A Publication of The Ford Family Foundation Visual Arts Program

I Am Alive

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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON | Center for Art Research

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The Ford Family Foundation, University of Oregon, Reed College, and the Pacific Northwest College of Art are located on the traditional homelands of Indigenous people. Since the arrival of European explorers, the Indigenous people of Oregon have repeatedly been dispossessed of their land by settler colonialism, including the United States government and their policies to forcibly remove the Indigenous populations to reservations in Oregon and around the country. Today, the descendants of Oregon's first people continue to make important contributions to communities, institutions, the state of Oregon, the United States, and to the world.

In acknowledging the original people of the land we occupy, we extend our respect to the Indigenous people of Oregon and all other displaced Indigenous people who call Oregon home. With this publication and our collective activity, Critical Conversations recognizes Oregon's first people as the past, present, and future stewards of this land, and we pledge our commitment to make ongoing efforts to center Indigenous existence and related knowledge, creativity, resilience, and resistance in the work we do.

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Editorial Statement

This Critical Conversations edition gets its title from an eight-foot-tall beaded textile work by Jeffrey Gibson. *ALIVE!* is heavy with the weight of glass beads and rows of tin jingles, its color and pattern in the lineage of Gibson's Choctaw and Cherokee nations. The sculpture's weight takes flight with a proclamation of space, conjures Jingle Dances, and celebrates: *I AM ALIVE, YOU ARE ALIVE, THEY ARE ALIVE, WE ARE LIVING!*

Gibson is an exceptional celebrator of contemporary Indigeneity, a MacArthur Fellow who brought Fancy Dancers to the American Pavillion at the Venice Biennial this year, breaking expectations and making fucking history.

There is a generational aspiration to join Gibson in chorus. We heard it over and over, from varied practices and positions throughout the state, as the work of this collection's writers crossed our inboxes. We put their stories forward hoping they make room for more. From those who have struggled to find authentic teachers, about those who have taught, and the conversations that consider art and community every day to inch our world toward a slightly better condition.

As editors, we still find remarkable distances traveled since the 2020 launch of this project. We aim to run a publication that travels distances too and we are in the lab thinking about platform and how we connect with our readers to amplify the artists whose work we are here for. With ambitions to be the rising tide that lifts all boats, this publication is a collection of casts from the bows of vessels coming from a range of places who harbor in shared waters.

Many thanks to Jeffrey Gibson for encouragement to use his work as a compass. *ALIVE!* is permanently installed in Portland State University's Vanport Building in Portland, Oregon, and is part of the State of Oregon Percent for Art Collection, managed by the Oregon Arts Commission.

I Am Alive

I Am Alive

Photo Courtesy Woodrow Hunt and Olivia Camfield

• I Am Alive • • You Are Alive • • • They Are Alive • • • • We Are Living

Amber Kay Ball
(Dakubetede, Shasta, Modoc, Klamath)
Citizen of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

Untitled

OUCH!

I hold my hand up to see the needle stabbed straight through my thumb, and I'm reminded once again how humbling Creator can be.

I remove the needle, and the tiniest drop of blood appears. I turn over my piece to see the stitches. Along the last rows of white thread are the faintest stains of red—a part of me in each creation. My hands act as a conduit between materials, and I feel lucky to work with them. Shells, beads, leather—all before me, waiting to be stitched into place to bring together purpose. All these materials I consider to be living; they've lived lives, had journeys, and are now meeting in relation with each other.

When doing beadwork, I was told to hold the best intentions—to say your prayers and understand that when you're working with your hands in this way, it's important that you create from a place of positivity and love. Beadwork is a living practice, and when you complete your work and share it with others, you want them to carry those loved energies that you share.

My stepfather Louis LaChance taught me how to bead when I was a kid. The first technique I learned was the flat stitch. I would watch him finish a row and then I would give it a try.

Thread my needle
Wax and knot the end of the thread
Don't forget to burn the loose ends with your favorite lighter

Seven beads on a thread
Tack down row through canvas
Go back four beads
Send needle up and over the row to tack
Guide needle through the last bead and continue

> *"I used to watch my older cousins. I would always hear stories from my dad and older folk about how they did beadwork and had to make a living off it. My beadwork process gets started with a dream… whether it's an animal or flower—geometric. Something just comes to me and I go with it."*
> —Louis LaChance, Stepfather (Enrolled Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians)

I didn't like beading when I was first introduced to it. I heavily felt the length of the creation, and I was impatient. It took me years to understand that the patience demanded by the process is part of the healing journey within myself. I was letting go of trying to control what was before me. Understanding that perfectionism will hold me back from learning lessons I can grow from.

Mistakes would be my greatest mentor.

Error would be my greatest guide.

It took me years to realize this, and led me to trying different forms of creation.

I switched to necklace making, which I enjoyed. I'd sit and watch how my mom and stepdad would piece necklaces together using trade beads, dentalium, and olivella or nasset shells. Some good money. Or my favorite part: wrapping the sinew in white elkhide or smoked leather. The smell of smoked leather. This was my cherry on top of the cake, the relief and pride of the last detail.

My mother, Kelly LaChance, taught me how to string together our necklaces. We are Siletz Tribal members, Shasta and Dakubetede descendants from Southern Oregon and Northern California. My mother would take me material gathering. She'd tell me that our materials liked to be talked and sung to, so she taught me a gathering song that we would sing while collecting shells.

> *"We would go to a special place to gather shells that we used for necklaces and traditional regalia. Before we started, we would offer tobacco, and sing a shell gathering song. As we gathered, we were always amazed by how the shells would show themselves to us. She (my daughter Amber) would always find a white shell or two to add to her collection. These are very special, and after we were done, we thanked the shells, the ocean, and the area for the gifts."*
> —Kelly LaChance, Mother (Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians)

I consider myself a contemporary self-taught beadwork artist. I started with a single thread flat stitch, and taught myself two needle flat stitch later in life. I thrive in constructing contemporary pieces that amplify Indigenous ways of being through abundant and bold works. Beadwork is a living practice that has been integral to many transformative points in my life.

My most special piece is *Coming Home*. It was created in 2022, the winter before I moved back home to Oregon. This was important, as I created it to capture a moment in time. The Klamath Dam removal was in progress, and we were at the start of witnessing our salmon relatives beginning their journey back home. This felt like a calling, as I was told that when the salmon come home, so do the people.

The salmon are interconnected with us as a people; they are woven into our DNA, and inseparable from our ancestry. We have always

Amber Kay Ball, *Coming Home*, 2021. Glass beads, Olivella shells, pine nuts, abalone shells, smoked elk hide, 26 × 5 × 1 in (66.04 × 12.7 × 2.54 cm). Courtesy The Arts Center, Corvallis, Oregon

Amber Kay Ball, *Ancestor Box, what's left behind,* 2024. Glass beads, dentalium shells, freshwater pearls, stainless steel, vintage jewelry box, 8½ × 7 × 6 in (21.59 × 17.78 × 15.24 cm). Courtesy Multnomah Arts Center, Portland, Oregon

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known each other. Moving back home to Oregon, I wanted to create a medallion—a large circular beaded piece with beautiful necklace strands—in order to capture the emotion of returning by choosing materials from home that I had gathered and selected.

Vintage Venetian seed beads
24k gold and sterling silver cut beads
Pine nuts
Olivella shells
Abalone
Smoked leather

It was a special moment when I showed this work in my first group exhibition. I'd never considered my work to be in the field of visual art; I create in order to find peace in my healing journey—mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally.

Each piece contains prayer
Each piece contains love
Each piece contains memory
Each piece holds a part of me

After I finished stringing the necklace of *Coming Home*, tying it off with elk hide, it was time to mail the work off to the gallery.

I felt emotional, and was surprised by the sadness, so I spoke to the work and shared my gratitude.

Thank you for representing a part of me and my people.

Thank you, Creator, for this time I had less needles in my thumb, and fewer red stitches.

Born in Portland, Oregon, Amber Kay Ball is a theater maker, visual artist, and community-based advocate. Amber draws inspiration for their work from ancestral and contemporary ways of being and knowing. Traditionally, their people are from Southern Oregon and Northern California, Dakubetede, Shasta, Modoc, and Klamath. As a contemporary Native multipractice artist, Amber uses theater, multimedia, and beadwork as mediums for sharing stories, truths, laughter, joy, and medicine. These mediums allow them to critically explore, honor, and weave Native pasts, presents, and futures in a just and liberated format.

