come and gone at different times and in certain paintings. And I appreciate that frequently we're getting a one to one scale, that we're getting a brief lift out of her world at scale. And that's another element that's not always true for my work, but has driven a lot of it. There's a real affinity. I've met her, I can't say that we're friends because we haven't had the opportunity to spend so much social time together, but she and her husband are very good friends of other very good friends. So it's kind of an arms-length knowing her, and I heard she gives a great conversation and talk. There are many reasons that her work is attended to by a very wide bunch of artists because she's articulate and she's committed to her vision and her family. And provocative and candid, grounded. It's a remarkable history of work. Have you met her?

**WILLIAM:** No. Well, she gave an artist talk at my undergrad, UC Davis, and it was a really incredible talk.

**JULIA:** Oh, I bet it was. Did she go way back? No?

**WILLIAM:** I remember specific

works that really stood out to me, like the garden hose.

**JULIA:** So the Morie Chair? I'll make sure that we see it. But the point is this fantastic pattern and the point of view is this.

**WILLIAM:** Oh, like a downwards.

**JULIA:** Not seeing the object, you're looking into this sense of the arms, the back, the cushion. And it's fantastic. So fantastic that there was a time I took a friend and asked at the gallery if they could pull the painting out just so we could see it. The gallery was nervous, we weren't clients. So it's partly that point of view and getting lost in it where I felt quite confirmed. It was that painting that spoke to me and confirmed something about proximity.

**WILLIAM:** Yeah, just those very particularities of where you're seeing it from, at what distance, how that relates to the thing being seen.

**JULIA:** Exactly.

**Natasha Ginwala** is Associate Curator at Large at Gropius Bau, Berlin; Artistic Director of Colomboscope in Sri Lanka and the 13th Gwangju Biennale with Defne Ayas (2021). Ginwala has curated Contour Biennale 8, Polyphonic Worlds: Justice as Medium and was part of the curatorial team of documenta 14, 2017. Other projects include Indigo Waves and Other Stories: Re-navigating the Afrasian Sea and Notions of Diaspora (with Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung and Michelangelo Corsaro) at Zeitz MOCAA; Survey exhibitions of Bani Abidi, Akinbode Akinbiyi and Zanele Muholi at Gropius Bau. Ginwala was a member of the artistic team for the 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2014, and has co-curated The Museum of Rhythm, at Taipei Biennial 2012 and at Muzeum Sztuki, Lodz, 2016–17. Ginwala writes regularly on contemporary art and visual culture. Recent co-edited volumes include *Stronger than Bone* (Archive Books and Gwangju Biennale Foundation) and *Nights of the Dispossessed: Riots Unbound* (Columbia University Press).

# Natasha

**Natasha Ginwala  
in conversation with  
Ashley Campbell**

**Ginwala**



**ASHLEY CAMPBELL:** Thank you so much for participating in our five minute interview. I have a few questions for you. The first would be what excites you most about the curatorial process?

**NATASHA GINWALA:** Thank you for having me in this interview. For me the curatorial process is a way of bringing to life certain creative possibilities that often lie dormant or latent in the ways that I work at least. These are often artistic practitioners who have been challenging institutional frameworks and ideologies, and so for me, the curatorial process is one of care and one of constituting possibilities of being. Otherwise, trying to think about the exhibition space as a space in which there is hospitality, there are different material conditions in which often contrasting histories can meet each other.

**ASHLEY:** Yeah, like I find that really interesting. What I've read and the projects I've looked at of yours, they seem like an attempt at radically resifting the institutional spaces. And you had talked about this idea that there's a potentiality outside of a biennial—that being the large scale exhibition space—of approaching it as a hybridized model. And I was so curious to know what do you see as the potential future of hybrid models outside of just a large scale visit where people go and see the work?

**NATASHA:** I've always tried to engage with larger and smaller constellations of curatorial practice. Biennials also differ greatly depending on which part of the world they're emerging from, how well resourced they are, how much cultural infrastructure there is. I've always been trying to think about, also being someone who runs an independent arts festival, how this model of commissioning artists and really being quite hands on with artistic process and publishing and programming opportunities, how those can also create more long lasting infrastructures in the scenes that they are active within. And trying to think how, for instance, a biennial can speak in a relevant way to a nonprofit space in the same city, or what it means for artists who are not represented within the commercial art world to participate in these models. What does one need to do to make that more equitable? I think these are all things which one may not always succeed at, but at least those have been the kinds of questions I have asked, and it has helped because my own working process has constantly taken me into the nonprofit side of the art world as to academic alliances. And I feel like the combination is what is really exciting.

**ASHLEY:** Yeah, like I had read you talk a lot about collectivity and the artists having power in the situation, which I find really refreshing. It's great to read about.

# Neteisha



Speaking of that, how do you find artists that you want to work with?

**NATASHA:** So, I'm often mentoring and participating in things like guest visits and lectures within art academies, but also in residences, within spaces where artists get fellowship opportunities way after they have completed their academic training, and so these are some ways. I do a lot of studio visits. I also really go by artists' recommendations. I found some really incredible encounters through artists, knowing me and my work, suggesting and sharing their research with me. I also don't strongly believe anymore in the divide that is sometimes constructed artificially between the artist and curator, because we know there are incredible artist-curators. So the point is also how we learn from each other.

**ASHLEY:** I really like that. And, my final question, I feel like the projects you work on are so multifaceted and complex. Do you have any advice on organizational tips to go about doing projects like that? Time management? [laughs]

**NATASHA:** I think in my own head, I kind of produce a sort of a map of who the key people are, what the stakes are, what the infrastructural challenges will be. And sometimes the timeline of the institution contrasts with the timeline of what an artist's production might ideally take. So

that's often when one needs to, in a sense, remain very attuned to, one the one hand, what the creative process desires, and on the other, to ensure that the practicalities of something becoming an exhibition are equally taken care of. And so in order to also maintain a balance, I often try to alternate between the kind of more logistical side, the side of, say, writing and interpretation, and the side that is way more intimate, that involves long conversations with artists, and that's an extremely fulfilling and vulnerable side to one's field. And so, I think that sort of way of moving in between these tasks allows to not over extend oneself in either direction. And it allows you to sort of maintain some kind of equilibrium to do what you need to do and to keep some kind of holistic picture of why you are advancing the way you are with a project.

**“... for me, the curatorial process is one of care and one of constituting possibilities of being.”**

**Netasha**



**“I also don’t strongly believe anymore in the divide that is constructed artificially between the artist and the curator”**

**Glinwella**

**Salvador Jiménez-Flores** is an interdisciplinary artist born and raised in Jalisco, México. He explores the politics of identity and the state of double consciousness. Jiménez-Flores addresses issues of colonization, migration, “the other,” and futurism by producing a mixture of socially conscious installation, public, and studio-based art. His work spans from community-based work, drawing, ceramics, prints, and mixed media sculpture. Jiménez-Flores has presented his work at the National Museum of Mexican Art, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Urban Institute of Contemporary Art, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, and Museum of Art and Design amongst others. He served as Artist-In-Residence for the city of Boston, Harvard Ceramics Program, Office of the Arts at Harvard University, and Kohler Arts Industry. Jiménez-Flores is a recipient of Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grants and The New England Foundation for the Arts, Threewalls’ RaD Lab+Outside the Walls Fellowship Grant, and he is a 2021 United States Artist Fellow. He is an Assistant Professor in ceramics at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

# Salvador

# Salvador Jiménez-Flores in conversation with Christian Alvarado

Jiménez-

**CHRISTIAN ALVARADO:** Before we started this recording I brought up language, that English was your second language. And I asked you how long did it take for you to feel comfortable?

**SALVADOR JIMÉNEZ-FLORES:** Still working on it. But I guess to be really comfortable it definitely took a few years. I think there's a lot of insecurities that come with not knowing the language. Especially during high school times, when I moved here, it's the age where that's like the perfect target for people to bully you.

**CHRISTIAN:** Oh my gosh.

**SALVADOR:** It's like, they will pick any mispronunciation to be like, oh. So at first I was very self-conscious about that, but then I think when I got to college and I started to hear other people, different accents, from other parts of the world.