Amber was a recipient of the Indigenous Place Keeping Artist Fellowship through the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and received the Community Mentor Award from Southern Oregon University's Native American Studies Department. Additionally, Amber received a degree in Theater Arts and Native American Studies from the University of Oregon.

Photo courtesy the artist

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June L. Park

That Sliver of Awareness

I'm a lifelong Pacific Northwesterner. I grew up in a small town in North Central Idaho. In middle school, I was a cheerleader, ran track, and played soccer. I was a relentless tomboy with a wild spirit. My favorite times were spent crabbing and clamming on the Oregon Coast, as well as camping and fishing at Lake Pend Oreille. I'm a first-generation Korean immigrant, and when people hear about my rural upbringing, they're taken aback.

As a rural kid, I grew up with the belief that an urban environment would be more comfortable for me. I moved to Seattle, seeking acceptance in communities that shared my racial and queer identity. But urban exceptionalism is a myth; despite appearing inclusive on the surface, there's often unspoken exclusion within communities. Internalized *isms* in these communities primarily surface as subconscious ticks in words, actions, and thoughts that are subtly violent, masked as sticky, sweet kindness or aggressive insecurities and fears projected onto others.

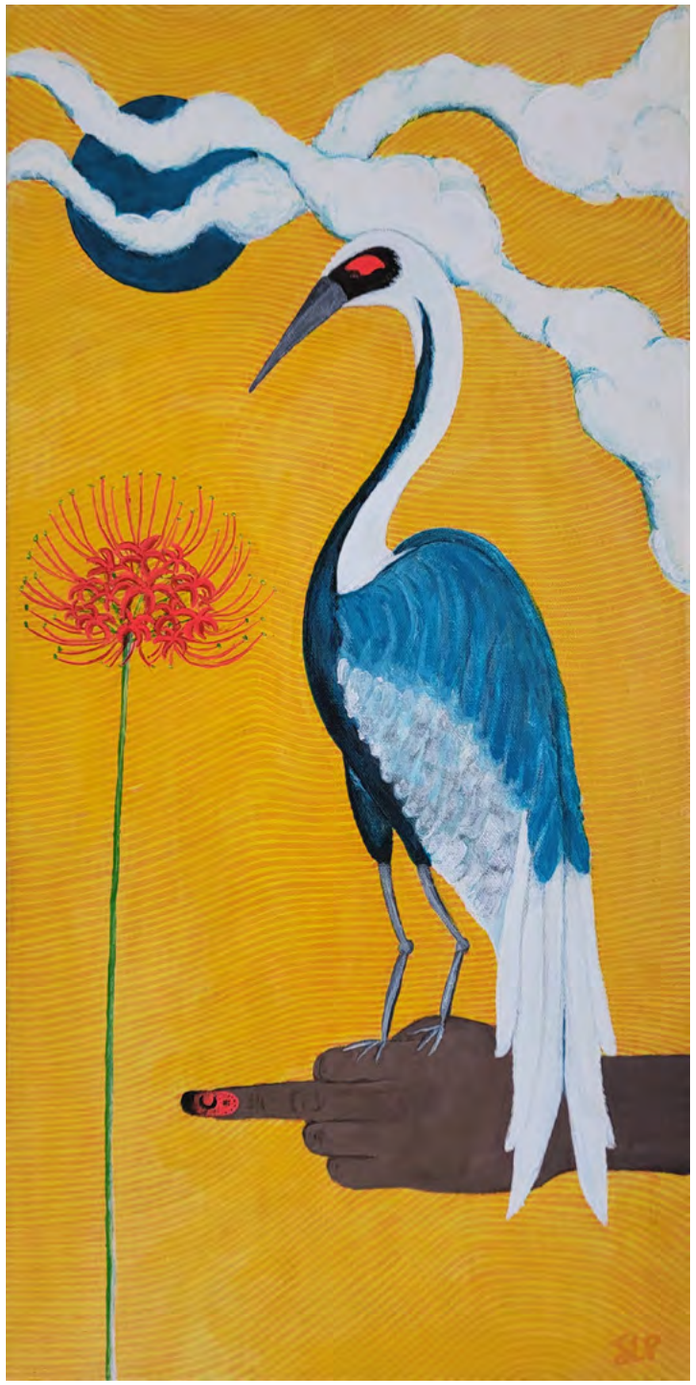
We've heard them all, haven't we?

I don't see color. You're not Asian enough. Your Korean isn't good enough. Are you trying to be white with the way you speak? You're not gay enough to be queer. Oh…are you sure you're queer? I think if you were really queer, you'd be a dyke or lesbian. Why aren't you acting more girly? You're a girl, act like a girl! Don't try to be like a man. If you don't feel like a girl, do you want to be a man?

Or the internal ones that no one talks about…

When you see someone who is racially or physically different from you, do you think it's unusual to meet a BIPOC who speaks English with an American accent? Do you assume BIPOC you see in rural places didn't grow up there? When a white stranger stares at us in rural places, what goes through our heads as BIPOC? Do we always assume malicious intent, even though we exchange no words? Do you have your own racialized bias

June L. Park, *Jim*, 2022.
Acrylic on canvas, 24 × 12 in
(60.96 × 30.48 cm).
Courtesy of private collector



against BIPOC who grew up in rural places? Do you assume they will "act white," hate themselves, and other BIPOC?

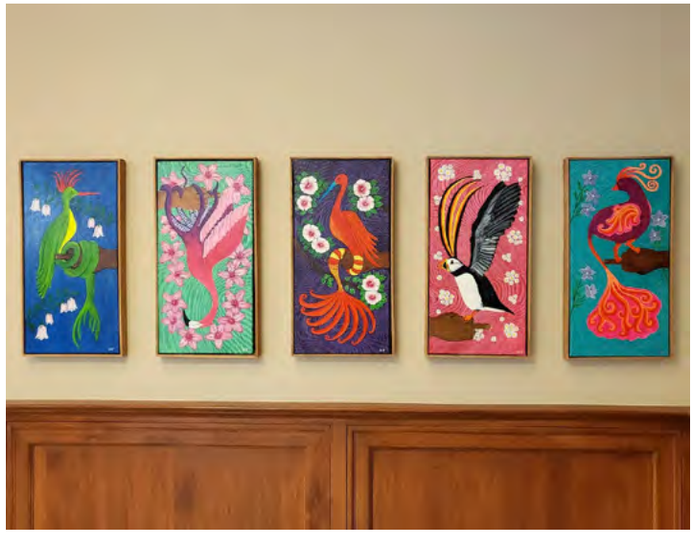
People engage in mental gymnastics to fit BIPOC and queer folk into their predefined schemata, often confining us to urban or foreign contexts. Colonizers used this same type of narrative to justify stealing land and controlling BIPOC, queer, and femme bodies. Marginalized people use this same narrative to protect against violence, and to survive the onslaught of stereotypes that diminish our existence and keep us unseen. People use the same narrative when they approach me.

People immediately assume I was adopted by nice, white Christians who saved me from being abandoned by my people. This is the most common narrative Americans have about Koreans who speak English without an accent. When they hear I grew up in a small college town, they're relieved, and believe this somehow made the racism, sexism, and queerphobia less prevalent. We should stop believing this, knowing what's happening across colleges right now. When they find out my father was a professor, they're relieved because this agrees with their assumptions about Asians being well educated and belonging at a university. And they assume that my life was very difficult because of ignorant, racist, and queerphobic people.

The truth is that people who are ignorant, racist, and queerphobic are everywhere. They're often people who claim not to be.

June L. Park, *Sian*, 2023.
Acrylic on canvas, 24 × 12 in
(60.96 × 30.48 cm).
Courtesy of private collector

June L. Park, *Chris*, 2022.
Acrylic on canvas, 24 × 12 in
(60.96 × 30.48 cm).
Courtesy of private collector



I like living in a rural area because I love nature and the space it creates for reflection. The truth is that I will always feel uncomfortable anywhere I am in the US because the narratives about my identities will always proceed me. But instead of seeking refuge in narratives, I trust myself to recognize the difference between being uncomfortable in my own skin and being unsafe. And bringing those unconscious beliefs I had about myself and others into consciousness was the key to being more accepting.

Living in both rural and urban places helped me become aware of incongruities between narrative and reality. Racism, sexism, and queerphobia exist in every mind that grew up in this culture. Healing comes from acknowledging that we all grew up internalizing this narrative, and taking responsibility for how it shows up in the way that we treat ourselves and others.

When I create art, I want people to sense the moment when they perceive what they didn't notice before. Because that sliver of awareness is what evokes understanding of those incongruencies, and leads to the empathy and awareness that's needed for change. Being keenly aware of how people and concepts are depicted in art and media is critical to the viewpoint developed in my artwork. I spend time playing with ideas concerning patterned thinking, stereotypes, and assumptions. How do I explore ideas that will wake people up to how they view the world? Art projects the perspective of the artist outward, and how art is interpreted is the projection of the viewer's internal world. How can we work to bring forth that sliver of awareness that breaks patterns that do harm?

In my *Birds of Paradise* paintings, I examined the concept of not belonging, non-conformity, and standards of beauty. Both birds represent our desire for acceptance as well as the longing to be our true self. We're taught to believe that we must conform to a standard of beauty, but all of those standards are imposed on us by cultural norms that are programmed into us from a very young age. The bird represents an extension of the person holding the bird. Both birds convey a defiant act against ideas of conformity. The hand as a perch plays with the idea that BIPOC are often objectified as props, and relegated to the background to enhance the main subjects in Western paintings, usually white people. Whether people perceive or acknowledge the hand belonging to a black or brown person, and whether they see the bird of paradise as an extension of the person or as the main subject reveals someone's internal narrative.

In my *Rest is…* paintings, I consider how art depicts white and non-white people throughout history in art, propaganda, and media. When we look throughout the course of history, BIPOC are depicted as props in the background

June L. Park, Birds of Paradise Collection, 2022. Acrylic on canvas. Scalehouse Annex, Bend, OR

June L. Park, *Visionary*, 2022.
Acrylic on canvas, 24 × 36 in
(60.96 × 91.44 cm)

June L. Park, *Revolutionary*,
2022. Acrylic on canvas,
24 × 36 in (60.96 × 91.44 cm)

June L. Park, *Restful*, 2022.
Acrylic on canvas, 24 × 36 in
(60.96 × 91.44 cm)

June L. Park, *Respite*, 2022.
Acrylic on canvas, 24 × 36 in
(60.96 × 91.44 cm)

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June L. Park, *A Fluid Existence*,
2023. Acrylic on canvas,
24 × 24 in (60.96 × 60.96 cm)

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or villains to invoke fear in society. Those images imprint into our culture and replicate for generations. Rest is a topic where BIPOC are depicted as lazy or devious in avoiding or getting out of work. BIPOC are often painted through a Western viewpoint as anthropological studies of their labor. There are not many paintings of BIPOC—especially BIPOC women—resting, while artists have primarily depicted white rest as angelic, wholesome, and refined. I wanted to create a collection of work that canonizes women of color centered in their own rest and without reference to their value in labor or as cultural reference.

We are all so much more complex than mainstream narratives about us. Being seen in our complexity is fundamental to change. These incongruent narratives can't be teased apart without bringing them to the surface. And art and media are crucial to transforming the narrative our future ancestors will internalize.

Don't you want to see that narrative shift?

I do.

June Park is an interdisciplinary artist and designer. They share a perspective cultivated from the truths they've had to balance through their life at the intersection of their identities growing up in rural Idaho and urban Pacific Northwest. They hope their flavor of "just being" can help us see each other more clearly as unique and complex individuals.

They're a lifelong creative and curious learner with a background in User Experience Design, Graphic Design, Teaching, and Engineering. In their younger years, they studied music and performed in theater arts.

They currently live in Bend, Oregon with their spouse Chris and rambunctious rescue dog Leche. The trio can be found wandering around the trails, lakes, and rivers in the surrounding area.

junelparkart.com, Instagram @junelparkart

June L. Park, Mel Smith, and Shandell Landon, *Intertwined,* 2023. A collaborative installation and conversation between BIPOC women. Fabric, hair, extensions. Pinckney Gallery, Bend OR

Photo courtesy of Woodrow Hunt and Olivia Camfield

Vibes of the Periphery
A Journal Entry
By Morgan Ritter

Going rogue on the farm, in Pleasant Hill, Oregon. Shoveling wormy apples to keep the wasps away, working on drawings in my head. My daughter quickly learns to crush the apple with her tiny foot and proceeds to feed the bits to cows in her open two-year-old hand. Hauling rocks with family and friends, thinking about things like: consciousness new systems, old systems, how artists afford gas.

There are graphic designers living with cows, visiting artists coming to buy eggs using an honor system on the side of the road. Blue-collar and working class communities merge with trippers and artists.
I see a sign outside of Eugene that says, "Grass seed capital of the world" then I see a billboard that reads, "We keep rollin a lawn". A lot of

dog walkers are wearing brand new Nikes amidst graffiti conveying mushroom intelligence, 'Let's go Brandon' flags, Pioneer Museums, Mexican Flag colored LED customizations on cars, gun promotion, and more; The bumper stickers here proudly exhibit the complex individualism of Oregonians. It's all very stimulating.

I took this photo of one of the gutter cleaner's cars during my recent farm stay, 2023. Courtesy Morgan Ritter

I think many of us, especially artists or highly sensitive people, or more, share a wish to retreat from wherever we are, to get away. Hence the functions of artist residencies, to permit one to break out of a grind and focus. There's something deeply generative about getting away from distractions and hardened routines, which is an obvious privilege if you are able to do so.

Because retreating may not be accessible to most people due to the precarious juggle of making a living to support one's artistic practice, or further, being a parent or caregiver, and/or having mobility or health issues on top of it all, I believe many artists make their own opportunities, in their own time. I've seen artists in the Northwest hone skills in self-sufficiency as a means of survival, whose identities are cemented on resourcefulness, friendship, plain living[1], and/or DIY anti-corporatism culture. Despite problems with terms like 'self-made' and 'outsider,' there seems to be more 'outsiderness' here in Oregon. "Are we making outsiders?" Artist Ellen Lesperance questioned in a recent conversation. I've noticed we tend to make our own paths out here and it's a magical approach to

scarcity that I've personally adopted. But I wonder how we can support and include each other, with the little financial resources available without compromising our values, our personal responsibilities, or having our expansive imaginations succumb to institutional restrictions.

Oregon, or particularly the Outskirts of Portland, offers a vast biodiversity of wild, aromatic, fungus-filled forests, tangled and thorny thresholds butted up to hilly suburbs. In Portland, one's almost always a stone's throw from one of the many forests, parks, rivers, and an overall abundance of natural places to hide. Artists and creative individuals may be drawn to the region because the long, wet seasons of the northwest allow for interiority, self-cultivation, and focus. Then there are (increasingly) communities of encampments not getting their needs met, people living amidst quiet, fern-filled pockets and sidewalk sweeps, industrial areas, quilts of small working-class farmlands expanding into the horizons, and probably most of which share the experience of feeling priced out of the metropolitan area.

As I write this, I am processing 36 lbs of Oregon Concord grapes picked from Ken Kesey's family farm. Ken Kesey was an author, maybe best known for two of his most celebrated novels, One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest (1962) and Sometimes a Great Notion (1964), written when he was in his twenties. His spirited work encouraged participation from his friends, family, and strangers within his experimental performance group, The Merry Pranksters. He was largely associated with the popularization of LSD and psychedelics in the 1960's, though he believed he was riding a wave that existed beyond him.

Kate Smith (Ken's granddaughter) and her partner Justin Cole Smith (they synchronistically share their last name) steward the 39-acre functioning farm with close support from Kate's family. They are both artists that maintain the Kesey Farm. Kate has been initiating programming for artists under the name Kesey Farm Project, since 2016. Pre-pandemic, they saw through multiple opportunities for artists and writers, with support from other noteworthy contemporary artists/poets, Kayla Ephros, Milah Libin, and Justin's brother and artist, Vinnie Smith.

Selfie in the acid room, 2018. Courtesy Morgan Ritter

Deniella's Performance, 2018. Courtesy Justin Cole Smith

I was lucky enough to be selected for their week-long poetry workshop in 2018 titled, September Spring, and because of how powerful that experience was for me, I have since returned to the farm numerous times. The workshop's immersion into the farm environment included an intimate group of extremely talented artists and writers. Mary Clark, Anahit Gulian, Nora Slade, Johanna Swan, Audrey Wollen, and myself were the residents, and we were supported by Kayla Ephros and Kate.