**CHRISTIAN:** Yeah, it's normal.

**SALVADOR:** It's okay.

**CHRISTIAN:** Do you feel like that space of adjustment or confusion was fruitful to you in any way? Was that generative or creative for you?

**SALVADOR:** Most definitely. I really think that moving to a new country, not

knowing the language, was essentially the reason why I became an artist. And especially having the luck and the opportunity of taking a photography class in an after school program, that really allowed me to process all the things that were going on with this move. But also it was a great coping mechanism to capture that transition and to really open my eyes and mind to the power of visual communication. Moving forward, thinking about language as an obstacle, one that we usually communicate with and, in my case, being self-conscious about it, and then in facing that obstacle I ended up becoming a communicator. I became a graphic designer, which I was able to communicate the ideas of my clients and others through graphics. I think that definitely had a big role with learning photography and learning the power of visual communication. I think now, as an educator, that's another way where I get to do a lot of, essentially, what was my fear, public speaking. Now I have to do it all the time [laughs]. Sometimes that idea of exposure therapy has been great in that case. There's an obstacle, okay, how can I overcome it or face it or walk around it.

**CHRISTIAN:** It's a very brave and direct approach, I think.

**SALVADOR:** It doesn't work all the time. Sometimes you just have to find other alternatives.

# FLORES

**CHRISTIAN:** Yeah. I think your work is very interesting, it kind of speaks to what you're describing in a lot of ways. Your surroundings, they fuse a lot of different elements of yourself and of culture together, with such a strong grasp of language used, embedded in it and surrounding it. This might be a weird question, but you know, art doesn't use just language and verbal communication. There's a whole lot of different elements in there. I'm wondering how do you want other people to read them, or how do you think other people start with your work? Where's your starting point?

**SALVADOR:** Well, I think the role of the artist is to make the work. We don't really have control on how others view the work. So I think I'd rather have the reviewer approach the work in any way that they feel they need to approach it. So for me, it's fascinating how my experiences and how that informs my work, and just the work that I put out in the world, that some people find it relatable. To me that's more than enough. Like, if my work, some way, somehow, is creating consciousness of the struggles or the things that affect a certain group and other people can relate to it, it's just amazing. Sometimes I do try to make work that even though it speaks from my personal experiences, but I try to make it in a way that others can relate to.

**CHRISTIAN:** I want to ask you a question that is, I personally feel like it might be unfair because this question is usually only directed at people who are marginalized, but are you worried about being put into some kind of box as, like, a cultural artist or someone who focuses specifically on that? Or are you comfortable representing that, like do you struggle with that in any way?

**SALVADOR:** I don't. I personally made the conscious decision that making work that tells the story of the people, of my people, my community. And that was a choice. But as an artist, I feel like any artist, including myself, I also have the right to, at any point in time, I can make artwork that doesn't have anything to do with identity. That's not something that has come up yet, but I could do that in the future if that feels right. But I don't feel bad about that because it's not my problem. It's the people who view the work with that lens, with that limitation. They're the ones limiting, to see the work from that perspective, from that label, from that box. If they really open up their eyes they can see that the work that I try to make, it really goes beyond identity. But if they're not capable or they're not ready to see it beyond identity, it's really on them.

**CHRISTIAN:** I feel like we're really starting to use language that lends itself

to a sort of futurism. From the work that I've seen, there is this surrealist, this chimeric, or this hybridity that you focus on, which through my eyes feels like that is in the realm of speculative fiction, of science fiction. I'm wondering if you have thoughts about those genres of work? Do you ever get to speak about that, or what's that area within that conversation that you really want to make sure that you touch upon, press upon people?

**SALVADOR:** I think the idea of making work that has aesthetics or the styles of surrealism, for me it's important in my work because I think as a young artist I was really influenced by surrealism. But now, the way I conceptualize that surrealist approach in my work is really with the surreal realities that Latinx people experience in the United States. A lot of the times it literally feels unreal, and sometimes the way society treats or also approaches groups or boxes them in, or you name it. And I think especially thinking about these ideas of futurism, it really came after 2016 when Donald Trump was nominated President of the United States. And to me, I didn't wanna make work that has anything to do with him. Like, he doesn't deserve my time and energy at all. So that's when I decided to do this body of work that is titled *La Resistencia de los Nopales Híbridos*, the resistance of the hybrid cacti. And I really was inspired more by one of the

godfathers of afrofuturism, Sun Ra, and that idea of world building, and thinking also about what was happening in the '60s. And I feel that 2016, and also the 1960s, there is a lot of repetitions or almost like a mirror. So thinking about the art that was happening during that time, the words of Robert Anderson and also thinking about music, right. Music is a big influence in what I do. And during that time there was this composer, writer and singer Rodrigo, but he would also go by Rock. Rockdrigo González. He's also named *el profeta del nopal*, the cacti prophet. And when I analyze the lyrics of his songs, they're very futuristic, they're very visual. And there is one song in particular titled *Tiempo de Híbridos*, hybrid times, or something along those lines. And just the lyrics about that song they're so visual and very futuristic that when I would just listen and imagine, like, the words, the phrases, the objects that he was describing really inspired me to do that kind of work. And maybe go away from reality a little bit, thinking about new perspectives, new realities and how art could be a bridge to get there. That was something that was very freeing. Give yourself permission as an artist just to be with this idea of world building and making space from yourself.

**CHRISTIAN:** Yeah, I really appreciate those thoughts and I connect with a lot of them. I think this will be my last ques-

# Jiménez

tion, but when we're thinking of the surreality of oppressed or marginalized people especially because of 2016 and everything that happened after that, the pandemic as well, movies came out like *Get Out*. Like Jordan Peele's whole thing, the resurgence of afrofuturism. I'm wondering, because it seems like it's the marginalized's time to imagine a future, what do you think freedom in the future means to you? What we're describing is kind of like this ability to play and to not be kept in some kind of margin anymore. What does freedom look like to you?

**SALVADOR:** I mean I think one way of looking at freedom would be a place where everyone can see each other for who they are and not by limitations or trying to put people in specific boxes but maybe accepting everyone the way they are and welcoming everyone. To me, freedom will be great and we can just go back to what it used to be, or this idea of living in community, working towards helping one another. Almost like, not as much a utopian kind of thing, but kind of. How can we get to a point where we can just use what we need and share what we have as surplus. Yeah, that might be too romantic.

**CHRISTIAN:** Futurism is romantic, isn't it?

**Margaret Lee** has organized and exhibited work at numerous venues domestically and internationally including Misako & Rosen Gallery, Tokyo, Japan; *The Artist Is Present*, curated by Maurizio Cattelan, Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China; *The Windows*, Barneys, New York; *Concentrations HK: Margaret Lee*, curated by Gabriel Ritter, Duddell's x DMA, Hong Kong, China; *Made in L.A.*, 2014 Hammer Museum Biennial, Los Angeles; 2013 Biennale de Lyon; *de, da do...da*, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; *Caza*, curated by Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy, Bronx Museum, New York; *NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami, *New Pictures of Common Objects*, curated by Christopher Lew, MoMA PS1, New York, and *Looking Back*, White Columns, New York, amongst others.

Margaret



# **Margaret Lee in conversation with Jens Pettersen**

**Lee**

**JENS PETTERSEN:** The question I have, or more of a conversation, is, you're an artist, you're a curator, let's define this, because that's what I'm curious about.

**MARGARET LEE:** Well, I used to be a lot of things. And I have slowly been shedding some of these paths. As people would say, to wear many hats. I have a very inquisitive mind, so I like to know how systems work. So, as an artist you always want to know, like, how does that happen? How do shows get put on? Why do people get grouped together? How do galleries work? So I kind of immersed myself in all of those things. At some point, I just didn't know that I wanted to set this example of being a poster child for workaholicism and overwork. I was uncomfortable setting that example as I got older.

**JENS:** Yeah, because I was going to ask, like, within these different disciplines where you operate in, what's your sort of through-thought, or your core value, that pertains to each of them, even though the disciplines were so different?

**MARGARET:** I mean, it always was artist first. That was why I wanted to know how systems worked. Because as an artist, when I was younger, it didn't seem like anyone wanted to really understand the artistic process and then start forming programs or concepts from there. It al-

ways seemed a little top-down. Someone outside of the artist would have a concept, and then the artist's production is basically used to support someone else's thesis. And I didn't feel that comfortable with that. And you know, when you're younger, you have these interactions with people and are made to feel bad about yourself. I wanted to know why. And so I figured, I don't know why people aren't asking me questions? I thought the discipline would be something like this, people getting together, getting feedback, asking one another questions because it didn't matter where you were in the hierarchy, everyone understood the value of artistic thought. So that was what always drove it. You know, when I was curating shows, it was never, oh, I just want this one thing. It was more, I like you conceptually, I like the way you think. I don't know what the final product will be. That is what we're gonna do together, whether it was curation, or when I ran a gallery, or anything. I didn't want to lock people in, because things change all the time. So I really wanted to help people and I wanted artists to feel confident in honing that. How do you present ideas without limiting yourself but also not denying yourself opportunities?

**JENS:** Going off of that, do you have different components of your brain when you're thinking through things? When you're running the gallery, are there



parts of being that have to sort of shut off?

MARGARET: Well, I was never the sales person, because I was a partner. I never did that part of it. I only did programming curation. And to me, I felt that it actually helped me understand my own practice more because every time you help an artist exhibit, it's an exercise in exhibition design, or press release writing, all these things. Usually artists only have a show every couple years, so you don't have that much practice, instead of doing it every six weeks. When I had my first project space, I was doing shows every weekend. And because I didn't go to an art school, that was my way of getting my education, and it was through peer to peer. That was always the most important thing. It's not that I have the power, it's that I had the keys to the space, and I'm responsible if you set it on fire. However, I'm not anointing people or granting people opportunity. I'm like wow, this is just two weeks just learning. I've always felt that and that's why I want to be in this industry.

Lee

**“I don’t know what the  
final product will be.  
That is what we’re gonna  
do together.”**

**Margaret**



**“It’s not that I have the power, it’s that I had the keys to the space, and I’m responsible if you set it on fire.”**

**Lee**

**Magor** is a Vancouver-based artist who produces sculptural and photographic works concerned with the latent, affective range of familiar materials, images, and objects. Her process and studio practice were featured in Season 8 of the PBS series Art 21, “Art in the Twenty-first Century” and her work has been exhibited in major international exhibitions such as Documenta VIII, Kassel; the 41st Venice Biennale, and the 4th Biennale of Sydney. In 2019 Magor presented an exhibition titled BLOWOUT at the Carpenter Center for Visual Art, Cambridge, Mass. The exhibition traveled to the Renaissance Society in Chicago accompanied by a publication. Recent exhibitions include Downer at Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver and I Have Wasted My Life at Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, NY.





**Liz Magor  
in conversation with  
Ellen O'Shea**

**Magor**



**ELLEN O'Shea:** Your practice usually involves casting objects and manipulating them to give them a new life or purpose. Do you usually seek these objects out, or do they present themselves to you?

**LIZ Magor:** I'm always looking for them. I have to choose them from the world. They don't come to my house, they don't knock on the door. So I'm always looking around. There used to be, right near the studio, there used to be a big, big store called Value Village, you have that?

**ELLEN:** Not anymore, but I used to love them.

**LIZ:** Yeah, so it was so close to the studios I could be there in five minutes. It was massive, it was probably twenty thousand square feet. But it burned down this summer, so that's over. So I got a lot of stuff there, because that's a big archive of the good, the bad, and the ugly. And I also would get all my working aprons and rag material and tools for mixing and everything that was major in my life. But, it's gone. And now I'm discovering all these kinds of smaller second-hand stores. But sometimes people give me things. I did quite a lot of work with blankets that were exhausted, wool blankets that were all torn or lumpy. It was a bit hard to find those at Value Village because if they're too ragged they won't have them. So for a while I was

looking for things that were too ragged for Value Village, so that kind of depended on people, I don't know, finding them in their garage or something. So there's a variety of places, but I'm always sniffing around.

**ELLEN:** Do you ever find things on the street?

**LIZ:** Uh, yeah.

**ELLEN:** That's cool [laughs]. Was there ever a moment in your practice when it was opened up for you by discovering a new material or process?

**LIZ:** Maybe it's still happening. Maybe it happens all the time. Mold-making and casting were sort of a discovery a long time ago, I'd say in the nineties. I've been doing this a long time. But I'm always looking for new ways to make an image. And I'm looking for materials that are familiar but not in an art sense. Like I might go to a store that just sells stuff for birthday parties and I go, wow, this is better than any art store.

**ELLEN:** The Dollar Tree, really good birthday stuff.

**LIZ:** Yeah, so that sort of thing. But also in terms of making things, I do experiment. Not as much as I used to.





ELLEN: Is there anything that you've wanted to try experimenting with that you haven't yet?

LIZ: No, I guess. Because if I wanted to, I would've.

ELLEN: At this point you've kind of done all the things that you've wanted to play with.

LIZ: Well, there might be something that comes up, but so far I'm still busy with this stuff that I know.

ELLEN: One of your pieces All the Names (Seasons Greetings) has made the rounds on Pinterest. I'm not sure if you know, it's just a photo sharing site that doesn't always acknowledge the artist. Were you aware of this, or any of your online presence?

LIZ: I'm sort of aware of Pinterest. I don't use it, and I'm not on social media because it's important to me to not be making work for other people and sometimes you do that inadvertently once you hear that people like something or don't like something. So I have to be blind to that because I have to be making work for my own needs. I mean, that's the difference between art and many other fields. In other fields it's important that you pay attention to what people think or need. But I chose

this because I have to pay attention to what I think and need and that's a hard job.

ELLEN: Have you ever find yourself in a position where someone of authority doesn't like your work and you have to kind of confront that?

LIZ: Oh god, there's been so many long periods in my life where I have felt that someone in a stronger position than I am doesn't like my work. And so I don't confront them exactly, I have to just be stronger. It's really hard though, it's really hard on me. Obviously I've prevailed [laughs]. But I have to just kind of find the confidence, and it doesn't come that easily, and I have to just keep doing it and try to be more incisive. Not better, but stronger. Because I don't know that there's a better and a worse. But there is a place where, whatever it is that you're trying do, you can be more succinct, because of course there's no better way to be an artist. That's the other beautiful thing, is that there's no right subject and way to go about it. I will measure the value of an artist who knows how to identify their subject and work with it in a way that's very succinct and true. So just try to be like that.

ELLEN: Interesting. I want to definitely talk more about that tomorrow.

LIZ: Yeah.

meagor



ELLEN: I'm having trouble right now with people in authority telling me to work a certain way and trying to be true to what I want to do. It's hard. One last question: Agnes Martin once told you that artists should be totally alone, not even with pets. And you said that you had two dogs [both laugh]. Do you still have two dogs?

LIZ: No, no, no, no.

ELLEN: But did you listen to her for a moment?

LIZ: I understood what she meant. I don't have any pets. I don't have a partner. I mean, it sounds pretty brutal, but I have tons of friends. So, I'll go back to your earlier question about how do you handle disapproval or lack of interest, all the things that kind of don't believe in you. And there's a kind of assiduousness to being an artist, that I think is a tool, so that it has primary importance over practically everything. So pets require a schedule, dogs have to be walked, and I just can't do that happily. Of course I can do it, but I'm not happy to do it. So I do everything on my own schedule. Hardly, I would hardly ever go to the dentist because it's an appointment, you know? Doesn't it sound pretty mental [laughs]. Not as bad as Agnes Martin.

ELLEN: Hahaha!

LIZ: These things are also generational, you know. Because to be a woman and be an artist at my age was much more difficult, I think, than it would be for you, because no one believed in it. They just didn't think it was that possible. And they were kind of right, because if you don't feel confident it's really hard to be an artist. It's just a very bad Catch-22, the surer you can be, the better you are at doing what you're sure about, you know what I mean? So if people are trying to, what did you say, they told you to do something else?

ELLEN: To research a different way.

LIZ: In answer to that, I would say you have to do what you're doing. You have to do what you're doing better. And stronger and with more criticality on yourself. So I'm still really critical, but it's my critique on my terms. Because you kind of don't quite know what you're searching for, and nor does anybody else know what you're searching for. You know that thing about 'fail more often?'