September Spring residents with Linda Yuknavitch, Chef Jake Ephros, 2018. Courtesy Kate Smith

It was to be led by singular, ritualistic poet CA Conrad who unfortunately wasn't able to teach in the end due to car troubles. Oregon writer, Lidia Yuknavitch led the force, whose memoir-focused writing is ~~[illegible]~~ warm, risky and deviant. She took a writing class with Ken at the University of Oregon in the 1980's. She has spent time on the farm previously, so her return as a teacher was full circle. Her encouragement to us was to write with urgency about what muck was storied in our bodies, and take the time to listen to each other's work in circle.

The room where I slept and worked for a week has floor to ceiling patchwork day-glo carpeting, and a window that cradles the iconic, sky reaching swing and apple trees in the front yard. Kate shared,

Ideally the farm ~~[illegible]~~ is a place for artists/writers to take space, merge with other artists, get out of their norm, play, be inspired, and interact with the land and this long standing history (since 1967) of artists spending time on this property. So many people have met their best friends or changed their paths because of something they discovered here.

Pizza Oven with Vinnie Smith and Dino Matt, 2020. Courtesy Justin Cole Smith

Artist Jen Shear, 2020. Courtesy Justin Cole Smith

the focus since the pandemic has been on solo residencies,[2] where artists may reside in the tiny home situated next to the cookhouse and the cow pasture. This tiny home is a sanctuary of bare necessities touched with whimsical chiseled wood details, designed and constructed by local rural artist, Matt Brown (who builds most everything on the farm) and his childhood best friend, Portland artist, Adam Zeek.

Down the way, nearby hiking paths echo rivers that trace the neighborhoods. Oak groves openly drip with pale, glowing Usnea. Kesey family and friends (and strangers) continue to come and go in a free flowing manner, each one doing this and that, contributing here and there. Gary Fisher, "inventor of the mountain bike", came to the farm as a seventeen-year-old and learned how to weld by building a geodesic dome with a sculptor who was living at the farm at that time. His wish was to go mountain biking or "klunking" as he called it, freely, away from the authoritative restrictions of cars, cops, and pavement. Many legendary artists,[3] writers, and even the Hells Angels, are enmeshed in the farm's history. Originally stewarded by the Kalapuya tribes, the Kesey Farm has been managed by many, and many have been touched by the land it occupies.

September Spring residents running from a dust storm (left to right) Morgan Ritter, Nora Slade, Kayla Ephros, Audrey Wollen, Mary Clark, 2018. Courtesy Kate Smith. Photo: Milah Libin

The Farm's existence as private property is mitigated by the family's strong desire to share access to the land and invite people to work and dream with them about its potential. Kate added that, "solitary work to keep yourself and the land productive in a rural environment can feel thankless until it's shared".

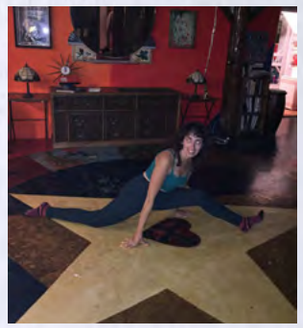
Upholding the family farm is no small feat — no one retired early here — the maintenance of the property, the land, and caring for the animals have their demands. Communal efforts are a joy and a necessity. Kate Smith said of her grandfather,

> He was such a man of the people and the world! I think he had a hard time writing because it was so solitary, and his real inclination leaned more towards collaborative projects: bus painting, movie making, performance, and other collective experiences. People were so drawn to him naturally, that he had to write at night and do farm stuff by day. Because there were always people stopping by the farm to see him, he would involve them in the chores. 'grab a shovel, we're digging a trench today' or 'borrow some boots, we're feeding the cows.' He made the day to day chores fun though, with stories and music and usually some late night stargazing and magic tricks if you made it through the day.

Ken's part-time farming ran parallel with his work as a writer, activist, performer, artist, and prankster. Despite his ecstatic and playful sensibilities he remained a very traditional person in many respects. Ken felt that living life is creating art, and creating is available to anyone, always. Art making tends to be an unstructured purswit, not typically a 9 to 5 vocation for most. Ken effectively integrated his creative practice into his daily life and schedule. He was a sporty one, a wrestler in his younger years. His approach to everything, like wrestling, was playful and participatory. Are we walking or are we dancing?

The Merry Pranksters, Further Bus after it was dragged out of the swamp (detail), 2006? Courtesy Ken Kesey Archive

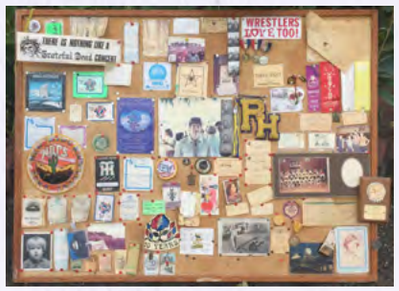
The farm remains riddled with sacred and dusty residue from histimes. The original "FURTHER" bus is tucked away in a barn, cloaked with dust and dried swamp matter from the time it was submerged in a nearby Nutria-riddled swamp. The kitchen and living room floors feature a mural of flowers loosely painted, a once upon a time day-glo, now is a palette of muted, dirt-trodden fluorescents. Visitors are implicated in the scene as they walk upon sacred astrological symbols that surround a massive heart.



Morgan Ritter, trying to do the splits in the living room, 2018. Courtesy Morgan Ritter

The psychelic culture caked into the farm was renegade. It is felt. It cannot be fully represented, cannot be posted to the feed. It defies our times pressures to represent (and thereby reduce) every moment of our lives within a legible grid. It cannot be fully tracked, cannot be fully surveilled. You have to get out of it, to get into it.

There is a feeling that you can change the world and then retreat to the Oregon country. But retreat is not synonymous with isolation. Clearly, Ken is a person of many contradictions. He is said to have led counter culture movements while simultaneously establishing and caring for his family and the farm.



Kesey Family Move In, 1967. Courtesy Ken Kesey Archive

Jed's Board, 1984. Courtesy Ken Kesey Archive

There's an out dated but ever lingering theory that to be an accomplished artist or writer, one cannot also have a family. I believe this theory impacts women and women of color disproportionately, as well as other parents with intersectional identities. The reputation-based industry of art "operates overwhelmingly through public presence, word of mouth, informal networks, and introductions" which demands flexibility and compromise from those who are parents or caretakers, to be available. Yet of course, many brilliant artists and writers have survived these conditions, with focus increasing their endurance for these long-standing inhospitable art world conventions. Ursula LeGuin says about this,

> The myth of the solitary artist, who must work alone and must sacrifice maybe kids, maybe normal human relationships, I think perhaps this kind of sacrificial solitude may even be counter-productive in the long-run. It certainly leads to a kind of arrogance about the relationships that are so important in most people's lives - which are your blood kin, your neighbors, and the people you work with. An artist who is working in grand isolation doesn't know anything about all that, is aloof from it, and this may impoverish the novel.

This romantic ideal of the male artist standing in total isolation from his society - that is an unbalanced eccentric idea which I reject because that's not how you get work done. To me, art grows organically out of its society at its best, so you don't cut the connection. And if your connections happen to be family ones - to your ancestors, to your descendants, to your lateral kinfolk - then that's your world.[6]

Twister: A Musical Catastrophe, George Walker (Tinman) & Azinia Richardson (Voice), Multimedia theater at Kesey Farm, 2000. Courtesy Ken Kesey Archive

Twister: A Musical Catastrophe (Poster), 2000. Courtesy Ken Kesey Archive

During a recent stay at the farm, Danielle Davis, graphic designer and Eugene local, and her toddler, came over and immediately plugged into the scene, making excellent wood-fired pizza from improvised dough. Danielle made 16 pizzas like it was no thing, and they were devoured gleefully, without concern, over the course of hours. Jimmy Nardelo peppers, bufala mozzerella, raw honey, pears, arugula, chili oil, lemon zest. Meanwhile, the apple mill chugged along, expertly led by Justin, who was surrounded by toddlers throwing apples as their way of being helpful. A quick visit with Ken's wife, Faye, and Kate's parents, satisfied my fantasies of seeing this space cared for by multiple generations, while two of my freestyle apple pies were in the oven, whose whole grain flour was sourced nearby from Eugene's Camas Country Mill.