ELLEN: Yeah, yeah.

LIZ: Yeah, I forget the whole aphorism, but it's do it more, so you'll fail more often, but you'll also be successful more. It's just a matter of scale. The more you put into it, the more it will be. No part-timing.



**“The more you put into it,  
the more it will be.  
No part-timing.”**

**Meigor**

**Kate McNamara** is a curator and educator based in Providence, RI. She currently holds the position of Executive and Creative Director of My HomeCourt, a nonprofit arts organization working with contemporary artists to revitalize city parks. McNamara is also a Curator at Providence College Galleries; administrator at Interlace Grant Fund; and is a Visiting Critic at Rhode Island School of Design and Sotheby's Institute of Art. McNamara is invested in contemporary art and innovative curatorial practices and recently launched KMM Projects, an alternative art program in Providence.

# Kate

# **Kate McNamara in conversation with Jens Pettersen**

**McNamerPet**

**JENS PETERSEN:** A question that I have that relates to curation and your job is on the idea of trends. Do you consider it your job to recognize or predict trends?

**KATE MCNAMARA:** It's interesting because I also teach two different courses at two different places on curatorial studies and this question comes up quite a bit. I think every curator right now would answer differently because to some degree — we were talking about this in your studio, you know, taste making. I think to some degree curators are naming things that they're seeing in the organization of an exhibition, whether it's strategic, and/or organic. And to some degree, if you're at a certain level of institution you are asked what is the compelling idea that recognizes trends that you're seeing. It makes me think of a catalog of an exhibition that took place at the New Museum in New York, gosh, in the early two thousands, called Unmonumental. And it was one of those things that like, someone had to do this exhibition. Everybody was making work using found objects. This is like Jessica Stockholder's moment, Gedi Sibony's moment, things from trash, things from Home Depot, piling them together, really facilitating conversations about assemblage and collage. But if it wasn't against the monument, specifically, it just felt unmonumental. It wasn't necessarily anti-monument, but it was unmonumental. And I remember reading

about this opening and thought, yes! Yes, this is what I'm seeing, you're seeing this. These are concerns that are shared, and they're shared between certain groups of artists working, or it felt like larger pervasive parameters, like materials were just very expensive at that time, so people were approaching sculpture in a different way. And the sad part was going to the exhibition—everything looked exactly the same. [laughs] And the work that you love, or artists that you're excited about, and seeing their work, it really felt collapsed in a way, which felt unfortunate. So this is a roundabout way of answering your question, because I think about that ultimately as 'Could this have been an essay? This is better as an essay.' Because I share essays from that catalog often, and that's what holds up more than the experience of the exhibition. And it's like, someone had to write about it, someone had to think about it. It was so pervasive in New York, specifically, at that time. So yes, the curator did the right thing, the range of curators on that project. But I also think there are two different strands of spaces and places where you can put work. And if you're trying to put work in a museum and you're trying to speak to the contemporary moment, I don't think there's the capability to be flexible or nimble, because often museums are scheduling or organizing exhibitions three, four, sometimes five years in advance of it actually happening.

# Kate



And so you may experience this going to see an exhibition and maybe through language or an idea, you're like, this feels a little lagging, or outmoded. It's not in sync with this moment. We've had this idea and we've moved beyond it. And so there's this institutional lag, I guess? And that's where, as a curator, I've also always been interested in a more Kunsthal-style space. And my first job out of grad school was at PS1, which is like MoMA's contemporary, non-collecting step-sister. Familial, but it feels like that, and that really interested me as an alternative. Likewise I think of the New Museum all the time. It's an important museum, if you haven't been there, you've probably heard of it. And if you really think of 'new museum,' when it started there was an attempt to really rethink what a museum could be, a museum to think of and study contemporary art. And by that stamp — and this is European. The Europeans were doing this way longer than we were. You have like Karl \_\_ who was making these wild exhibitions and really pushing . But I think that shift and understanding of a lack of flexibility put me in a curatorial space of really being interested in programming maybe being an answer, in the way of what supplements? In the way of, art from the past, how do we connect to audiences, artists, cultural workers, and produce content that is speaking to whatever this moment is? A kind of bridge? And that's what I was doing at PS1 when I was there. Then it was

creating alternative art spaces. And sometimes 'alternative' feels flimsy, intangible, and nebulous, like, I don't know what that means. More recently I've been describing it as a strategy, or using language like calling it a project space. I like that it's noncommittal, ephemeral, like it's a space, but it could also be an idea. But for me, this alternative — and explicitly the history of artist-founded spaces in New York, which is really where I came up in the curatorial field — were really interesting to me as not institutional. Even though they might become institutional down the line if they stick around, but that space could be an alternative art space for a day, it could be three years. I started an art space in New York called Cleopatra's with three other collaborators and we signed a ten year lease. Like, perfect! It's a ten year project. And there are four of us, so we can always entertain, if someone leaves, it also means that it can always be constantly moving and shifting in what it supports and what it holds on to. So long story long, yes, I think it's important to design ways to amplify and create platforms and support work that you're seeing.



**“Yes, this is what I’m  
seeing, you’re seeing  
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pervasive parameters”**

**Kate**



**“I like that it’s  
noncommittal,  
ephemeral, like it’s a  
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**Memento**



**Yoonmi Nam** received her MFA degree from the Rhode Island School of Design and BFA degree from Hong-Ik University in Seoul, Korea. She was awarded residencies at Mokuhanga Innovation Laboratory in Japan three times (2004, 2012, 2019) to study traditional Japanese woodblock printing techniques and is the recipient of the Keiko Kadota Award for Advancement of Mokuhanga. She has participated in artist residencies at Brandywine Workshop and Archives in Philadelphia, Frans Masereel Centrum in Belgium, Kala Art Institute in California, Vermont Studio Center, and a 3-year studio residency at Studios Inc. in Kansas City. Her work is in the collections of the RISD Museum, RI; Spencer Museum of Art, KS; and the Hawai'i State Art Museum, HI; among others, and has shown her work in over 20 solo exhibitions and 180 group exhibitions both nationally and internationally. Yoonmi is a professor of printmaking at the University of Kansas.

Yoonmi

# **Yoonmi Nam in conversation with Christian Alvarado**





**CHRISTIAN ALVARADO:** My first question is, as I was looking through your work in preparation for this interview, there's a lot of mention of transience. So I'm curious, when did transience first come to mind as the basis of your practice? Was there a defining moment or a defining object?

**YOONMI NAM:** That's such a good question. I think you sort of got to the core of my work, and I'm kind of thinking about how much to tell you.

**CHRISTIAN:** No worries, tell me whatever you think, whatever gets the idea across.

**YOONMI:** Yeah, I think transience, and just this kind of feeling of something that feels so ephemeral and lost, that actually is what I always think about. In my work, I kind of use other subject matters, or other things that are more everyday to discuss the idea. I don't know, I think the studio practice often comes for many people, there's a question we have. And I don't know if we're actually looking for an answer or not, but it's just the act of asking questions and there's this thing that just keeps coming up. You know what I mean. You don't know if you're seeking the answer or not. And I think that's what it is for me. Transience comes from a loss that I had when I was really young.

**CHRISTIAN:** I'm sorry.

**YOONMI:** Thank you. A really close relative of mine passed away. And I was really close and also I was really close to the moment of death, and I was really really young, too. You know, you're in an age where you knew, you're aware of death, but you really don't know. So without going too much into the details about it, that was kind of the defining moment that I return to constantly. And I didn't know that actually until much much later in my life, as a person and also as an artist. You know, earlier in your art career, as a student, you're undergraduate art, you don't really know.

**CHRISTIAN:** No, you do not know [laughs].

**YOONMI:** [laughs] Yeah. You don't really know, but there's a certain accumulation that happens, over a certain amount of time passes, an accumulation of both understanding who you are but also an accumulation of these artworks that you make, and you start to make connections looking back. And I think that's when I kind of realized that the core of my inquiry, that I'm always asking myself, that I'm always thinking about, is that feeling of loss, and this feeling of transience. Nothing lasts. And I think I use a lot of these objects that are around me because I'm an only child, and I think the moments when I think about





those are usually when I'm surrounded by things, alone. There's no other person, things that are around me are objects and spaces. So I think that those are some of the connections that I make in my work. That's the reason that I often think about that kind of fleeting nature of everything.

CHRISTIAN: Yeah, those are beautiful thoughts. Thank you for sharing that. The understanding of transience that I had before we walked in here was that it was a state of in-betweenness.

YOONMI: Yes.

CHRISTIAN: Which I think is encompassed in this definition, too, but I like how you're touching on the transientness of life. We are going to be here and not be here. The things around us might stay or leave, too. I wonder about what the ends of this in-betweenness are.

YOONMI: Ends?

CHRISTIAN: Yes. The beginnings and ends, the entrance and exits. I guess, what I'm asking is, what are sort of the rules for your practice. How do you start and how do you end?

YOONMI: Oh gosh, I don't know [laughs].

CHRISTIAN: [laughs] Sorry.

YOONMI: How do I start and how do I end? Sometimes I feel like I never finish. I always begin. I do have so many things kind of going at the same time because one might see my work and think that they're very different. Because they're all moving along kind of in a parallel way all at the same time because there are different kind of ways that I'm interested in, certain questions that I'm exploring, certain material that I'm using to kind of figure out that question. So I feel like there's always a beginning, but often not the end. It's just constant state of just going, the process. But I do appreciate what you were saying earlier about transience in relation to that sense of being in-between. Because that is another really important part of what I think about and I actually identify as that being between spaces and places. Neither here nor there. Specifically, I guess for me it's cultural, being in between where I'm from and where I am and where I think I will be in the future, those are two different places. From Korea, the east, and here in the U.S. So that's true also about what you said about transience.

CHRISTIAN: I think I wanna touch on a plot that's in there somewhere, and maybe we can work on this thought together. I'm thinking of the idea of home, and I think first I want to know what that means



to you in the context of this transience and in-betweenness. And then, there's a second part of this question that I am having trouble processing because this is all so pertinent to what I am interested in, too. I'm interested in the idea of many homes, the creation of home in places where there might not be one. So, let's start with, what is home to you? How do you navigate yourself there?

YOONMI: That's a really interesting question, which, I wanna know more about your work, too. But, you know how some people have this really strong sense of home? And that could be family, or that could be a very specific location, landscape, certain area, that could be a certain country. I never had that. I don't feel like I'm rooted anywhere, nor do I have any desire to be. Even though, it's really interesting that now I've lived in Kansas for over twenty years, and that feels pretty permanent. It kind of surprised me that I've lived there for so long, I've never lived in one place that long. But strangely, I still feel like for some reason I might pack up and leave. Not that I have any plans to, but I don't think I ever have this feeling of or this longing for a permanent place. And I don't know if it's because I sort of moved around a little bit—it's not like I moved around a lot, but I moved around to different places that had completely different kinds of ways of living. I lived in Canada when I was

little, I lived in Korea, I live here. And for me, to a degree it's tied to my immigration status, weirdly. Because I came to the U.S. thinking that I would go to graduate school without any future plans as to what's going to happen after that. That was open. So it was possible that I might move back to Korea, or go somewhere else, or stay. And the way that the immigration exit visa type of thing works, after I graduated from graduate school, I wanted to stay a little bit longer to, you know, explore the art world.

CHRISTIAN: For sure, stick around, see what's happening, all that.

YOONMI: Yeah. In order to do that, you have to have a job [laughs]. You can't just stick around. So just because of that reason, I applied for a job, and that's kind of how I got into academia and started teaching, because you need your job to sponsor your visa to be able to stay and work. So my immigration status from a student visa turned into a work visa. And with the job, I liked my job, I wanted to stay longer, that turned into applying for an extension for the work visa. And you can only have a certain number of years with the work visa. So then I'm sort of confronted with, okay, if I want to stay here longer, then I would have to apply for a green card.

CHRISTIAN: Right, and this is this process that's like carrying its own mo-

Yoonmi

mentum.

**YOONMI:** Exactly, exactly. So it is something that is just out of necessity for the career that I was having, the art work that I was making. Exactly what you said, just one thing led to another and it's just here I am, twenty-something years later. So even though I have lived in Kansas now, yeah.

**CHRISTIAN:** It still has been this like, constant exploration, constant pushing of the limit of how long you can be in a place, too.

**YOONMI:** Yeah, because I never set out to be, okay this is the place, I think I didn't go into this place thinking that, so far it never felt that way.

**CHRISTIAN:** It seems like, maybe to relate that back to your practice a little bit, this transience also relates to a sense of openness. I think that a lot of people would probably feel very overwhelmed by being in an unfixed place, kind of suspended and moving around constantly. But there is a kind of peace that can be offered or some other sense of openness and maybe, like, peace in the lack of control, I don't know.

**YOONMI:** Maybe. I do think though that there is something that I feel at home, just to go back to the idea of home. And

I don't necessarily think it's just a place. And more and more, nowadays, a lot of my close friends, people that I love, they don't live close to me. And in some ways, it really doesn't matter where you live anymore. That is more of a privileged point of view, where I can go and have access to online communication and fly and visit them. But because of that situation, I do feel like its more people that I associate more with that kind of feeling of stability and feeling of rootedness. Not necessarily a physical place.

**CHRISTIAN:** Yeah. I see in looking at my own life now and reflecting how much that also applies to me. I think I have one more question that I want to hit on that's a bit further away from this. When I was looking through your work and hearing back our conversation, I'm thinking about themes of navigation in this transience, but also play, and how important that becomes. I was looking at some of your previous projects and I noted that there was a level of interactivity with some of them, like flipping pages, or pop-up books or pop-up houses made of paper that people could play with or dismantle or something like that. How does navigation and play, interactivity, relate? Do you often think of those in your own work or in your collaborations? What are your thoughts there?

**YOONMI:** A lot of that work comes

from the collaborative work that I do with other people. I think as a printmaker, I consider print as an object. So I think prints are not just images, they're objects to me. So it needs to be handled. That's the point of view that I come from, that's my background. I enjoy looking at prints on the table, in my hands as opposed to on the wall. And that's really important because I see print as something that's dimensional, not just the literal dimensionality of the paper, but the way the ink layers on the surface, the building of that layer, and how that looks different. It changes with how the light hits the surface and as it's moving in time.

CHRISTIAN: It's dynamic.

YOONMI: Yeah. So I think that's my background, handling prints. And there is that kind of relationship between paper and book arts. Some of that collaborative work that I've been doing—I'm part of a collective called Box. And a lot of the more dimensional works are done through that collaboration. And we mailed each other works. Inevitably, there's a lot of holding that's involved, because the sheer necessity and practicality of being able to mail something, there is this act of flattening it in order to mail it, but it becomes dimensional when someone opens it. So that's really fun.

CHRISTIAN: I love that.

YOONMI: Yeah. And that limitation, I think, is what allows us to kind of play with that idea. Coming from both, as a printmaker background, thinking about print in a more dimensional way. This collective that I'm part of where we mail each other work, I think a lot of that comes from that. But paper is such an interesting material. It exists in a two dimensional space and three dimensional space, so it has so much potential. When you're using paper, it's really fun to play with that material. And also, if there is this option of paper becoming three dimensional, it requires somebody to handle it, so that's another necessity that I can take advantage of.

CHRISTIAN: Wow, we could continue this for another hour or two because I love everything you just said. I think particularly, how we're talking about the object in this sense, maybe because I'm in Oregon, a little further away from the art centers that I'm normally used to, a lot of talk about art work as object implies a sense of distance. Which is not something that I really agree with. So your definition of an object as something to be held and interacted with, as some kind of device for a relationship or something, I think that really speaks to me, I think that's beautiful.

YOONMI: That's great.

Yoonmi



**“How do I start and how do I end? Sometimes I feel like I never finish. I always begin.”**



Born and raised in Miami, Florida in 1983, **Jen Stark** now lives and works in Los Angeles. She has been exhibited globally, with major shows in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, Thailand, and Canada. Recently included as one of Fortune's "NFTy 50," Stark made history in March 2021, as the first female artist to make Foundation's top 10 highest-selling NFT creatives. Her work is held in the collections of institutions such as the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the West Collection, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, NSU Art Museum, and MOCA Miami, among others.