Danielle Davis, Pizza # Unknown with Ricotta, Lemon, Honey, 2023. Courtesy Danielle Davis

Danielle Davis, Strutting through the garden with another pizza, 2023. Courtesy Morgan Ritter

September Spring, Outdoor poets lunch, 2018. Courtesy Morgan Ritter

Farm friend Dino Matt, artist and ceramicist, was quietly charming the children whilst hauling buckets of apple meal over the barbed wire fence for the cows. His sculptures take form consistently as irreverent ceramic vessels. They feel fragile, yet hearty, like a utility pole covered in chewed gum."

Apple Cider Preparations, 2023. Courtesy Morgan Ritter

Kate Smith, Apple Cider Action Table, 2023. Courtesy Morgan Ritter

Justin Cole Smith, Apple Cider Mill, 2023. Courtesy Morgan Ritter

Justin's lofi, cool, and somehow emotional photography and visual work captures the incidental stuff of art life. His work has been enmeshed with icons of the fashion and art scene of Los Angeles with friends such as Come Tees and Online Ceramics. Justin, previously based in Los Angeles, shared a bit how the farm has impacted his creative practice. "You're so tuned in with the seasons on the farm. Each one bringing new energy. When I'm here, I'm tuning into that energy: drawing, painting, organizing, and brewing new ideas while pinging between the day-to-day chores that keep this place going. In contrast, my time out in the world becomes a little more sacred as my opportunity to take photos and gather outside inspiration."

I used to live in a punk house with 7 people in its heyday, where Concord grapes overtook the back fence until our landlord evicted us in the ripe middle of the pandemic. He did this, we think, so he could do construction to eventually live there, and also to create an Airbnb apartment. To our knowledge, he still doesn't live there, but it seems he was in cahoots with our other neighbor who bought their house after the previous tenant was forced out because of activities relating to the sale of drugs. That new neighbor created an "artsy" Airbnb apartment with a separate entrance and incurred multiple violations with the City for not obtaining proper permits and approvals. Meanwhile, houselessness continues to be a growing issue for Portland, and many other cities. Architect Keller Easterling says about the explosive growth of the urban periphery, "the low-density territory that is growing so rapidly that it will approach the land area of India by 2050. As more and more people migrate to cities and search for cheaper and cheaper land, development streams away from denser centers. This space is now the bellwether of both inequality and climate change— the space to which the disenfranchised

are relegated, the destination of Some climate migrations, and a settlement pattern that exacerbates climate trends."[8] Admittedly, I do, however, miss the incentive of taking a nice walk to get an extremely complicated $8 cappuccino.

Making Concord grape jelly is an exhaustive labor that one must submit to.[9] It is a similar feeling to painting (or writing) for me, and like Kate said, laborious work can feel thankless until it is shared. The kitchen is my wonderland. I pledge allegiance to it, making use of abundant seasonal harvests: grapes now, mushrooms soon, nettles later on. It's an inherited love language, a high intensity exercise, a safe space to experiment. I am curious but not confident I know how things will end here. Will it cohere? Grape steam performs a kind of earthly goddess facial, a tradition that I've maintained for the majority of my residence in Portland.

2. On another note in my career as an artist & arts worker over the past 15+ years, I've wondered how we can develop more homespun opportunities that are not based on competition, but of mutualism and connection. Major public art institutions often exacerbate harm with extractive or exploitative ways of working with artists and staff though I believe they have the capacities and resources to change, I think?
We need more places where work can not only be exhibited, but authentically lived with, where communities are created and welcomed into the work. There are multiple artist-run project spaces with brilliant individuals behind them that I sincerely admire and trust. Due to the evolutions of such living programs/people, this meandering essay cannot be an absolute compendium of such projects. Rather, what follows is an imperfect and sincere record of local interests, relationships, thoughts, and feelings.

One such space is Conduit established by Jade Novarino—local artist, calligrapher, teacher, and farmer of collectively run no-till/permaculture farm, Campo Collectivo—in Happy Valley, at the home of her late mentor, Jaki Svaren, and more recently in Milwaukie.

Jade's vast and dynamic creative practice is fed by her interests in lineage, farming, and art. Her many public programs have occurred within the private backyard orchards and lawns of her rental homes, and often she presented foods to accompany curations, such as the herbal cotton candy she shared alongside artist Kate Falcone's exhibition and reiki sessions (available for trade). Most recently, Jade collaborated with artist Meech Boakye on a "Garlic Festival" in the half acre urban farm behind Jade's shared home. Jellies presented on a porcelain platter wobbled like bodacious alien jewels, and somehow embodied an ethereal purple hue, decorated with sweet garlic blossoms. There were numerous tables presenting various offerings, limited edition posters and block-printed broadsides, drawings, stick-and-poke tattoos of garlic 'scapes, and an unreal cake decorated with garlic, blackberries and long white beans, by Kiara Rose. A large papier mache sculpture of garlic by artist Jodie Caralier anchored the occasion at the top of the hill towards the house, alongside a massive banner reading the latin name of garlic, "Allium Sativum," whose calligraphic letterforms were so lovingly painted, I presumed was of the hand of Jade, herself.[10]

Kate Falcone, *The Power Goes Here: A Flower*, Conduit, 2018. Courtesy the artist and Conduit

Kate Falcone, *Grandfather. Brown Study*, Conduit, 2018. 35mm print of a digital video projection and live musical performance. Courtesy the artist and Conduit

Another artist-run endeavor that aspires outside of institutional conventions is home school, a free pop up art school and more recently, curatorial pragramming, by manuel arturo abreu and Victoria Anne Reis. In a recent and informal correspondance with manuel about the impact the northwest has had on their practice, they shared, "The arts ecology in Oregon seems much smaller and slower than NYC, which has its drawbacks but as a place, Portland has given me a fair bit of creative freedom I'm not sure would be possible in NY.

Well, my public practice would look different if I'd chosen to pursue it back home. Probably more Commercial/ object driven, less discourse and performance."

Ellen Lesperance, Studio snapshot at artist's residence, 2019. Courtesy Rose Dickson

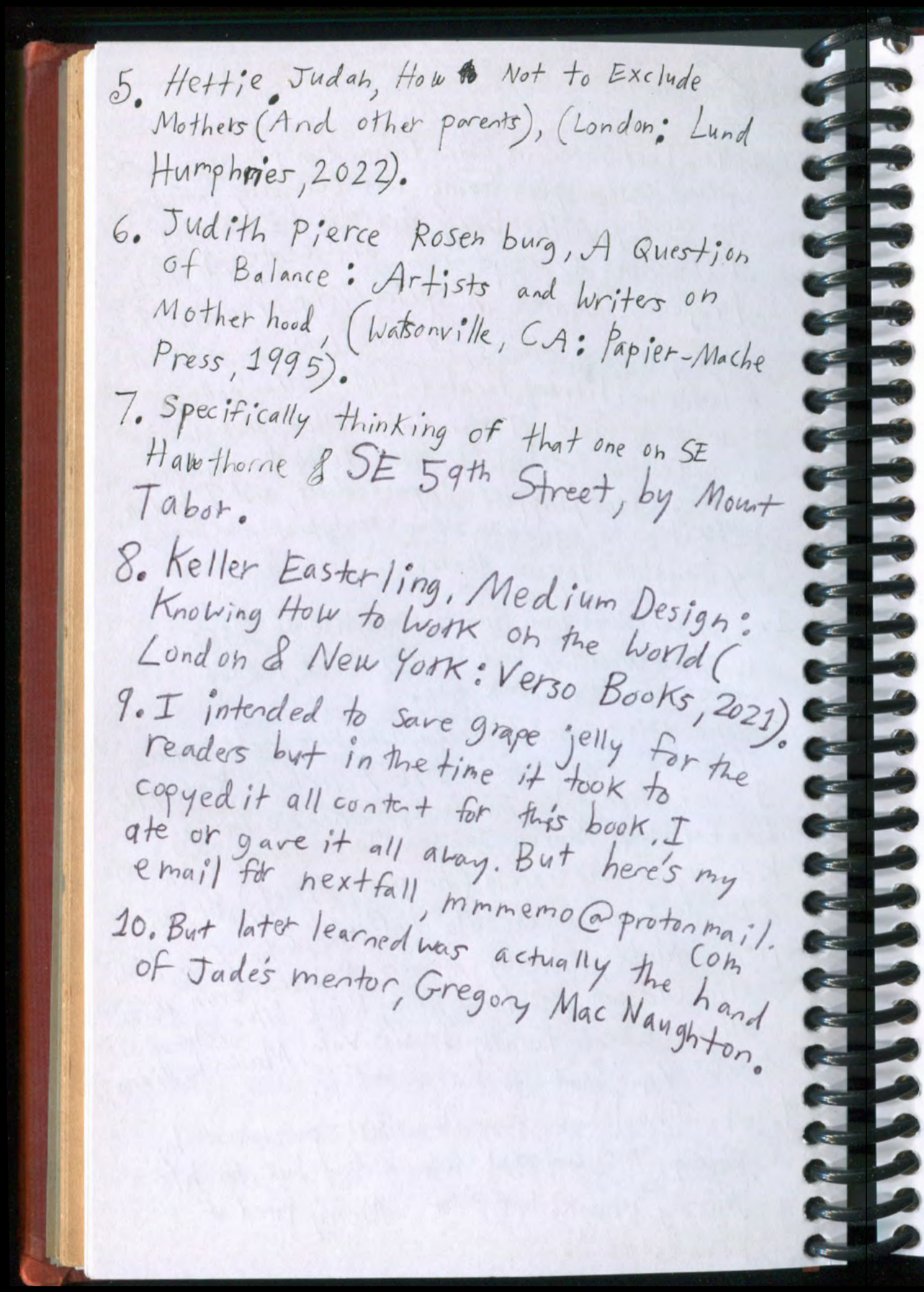
Artist Ellen Lesperance was raised in the Northwest and as quickly as she could, she moved to New York City. There she established her art practice only to find that the hustle necessary to sustain a family in the City was not tolerable. Her large paintings on paper are made upon a small desk in her small Tudor garage, and she exhibits her work internationally. Her research intensive work is in translating degraded images of the sweaters of pacifists and demonstrators into tenderly painted knitting charts. These meticulous paintings function to inform actual knit garments that she [redacted] then makes by hand, and presents alongside historical context. She has three children, all of which I used to babysit when I was her student. We had a recent conversation on the phone in which, for some of it, we nested our heads within our respective bay windows dripping with dangling crystals and objects gifted to each other (driftwood that looks like witch fingers, etc..). Ellen candidly shared her observations about living in Portland for the past 15 years.

Why do so many artists experience a sense of isolation here? Ellen likened living in this region as like living in a vacuum. "But maybe there is something freeing about living like no one is watching you..." Disadvantages in terms of a lack of visibility, press, and opportunities, may counterintuitively motivate artists to take greater risks in their work.

Artists in Oregon, though being a short-ish plane ride to larger metropolises, may feel greater freedom to explore their work beyond art market defaults, greatest hits, or convential modes of display, if they can afford it. There is scant patronage for artists and many artists are in competition with each other for the little support that may be available. Surely as with many places, artists set up hodge podge studios in their garages, sheds in their backyards, and buggy basements, where they may also show their work or go on to develop more DIY, artist-run endeavors. Beyond the surplus of fringe, or self-led projects, it would be grossly insulting to think that distinguished art or writing does not occur here. But the question arises once more: are we making outsiders here? Can we invite others into our outsiderness? Like Kesey, can we insist that others wear day-glo overalls, hats, sunglasses, masks, and help us with our many chores?

Footnotes

1. The Foxfire series, which focused on preserving practices of plain living, was recently introduced to me by Mike Bray, Artistic & Executive Director of artist-run art center, Ditch Projects, located in Springfield, Oregon. This book, among others, is available in a small & informal library, located within the gallery. I went to visit Taryn Tomasello's show where we talked a lot about how being the children of musicians/hippies impacted us, and I had the privilege to squeeze some sculptures and watch my daughter lay on them.
2. Also workshops from time to time, like the Sci-Fi writing workshop held in May 2024, led by writers of Star Trek, etc.
3. Some artists based in Oregon who have graced the Farm since its beginning in 1967 include Kate Ali, Isami Ching, Karin Clark, McKenzie Davie, Leah Howell, Maren Jensen, Jesse Jones, Nika Kaiser, Jerry Garcia (he painted, too!), Brian & Lynda Lanker, Ursula LeGuin, Charlene Liu, Dino Matt, Shelby Meyers, Rebecca Erin Moran, Julia Oldham, Rebekah Rose, Rick Silva, Aaron Sullivan, Sarah Turner, Jessie Vala, Mason Williams, & Gus Van Sant to name a few.
4. A school bus from the 30's purchased by Kesey, and converted into a tour bus for his "Merry Pranksters" or "Merry Band of Pranksters".


5. Hettie Judah, How to Not to Exclude Mothers (And other parents), (London: Lund Humphries, 2022).

6. Judith Pierce Rosenburg, A Question of Balance: Artists and Writers on Motherhood, (Watsonville, CA: Papier-Mache Press, 1995).

7. Specifically thinking of that one on SE Hawthorne & SE 59th Street, by Mount Tabor.

8. Keller Easterling, Medium Design: Knowing How to Work on the World (London & New York: Verso Books, 2021).

9. I intended to save grape jelly for the readers but in the time it took to copyed it all contact for this book, I ate or gave it all away. But here's my email for next fall, mmmemo@protonmail.com

10. But later learned was actually the hand of Jade's mentor, Gregory Mac Naughton.

Morgan Ritter is a Jewish artist, poet, and new mother whose intermedia practice is driven by dreaming and play, yet responsive and, at times, critical to cultural realities. Her work has been exhibited at Oregon Contemporary's Oregon Artists' Biennial 2024 (Portland), Artists Space (NY), Shanaynay (Paris), PICA, The Whitney Biennial 2017 (NY), a light bulb store, an orchard, MoMA (NY), and many other conventional and less conventional venues for experiencing art. She is the recipient of grants from Oregon Arts Commission and Foundation for Contemporary Art, among others. Ritter has attended several residencies including Anderson Ranch and Ken Kesey's Farm. Her work has been featured in *Art Forum*, Art Practical, Art Viewer, e-flux, *W*, and Vice.

Photo: Mariah Miranda, 2019

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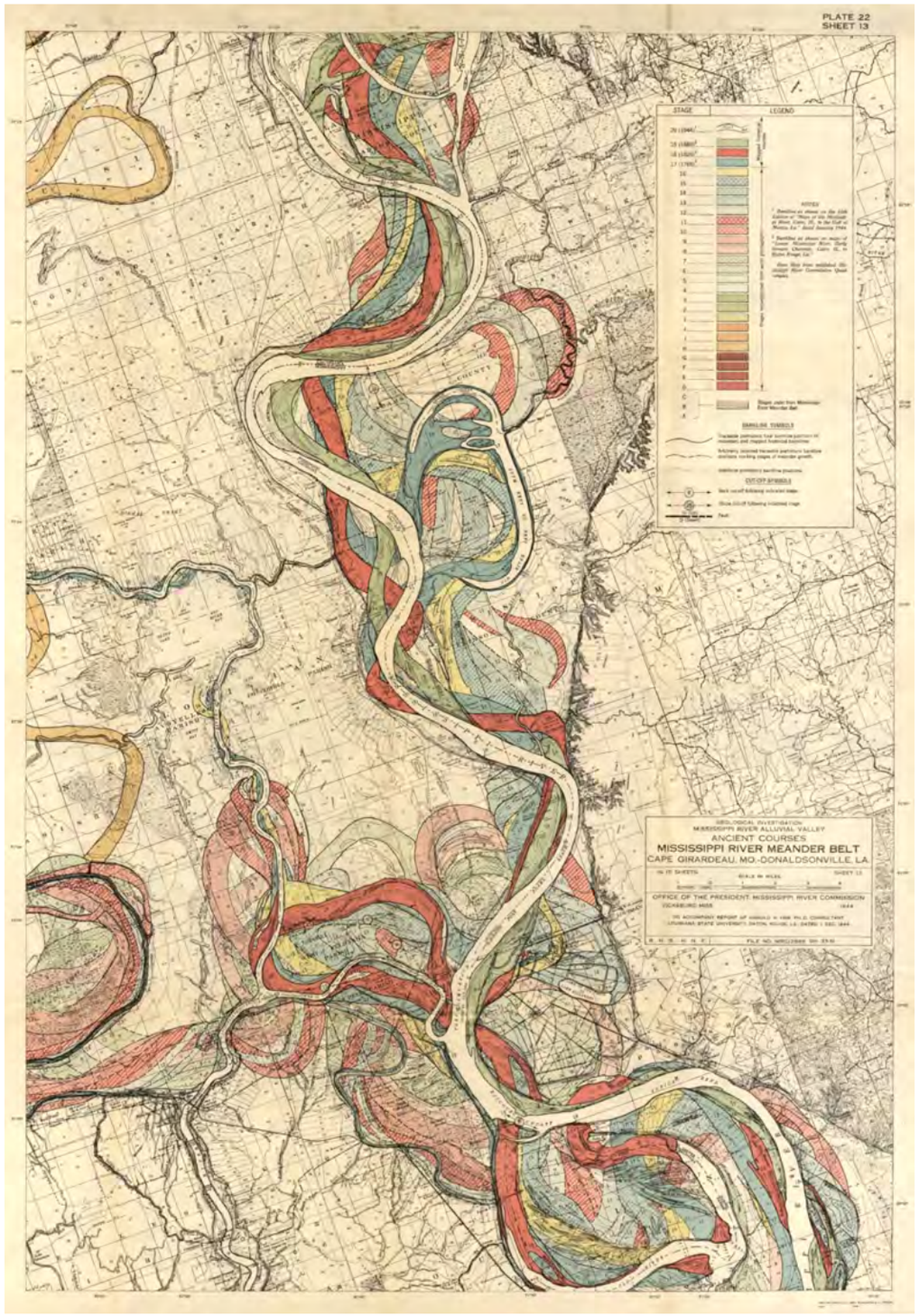
Dr. Jordan Amirkhani