Jen

**Jen Stark  
in conversation with  
David Peña**

**Stark**

DAVID PEÑA: To ease into it, what comes to mind with the word psychedelic?

JEN STARK: To me, what comes to mind is '70s neon posters, mushrooms, magical worlds, going into other dimensions. Yeah, that sort of thing.

DAVID: That sort of thing. I love that. I feel like it's a word that I've been using a lot within my own practice. I love that sort of feeling, psychedelic imagery. To play off of it is, what is the most surreal or strangest dream that you remember?

JEN: Ooh, that's a tough one. I would just say generally, a lot of my dreams are either—I've been having these armageddon dreams, for years, where on this adventure, the world has kind of ended, and I'm surviving, and I'm going through life, and it's kind of exciting, you know? It's not scary. I'm just problem solving, figuring things out. And then these other dreams I have are of underwater whales, underwater sea creatures, just surfacing in my dreams and maybe giving me a message. But I'm not sure what it is.

DAVID: Oh, interesting. So these are reoccurring?

JEN: Yeah.

DAVID: Woah, that's cool. I love

that imagery. Okay, this is kind of a fun one, and I'm just curious for yourself, do you listen to music in your studio, and what's your favorite music you're listening to this month?

JEN: I do, I listen to music every-day in the studio. It's usually pretty chill vibes, like vaporwave-y type stuff. I've been listening to a lot of John Wizards, who are this tiny band from South Africa. And they haven't put out new music for years, and I'm like, please! Put something out! And they finally put out a single a couple weeks ago, so thank gosh for that.

DAVID: Oh, awesome. I can't wait to look that up. Yeah, I use Spotify sometimes and I'll be like, new release! From an artist that you like, and always, right away, I gotta hear it. How do you approach experimentation with materials, or what is it like to experiment in your studio?

JEN: I'll experiment based on the idea. So I'll come up with a concept, and then I'll typically sketch stuff out in my sketchbook first. And I'll come up with a few different game plans. Then, depending on the concept, that's when I'll choose the material. Back in the day, I was doing a lot of cut paper sculptures, but more and more I'm gravitating towards more durable materials like metal, wood, glass. I'm doing a glass edition that's coming out soon.



Yeah, so the idea will kind of inform the material, and I'll go from there.

DAVID: Interesting, because that relates to another question. I love your installations and sculptures. How do you know when you have a good idea and you're ready to commit to it on a large scale?

JEN: It starts in the sketchbook, and I usually sketch out all of these strongest iterations, what I think would be the strongest and the best. When I'm one hundred percent satisfied with one, then I'll know. I'll know that's the one, there's kind of no denying it, and then I'll figure out how to get it made. If it's a huge sculpture or project, I'll have to reach out to fabricators and figure it all out.

DAVID: What's your approach when it comes to collaborating with other artists? Say, helping install a large scale sculpture? Is it homies, or is it trying to reach out and find the right people? How do you work in that sense?

JEN: It's a little of both, but more I work with professions who I vibe with. If it's someone who's rubbed me the wrong way, or done something kind of weird, I try to find a new person to collab with. Life is short, and I only want to work with good people who are on the same page as me.

DAVID: Yeah. I'm realizing that more and more. Like who do I wanna give energy to?

JEN: Yes. Exactly.

DAVID: Yeah. I'm a long time fan of your work. I've noticed the shift from your early drawings in 2009 such as *Celestial Continuum*.

JEN: Yeah!

DAVID: *Double Rainbow Rainbow*, *Elementary Particles*, which are explosive cells moving, organic forms and biologic, compared to the direction that you are in now, which have a familiar feeling, but are different in approach and direction. I'm curious if you can talk about the progression and exploration over the years that have led to your current work. Like, what in your life was happening during that shift?

JEN: Yeah, earlier on, I feel like I was doing more doodling and experimenting and that's what those drawings were. They were just me sitting down in front of a piece of paper and not really thinking too much, just stream-of-consciousness doodling until I have this big finished drawing. And I think, more and more, I'm getting a little more ordered in my approaches, like I usually have a plan of what I'm gonna do. I don't know if it's necessarily a good thing,

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maybe I should get a little more loose. And also being in Los Angeles has enabled me to build so many more things than I could in Miami, like glass, sculptures, plastic, metal stuff, like CNC water jet cut. I just didn't have resources in Miami, so that's shifted my way of thinking on a bigger, grander scale.

DAVID: I sort of love that environment, or location dictating material resources. And I think that's true for a lot of artists. If you're in Mexico City, and there's something there, or if you're in New York, the space dictates the potential and what you create.

JEN: Yeah, and opening your mind to it. Getting a piece of wood CNC cut, I go to their shop, and I'm like, oh, you have a laser cutter, too? Okay, let's see what we can do with this. Kind of just learning what tools there are and what can be done, having that shape my art.

DAVID: I love that. I don't have many more, I think this is a good one. How does family and community play a role for you as an artist? Where do you find community?

JEN: For me, community is the people I work with and my friends. There's a pretty great artist community in Los Angeles, and that's one of the reasons I'm there.

There's so many creative people to get inspired by. I also have assistants who I feel like they're my community. We just come to the studio every day, chat about ideas, chat about things and just brainstorm together. For me, I feel like I'm always around people, so that's part of my creative community that helps me come up with ideas, bounce things around. It's fun.

DAVID: That's really cool to hear. Right now I'm living with a MFA that's in the program, he's my roommate, and there's a really nice dynamic that's happening right now. We're excited and sharing ideas. Like, oh yeah, we should do that! And I really appreciate that sort of sense of camaraderie and trying to develop ideas even further, mutually.

JEN: Yeah, exactly.

**“For me, I feel like I’m always around people, so that’ part of my creative community that helps me come up with ideas, bounce things around.”**

**Steerk**



**Naama Tsabar's** practice fuses elements from sculpture, music, performance, and architecture. Her interactive works expose hidden spaces and systems, reconceive gendered narratives, and shift the viewing experience to one of active participation. Tsabar draws attention to the muted and unseen by propagating sound through space and sculptural form. Between sculpture and instrument, form, and sound, Tsabar's work lingers on the intimate, sensual and corporeal potentials within this transitional state. Collaborating with local communities of female identifying and gender non-conforming performers, Tsabar challenges the canon of mastery by writing new feminist and queer histories of mastery. Naama Tsabar (b. 1982, Israel) lives and works in New York. She received her MFA from Columbia University in 2010. Solo exhibitions and performances have been presented at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), Museum of Art and Design (New York), The High Line Art (New York), Nasher Museum (Durham, NC), Kunsthaus Baselland (Switzerland), Palais De Tokyo (Paris), Prospect New Orleans, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, The Herzliya Museum for Contemporary Art in Israel, MARTE-C (El Salvador), CCA Tel Aviv (Israel), Faena Buenos Aires, Frieze Projects New York, Kasmin (New York), Paramo Gallery (Guadalajara), Dvir Gallery (Israel and Brussels), Spinello Projects (Miami) Shulamit Nazarian (Los Angeles), The Bass Museum (Miami), Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art (Connecticut). Her work has been featured in publications including ArtForum, Art In America, ArtReview, ARTnews, The New York Times, New York Magazine, Frieze, Bomb Magazine, Art Asia Pacific, Wire, and Whitewall, among others.





**Naama Tsabar  
in conversation with  
Noa Taylor**

**Tsabar**

**NOA TAYLOR:** After our conversation and looking closer at your work — I'm curious about the relationship between objects and the body in my own work — and in *Melodies of Certain Damage*, the smashed guitar on the floor seems to require a very particular posturing of the body in order to play it. But in my mind, it also kind of decenters the body in a way? I would be curious to hear you talk about that, and I'm also curious about your choices regarding the shifts in the relationship between object and body and how that might be further qualified by using women and queer people as the performers of those instruments.

**NAAMA TSABAR:** So *Melodies of Certain Damage*, first of all, there's a transformation of the object before the body is even put into the composition. The transformation is one that happens in my studio. I break the guitar. It scatters the way it scatters. I screw it down, put new sets of strings onto it, and every time it's installed, it's installed in exactly the way it scattered. There's a chance element built into the work. So some of the works are fourteen feet long, some of them are more compressed, depending on the guitar, the wood it's made of, just my energy that day. So that's the first thing, the transformation from an object to a place. The guitar as an object, something you hold, becomes a place, and as a place, it's something you

insert your body into rather than hold. So, if we think of instruments that are places I would think of a piano as kind of a place, drum kits as a place, it's something that is bigger than you and encompasses your body. Within those works, they're on the floor, and for me I was thinking of this landscape of debris. And I work with female identifying and gender non-conforming musicians only these days. And the works are interactive while on display, so viewers could play them, but for the performative act, thinking about the position of the body, of the performer, on the floor while people are standing, as a place of compromise. So there is the decentralizing of the performance aspect of it, and the body in that sense by the scattering. But also it is inherently a place that is compromised where you are on the floor and somebody is standing and looking down at you. And I was interested in that relationship between the objects, the performative body, and the viewer, and how, as women, as queer people, as gender non-conforming musicians, do we enter that place from a place of power. How do we go into something that is considered compromised from a place that we control it and it's our decision and from a powerful place? That is the vocabulary I work with when I start writing and composing these performances with participators. I think destabilizing the central nature of the performance is a part of it, but it's also rethinking the place



of the relationship between the audience and the performer. And seeing something that has tenderness and intimacy and is a bit compromised or open as something that is actually a strength.

NOA: Yeah, I am really drawn to the chance aspect of the smashing. That's really interesting. And I like your framing of the compromise there, that seems really important. More along the lines of the instruments, I was also curious about the use of the guitar in relationship to the architecture of the space that you're working in, which feels really important. But I was also curious about what drew you to, I guess, using more physical instruments in the first place, as opposed to using something like a synth or something that would certainly shift that architectural relationship.

NAAMA: Well, I have a musical background, and I play, for a lot of my life, piano, classical and jazz, and I played electric guitar, and so those are instruments that are very accessible to me and my understanding of them and my relationship with them, and having them against my body, having them next to me, performing sound out of them. So in my early twenties, going to undergrad, I had an electro-punk band that I was in, I was performing in clubs. So those instruments, specifically the guitar, was something that was a mediator for me to insert my body into perfor-

mative roles. So that's one that's stuck with me. But also there's the history of, specifically the guitar, is interesting for me. It's a newer history within the instrumental world. And it's one that through the history of rock and roll has been very gendered, even just through its shape. So I was interested in rethinking that instrument. And when they break, for example in Melodies of Certain Damage, I don't call them guitars anymore, I call them breaks. Because for me, they've transformed. That transformation is interesting for me, and my point of interest with them architecturally is one that's connected to my own history.

NOA: I'm also curious about your formal processes. You've talked about the chance that happens with the smashing, but looking at some of your other pieces, I'm intrigued by the clean, pared down look, especially with your felt pieces and the contrast with what I think of as traditional rock venues, and the kind of sticky, grunginess that comes with my association of those places. So I'm curious if that's a negotiation for you?

NAAMA: Yeah, it's not a negotiation. For me, I don't think about rock and roll when I go to the studio. And with felt, for me, the points of departure were Joseph Beuys and Robert Morris. Specifically with Beuys with his works, using it as an absorber, the material absorbing heating,

# Tsai bear

but also specifically absorbing sound, and its use and materiality within pianos, ukuleles, or other instruments that have felt on different parts of them to silence them. And so as an absorber of sound and as a silencer, I was interested in flipping it and making it to be a resonator of sound. And the same thing with Morris, you know, with his gravity sculpted felts. These felts—and of course they're not only felts, they look like felts, but they have another material in them that gives them these characteristics that are not in line with their visuality, so they're complex, they're a bit of a lie. In that sense, they're not minimalist, they're not what you see. But with Morris's gravity sculpted felts, these are in a way a complete opposite where it's the resistance, the resistance is what sculpts. And that's also what makes a certain pitch on the piano string that is helping to sculpt it. So I didn't think at all about grunginess, nor any rock and roll.

NOA: Wow, thank you. And I have one more question. The way I had initially framed it was as what comes after the guitar smash, but looking at your work more closely and, at least in my understanding, denying that as the climax of the event, and instead laying out the performance with the smashed guitar as its own event. And so I'm still kind of curious still what comes after that after, in a way. Are you going somewhere new from there, or do

you think about where you sort of go?

NAAMA: For me, the work starts after the break. With other works, I am interested in the cliché moment of the break, that cathartic moment. I try to subvert it and rethink it through my work *Untitled Babies* and some of my other works that deal with the guitar as an instrument. But with *Melodies of Certain Damage*, for me, the point where I start is the point where history left off. After the break. So I'm dealing with the pieces on the floor. It's a bit weird for me to say, but I started thinking about these works around the Arab Spring, when the atrocities that were happening, of regimes trying to put their people down violently, but also the emergence of Isis in Syria, and the bombing of all the archaeological sites. The need to ruin the ruins, you know? Break the breaks. What's left—I was interested in those breaks, in those moments where things are destroyed. But not in the destruction of it, but what do you do after.



**“The need to ruin the  
ruins, you know?  
Break the breaks...  
But not in the destruction  
of it, but what do you  
do after.”**

**Tsabar**

**Marie Watt** is an American artist and citizen of the Seneca Nation with German-Scot ancestry. Her interdisciplinary work draws from history, biography, Iroquois protofeminism, and Indigenous teachings; in it, she explores the intersection of history, community, and storytelling. Through collaborative actions she instigates multi-generational and cross-disciplinary conversations that might create a lens and conversation for understanding connectedness to place, one another, and the universe. Watt holds an MFA in painting and print-making from Yale University; she also has degrees from Willamette University and the Institute of American Indian Arts; and in 2016 she was awarded an honorary doctorate from Willamette University. Marie serves on the executive board for VoCA (Voices in Contemporary Art) and on the Native Advisory Committee at the Portland Art Museum and in 2020 became a member of the Board of Trustees at the Portland Art Museum. She is represented by PDX Contemporary Art in Portland, Oregon, Catharine Clark Gallery in San Francisco, California, and Marc Straus Gallery in New York City, New York.

Marie

**Marie Watt  
in conversation with  
Sydney Lee**

**Watt**



**“I think that it’s  
important to sort of put  
blinders on, obstacles  
be damned, and more  
forward and explore the  
terrains and territories  
you want to explore”**

**maurie**





**SYDNEY Lee:** To start out, I'm curious about your relationship to craft based on the materials that you use. I'm a craftsperson and I'm having a sort of dilemma in my art practice where I'm trying to situate myself as both craft and fine art at the same time. So I was curious how you situate yourself between the two.

**MARIE Watt:** I have lived with that same struggle and I think that your generation might be better positioned to straddle both and have it all. And I would say that when I was in graduate school, I was challenged by people regarding the materials I used and I found it difficult and not necessarily supportive. And I think sometimes it's made me want to lean toward, well I should say, I've always seen an intersection between art and craft. I don't think you can divide the two. I think they're one in the same. But of course we're inheriting a history that has kind of siloed these two arenas and I think that it's nice to kind of finally see art and craft being shown side by side with less delineation. And I think it's really important for artists to not get bogged down with that kind of terminology. I don't know, I have a lot more to say, but it's also the topic I'm the least articulate about! I feel like I'm really awkward about it.

**SYDNEY:** [laughs] I know it's a hard topic, I am too. I'm just trying to find

my words and it almost feels like I will never find the right words. But knowing in yourself is, you know.

**MARIE:** Yeah, I think one thing that's really challenging about being an artist is sometimes the obstacles we put in front of ourselves, and those obstacles oftentimes, we can see them in art history, but I think that it's important to sort of put blinders on, obstacles be damned, and move forward and explore the terrains and territories you want to explore without getting bogged down with that history.

**SYDNEY:** Okay, another craft-ish question. When creating specifically your large Skywalker/Skyscraper pieces, are you thinking about the tactile history that the blankets you source hold, and where and how do you source them?