Wading in the Waters: Artists in the Archives

Somewhere in the muck between Natchez and Baton Rouge, the Red River enters the unifying current of the mighty Mississippi and begins to contribute to that mystical, mythological place known as the "Mississippi Delta."[1] Activated by the steady process of dynamic sedimentation, the Mississippi and the Red gather together "the marl of the Rocky Mountains, the clay of the Black Mountains, the earth of the Alleghenies, the red loam washed from the hills at the sources of the Arkansas and Red Rivers," and push it into the Gulf of Mexico. Pulling sand and water over soil and into the pathways of rock, animal, and vegetation, the delta becomes an alluvial floodplain that tells a story of the land—the ecology of marshes, swamps, bayous, lakes, and mud-living wildlife that nourish and support it, and of the people who have lived, extracted, disabled, and worked to protect it over millennia.

And yet, as the nation formed and developed according to the regular European methods of apocalyptic destruction and colonial violence, the nation recognized that it "could not afford nature."[2] By the nineteenth century, much of the river had succumbed to the demands of modernity and its appetite for order, extraction, commerce, and profit—a force of nature harnessed by dams and levees for captains of industry to navigate and transport goods and people. As the U.S. Corps of Engineers redirected the Mississippi's path and outline to satisfy competing needs and interests across the territories, so too did B.F. Goodrich, E.I. du Pont, Shell, Mobile, Texaco, Exxon, Dow Chemical, and Georgia-Pacific demand that nature's course must be restructured for lucrative outcomes. And so it became a site of nature detached from the natural—a river uncoupled from its definition, a waterway shaped by humans to suit human needs and reward power grabs.[3] So, while the Mississippi may never be tamed, it is far from wild. Better to view it as a landscape engaged in reciprocal activation with



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the city of New Orleans and the communities that live within it, dependent upon a definition of nature responsive to multiple uses and users, definitions and contexts.[4] Neither static nor immutable, the Mississippi and its delta are elastic and elusive constructions, engineered and artificial, complicated and contingent—a groundwater blanket under which material quantities and immaterial qualities entangle, lie dormant, and creep in and out of visibility.

In this way, the Mississippi is not unlike an archive filled with paper, holding the documents of its history and the discursive consequences of history within it. A place mined for treasures and stories, memories and ways of life, the archive too is a modern construction. To archive is to give place, order, and future to the remainder; to consider things, including documents, as reiterations to be acted upon and as potential evidence for histories yet to be completed. To archive also means to encounter and navigate institutions—places of practice and conditioning, shaping what is and isn't legible, or what can or can't be constructed as evidence. In this way, an archive points to an economy of markets, system of distribution and resources, and an accumulation of new narratives across space and time, churning old and new accounts into fresh iterations and complexities. Thus, the archive is never static or finished; nor does it simply pertain to the past. Archives are engaged in their continuing enactment and future use, and with the question of what can and can't be accessed and studied. A harbinger of material buildup, like sediment in the delta's soil, an archive is also a construct dictated by need, mythologies, interests, and extractive impulses.

Neither bank is neutral.

•

For the past four years, my organization has guided a small cohort of emerging and mid-career artists from around the world into the Amistad Research Center's archive in New Orleans—one of the oldest independent archives in the United States—to learn and engage with the collection's vast holdings.[5] Situated just a mile away from the Mississippi's edge as it takes one of its many crescent-shaped turns around the outline of the city, Amistad's collection of over 15 million records, including photographs, paintings, audiovisual documents, correspondence, books, and digital files, represents its commitment to collecting and preserving the histories of African and African American diasporic communities in an effort to tell a wider and more expansive story of the history of enslavement, civil rights, cultural praxis, and community development, and to connect these stories to histories of migration and displacement at national and international levels. Past Rivers Institute-led projects include deep investigations into artist Elizabeth Catlett's personal papers and the impact of Black feminist thinking and political activism on her work, an engagement with the photographs and portfolios of artist Raymond Barthé, and the liberationist legacies of The Free Southern Theater.[6] Bringing artists into the archive allows them to take stock of New Orleans' rhizomatic record of cultural and political significance through documentary and aesthetic forms, and to kickstart the creation of new work in New Orleans using traces from its past—pasts shaped by many others in varying stages of visibility. Led by artistic, as opposed to academic, research processes, new modes of authorship, ownership, and

Harold Fisk, *Meander Map of the Alluvial Valley of the Mississippi River, No. 13,* 1944. Public Domain

power are granted space and resources to escape the restraints and harnesses that can inhibit discovery or reroute knowledge. Much of this knowledge is shaped by aesthetic, historical, and cultural praxis, but what often results are new pathways to self-discovery and the recognition that archives are institutions laden with narratives of how subjectivity is formed and articulated through materials of documentation. As John Akomfrah has rightly claimed, "far from taking you away from questions of agency, autonomy, and authorship, the archive returns you to the question of self-representation."[7] Thus, perhaps the link between the two—river and archive—can be understood through its relationship to visibility: what lies deep beneath the surface of the water and what is accessible above it, what is public and what is private, and what is seen and what lies out of sight? As repositories of historical change whose very structure offers refuge for recording and recombining the act of remembering history, the tides of which continue to ebb and flow according to shifts in weather or zeitgeist, a certain politics of fixity and change, of self and identification, unfurls.

Contemporary curatorial work is predicated on strategies of presentation, rendering techniques of display, materiality, and visibility as central objectives. Organizing, assembling, and showing, all habits of Enlightenment thinking, predicate that the offering of knowledge should always be strung toward the digestible and efficient, the extractive and systemic. What Rivers Institute seeks to emphasize and enact in its work in the archives is to set itself inside the ways in which knowledge is formed and made, to promote a productive self-consciousness about our work as artists, curators, and researchers, and to reconceptualize interests in making and learning about our past in an expanded way by slowing down and learning from our collective mistakes and possibilities.

Perhaps our work is shaped by the logic and work of meandering—of the open improvisation of wandering, researching, learning, listening, flowing—where archival study and coursing waterway might meet and inform one another? To examine the soil, trace the edges of river and archive to see what was missed or ignored in their construction and rerouting? To ask questions of those who knew of the terrain before the steamboat captains rendered it ordered and navigable?