**MARIE:** I've always kind of sourced blankets from thrift stores, and I am starting to struggle more with that relationship because when I was using blankets in 2004, polar fleece was brand new on the market and I feel like everybody was getting rid of their wool blankets and going for polar fleece. And I feel like now actually, funny enough, thinking of craft, I think that people are seeing the value of wool blankets not just as heirloom objects but also in regards to other things that can be made with them and leaning in to that history and



story that's attached to that object. What was the other part of your question?

SYDNEY: Just where you source them.

MARIE: Yeah, that's where I source them.

SYDNEY: I am a quilter and I've noticed this resurgence in old quilts. The same thing, where people are buying them to use to make clothing or other objects, and I think there is great opportunity to give this thing a second life. I know some people are against chopping up old quilts or blankets to make things, but I'm totally for it because it brings a second life to this thing.

MARIE: Yeah, I think it adds to the story of the object and it acquires new stories but those other stories are like ghosts, or they're still embodied in that piece of cloth, which I think is the exciting thing about that. And truthfully some of those objects could end up in landfills.

SYDNEY: Yeah, exactly. Text often plays a part in your work. Is writing an integral part of your practice? Are you finding these writings out in the world or are they coming from personal experience?

MARIE: I feel really awkward and uncomfortable using text, and I think that's

why I do use language. I do some writing but not nearly as much as I think I could or should. And I do like reading poetry occasionally.

SYDNEY: Okay, one final question that's more fun. We recently, five of us MFAs, had a show here about pets, focusing on our relationship with pets. So do you have animals and how do they play a part in your work?

MARIE: Yes, I used to say I was a cat person, and during the pandemic we, like so many people, got a dog. And so we have a cat named Peggy and a dog named Leonard. Lenny is an Australian shepherd-black lab mix. And Lenny comes with me to the studio and one of the things we do in the studio when I document work, we have a hashtag that I want to invite everybody to use. It's called 'dogs for scale', you could do pets for scale or cats for scale. One of the things I love about including the studio dogs in photos of finished pieces or just even in general, I like them being part of the story, because they do really add another, I was gonna say they humanize the work. But I think of ourselves as related to animals, and related to water and trees and even rocks, things that we think of as inanimate, I probably think that a lot of these things have these animate spirits. And so I think that having our pets present tells that additional story about our connectedness.

Marie

**“Those other stories are like ghosts, or they’re still embodied in that piece of cloth”**

**Wette**

**Carmen Winant** is an artist and the Roy Lichtenstein Chair of Studio Art at the Ohio State University; her work utilizes installation and collage strategies to examine feminist modes of survival and revolt. Winant's recent projects have been shown at the Museum of Modern Art, Sculpture Center, Wexner Center of the Arts, the Cleveland Museum of Art, The Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, and as part of the CONTACT Photography Festival, which mounted twenty-six of her billboards across Canada. Forthcoming projects will take place at The Print Center (Philadelphia), ICA Boston, and Minneapolis Institute of Art. Winant's recent artist's books include *My Birth* (2018), *Notes on Fundamental Joy* (2019), and *Instructional Photography: Learning How To Live Now* (2021); she is a 2019 Guggenheim Fellow in photography, a 2020 FCA Artist Honoree and a 2021 American Academy of Arts and Letters award recipient. Winant is a mother to her two sons, Carlo and Rafa, whom she shares with her partner Luke Stettner.

Carmen



# **Carmen Winant in conversation with Noa Taylor**

# **Winant**

**NOA TAYLOR:** One of the first questions I wanted to ask you was something that we touched on briefly in our studio visit, which was when you mentioned how bodily representation and the internal visceral representation of women and of non-men is still considered a radical move, generally. And I was wondering if you could elaborate on the way that you're thinking about that as a radical move, specifically your definition of radical in that sense? And also your approach to bodily representation in your own work.

**CARMEN WINANT:** I want to clarify a little bit on that — in the context of that conversation, I was talking about specifically working in and around the abject, which is not necessarily something I think about doing in my work, but is something that I admire deeply in other people's work. So, I'm not sure if that makes sense for me to go into because it doesn't necessarily apply to my practice.

**NOA:** Well, we could talk about how you approach bodily representation in your work? I know that you're not really thinking about abjection, but I still feel like there's a certain viscerality to it, especially with the Birth Pictures. I guess, if you think about visceralness at all?

**CARMEN:** Yes. I don't necessarily position it at the center of my work, but

yes. I think to be a feminist and to be an artist who contends with the fullness of human experience beyond the purity of the studio, one need reckon with our insides. And I've always been interested in that because it is a feminist issue, right? Like birth is a feminist issue, bodily autonomy is a feminist issue. Needless to say, coercive reproduction and forced maternity is a feminist issue. Motherhood is a feminist issue, which is something I engage in hourly. So as I'm wiping my children's shit, or changing their diapers, day after day, year after year, how can I not be thinking on it in the studio? And also larger concentric circles of being an artist, and a human being and a citizen in the world, about the connection between our living, pulsing bodies and our larger body politic.

**NOA:** I was also curious about materials with your work. I've been looking at some artists who are using photo-collage, and I'm curious about where that boundary is for you between photograph and collage, and the integration of sculpture.

**CARMEN:** I'm trained as a photographer, so that is, in some sense, my first language or my entry point into art making always. Photographic histories, lexicons, and so forth. But I haven't made my own pictures for well over ten years, and I've instead inculcated, amalgamated other people's pictures. I have been able in that

process to really come to see photographs as objects. Not as flat, illusionistic surfaces, but really as something tangible, material, something that circulates in the world, that's printed on different kinds of paper, that's touched and wiped away by different kinds of hands. In that sense it's not really a reach for me to think about how "material" interacts with "photography" because for me they're the same thing. But it has enabled me, and sort of opened me up for more of an experimental yield because I don't feel precious about it — for the most part. Sometimes I do. But about these things that I find, about sticking them into clay, smearing them with food coloring, for me that feels like a natural marriage. I know that's like [laughs] perverse for some people, but I suppose it's a way for me to triangulate between photography, collage, sculpture, installation. But I don't think about it that way in the studio, I only talk about it that way when pressed to like account for my work, you know?

**NOA:** Do you have thoughts around it then, not like the jargon you say when you're pressed for it? Is that a conscious thought process in your work, or is it more unconscious, working with materials?

**CARMEN:** Maybe somewhere in between. You know when you're a teenager, and you're just like a raw nerve, and

you're putting shit up all over your wall and you're so deeply attracted to kinds of images or arrangements? It took me a really long time, decades, to circle back to that logic and understand it as being intelligent. So I think I'm operating from that place. As we talked about today, I really am interested in experimental impulse in making art — of course, we're having this conversation, and I'm interested in cerebral pathways — but I am a body in the studio, and I spend my day as a body taking care of other little bodies. I think a lot about how to bring my body in contact with the material.

**NOA:** I have one last question — are there any questions or topics that you don't usually get to talk about in interviews that you wish you were able to more?

**CARMEN:** Yes. I think there's two of them. One is bookmaking because artists' books, books period, are such a central part or kind of pivot point in my work. Using books to make the work, but also ultimately making books. It's so hard, books are such an intimate experience. It's so hard to project them in a powerpoint, you know, and describe them in any way that feels apt. And the other thing that's really immaterial is the social relationships that one builds up in working this way. There's no powerpoint slide that can account for that. One can't, or shouldn't just, like, strut into an archive or an organization or some-



body's house and be like, let me see what I can take here that'll fit my needs. Where is the reciprocity there? Where is the trust? How do you build that? That's a profound social experience and experiment. And that's so hard to account for in these conversations, or if I come to a school to do a talk in this shiny classroom projecting my slides. It's like, no, I can't just walk into a domestic violence support center and be, like, show me your materials! Right? Like, I'm an artist! That's not how that shit works. And ultimately, and I hope that this comes across, I don't mean this in just a self-serving way, those have been the most meaningful relationships of my life and they sustain beyond X or Y project because there is mutual investment. That is so hard to talk about.

Chairman



**“Where is the reciprocity there? Where is the trust? How do you build that? That’s a profound social experience and experiment.”**

**Windent**

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