1 For more on the Mississippi Delta mythology, see Ari Kelman's, *A River and Its City: The Nature of Landscape in New Orleans*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006, pp. 3-5.
2 John McPhee's essay "Atchafalaya," in *The Control of Nature*, New York: Farrar, Srauss, and Giroux, 1989, p. 6.
3 Ari Kelman's, *A River and Its City: The Nature of Landscape in New Orleans*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006, p. 7.
4 Raymond William's *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 219.
5 Rivers Institute for Contemporary Art & Thought—a non-profit contemporary arts organization founded in 2020 and based in New Orleans, committed to art and artists of the diaspora. For more information on Rivers' work and mission, please visit riversinstitute.org.
6 Rivers Institute for Contemporary Art & Thought's past exhibitions, including *Troy Montes-Michie: Rock of Eye*, 2021, at the California African American Museum in Los Angeles; *Helen Cammock: I Will Keep My Soul*, 2023, at Art + Practice in Los Angeles; and *Cassandra Press: An Unfolding*; 2021, at the California African American Museum in Los Angeles. For more, visit: https://caamuseum.org/
7 John Akomfrah, p. 29.

Jordan Amirkhani is Curator and Head of Research and Project Development at Rivers Institute for Contemporary Art & Thought—a non-profit organization based in New Orleans, Louisiana committed to research and publishing, exhibitions and convenings on art of the global diaspora. Prior to taking on these roles, Amirkhani held academic positions at American University in Washington, DC and the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga, TN.

Recent curatorial projects include *Tina Girouard: SIGN-IN*, co-curated with Andrea Andersson and Jade Flint; *Helen Cammock: I Will Keep My Soul*, co-curated with Andrea Andersson and Essence Harden for Art + Practice in Los Angeles and St. Claude Gallery in New Orleans; *Troy Montes Michie: Rock of Eye*, co-curated with Andrea Andersson and Taylor Renee Aldridge for the California African American Museum in Los Angeles and the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston; *Yto Barrada: Ways to Baffle the Wind*, co-curated with Andrea Andersson for MASS MoCA; and the *2021 Atlanta Biennial: Of Care and Destruction* for the Atlanta Contemporary.

Amirkhani has written scholarship and essays on the work of contemporary artists such as Helen Cammock, Wendy Red Star, Sheida Soleimani, Soheila Sokhanvari, Farkhondeh Shahroudi, Vesna Pavlović, and the British collective Art + Practice. Her work has been featured in many national and international publications, including: *The Paris Review Daily*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Baltimore Arts*, *Boston Art Review*, *X-Tra*, *Mousse*, and *Burnaway*. Her emphasis on contextualizing contemporary art and artists working in the American South garnered her a prestigious Creative Capital/Andy Warhol Foundation Short-Form Writing Grant in 2017, and three nominations for The Rabkin Prize in Arts Journalism in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

Anthony Hudson

On the Fallout (and Not Just From My Mascara)

In 2018, I offered a Drag Queen Storytime at the St. Johns Library in Portland, Oregon that would eventually undo my life. The day itself was joyful—it was the most attended Drag Queen Storytime Portland had seen. Over 100 children and parents sat, stood, and watched while I, in a rainbow-print dress as Portland's premier drag clown, Carla Rossi, read to children who could barely read themselves. Known for Carla's whiteface makeup and satirical drag routines mocking whiteness in Portland, I worried the kids would fear my clown face, but they only saw a person: one four year-old remarked, "I love your lipstick!" as I sat down to read.

After the story, we moved to another room in the library for a dance party on bubble wrap. Dancing on inflated plastic in six-inch heels to Cher with jumping toddlers, I lost my balance and fell over, the kids excitedly bouncing off one another and into me. Embarrassed, I laughed as Carla lay defeated and fallen, when a couple of the rowdiest kids piled onto me. A librarian took a photo of us, looking like we were reenacting a scene from *Gulliver's Travels*. Parents laughingly told their kids to help me up, and then we all went about our lives.

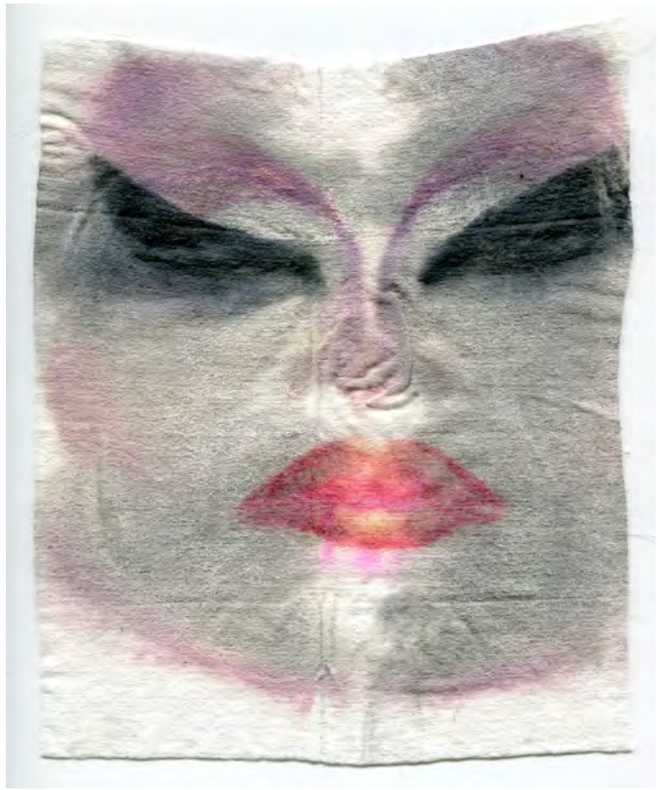
Within a few months, the photo—posted to the library's Flickr account—caught the attention of conservative media. Without warning, my face and names were all over the Internet. Strangers without the slightest knowledge of who I am misgendered me,

Drag performance documentation

Anthony Hudson, *Carla Wipe*, 2017. Neutrogena Makeup Remover Cleansing Wipe, makeup, sweat, dirt, air pollution, red paint, 7 × 7½ in. Makeup wipe print taken after doing a look from *Looking for Tiger Lily* for Carla's first and only audition video for RuPaul's Drag Race

called me a pedophile, and condemned me, my career, and drag as a whole. I made the front page of Breitbart. I gained a QAnon following that tracks and logs my shows as well as social media activity. They made dossiers about my "Satanic" behavior and cautionary videos about me and my friends, using images stolen from our Instagram posts.

In the midst of this fallout, the library announced a new series of teen drag workshops led by a dear friend and collaborator. In what can only be described as an alt-right, drag-centric spin on *The Wire*, one of the young attendees was sent in by their parents wearing a recording device with the hope of capturing new evidence of illicit wrongdoing. Burning beneath this performative outrage is an increasingly stoked furnace of misogynistic transphobia and homophobia, as well as a misunderstanding of drag itself—not only drag's relationship to queer and Indigenous communities, but also its place in the arts. These occurrences demand reconsideration, reclassification, and protection of drag as a valid art form in order for it to survive and innovate.



Anthony Hudson, *Carla Wipe Storytime*, 2018. Neutrogena Makeup Remover Cleansing Wipe, makeup, glitter, air pollution, sweat, dirt, hair, 7 × 7½ in. Makeup wipe print taken after what would become the infamous Drag Queen Story Time

Photography can capture an image of a moment, but performance itself cannot be captured. It can be documented, but, as any grant panel reviewer or unlucky family member subjected to a vacation slideshow can attest, something is lost in translation. The performance's aura, its essence, its magic isn't there—what it means to be in a room full of bodies breathing and sharing an experience so intently that our hearts begin to beat in tandem—because that's what performance strives for: to bring people together to feel something.

Despite its innate uncapturability, I try to capture what I can of a performance after each show—after any drag goes on my body—by making a print of Carla's face using a Neutrogena makeup wipe. Laying what amounts to an oversized moist towelette over my face, I press and massage the wipe against my skin, essentially creating a grave rubbing, but of a clown. What these prints capture are the sum of a performance's physicality: not only makeup and glitter but eyelashes, the hair of my eyelids, and sweat—human sweat, *my* sweat, water of my body, tinged with elation and fear and adrenaline—and even the unseen effects of the environment. Air pollution, from prints made after outdoor gigs, turns my clown white face dark gray.

Anthony Hudson, *Carla Wipe First Audience Since COVID,* 2021. Neutrogena Makeup Remover Cleansing Wipe, makeup, sweat, dirt, 7 × 7½ in. Makeup wipe print taken after Carla's first performance with an audience, in November 2021, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic

Opposite:
Anthony Hudson, *Carla Wipe Eyes Ucross,* 2020. Neutrogena Makeup Remover Cleansing Wipe, makeup, watching eyes, 7 × 7½ in. Makeup wipe print taken at Ucross in the midst of a nervous breakdown

These aren't just prints. They're biohazards. But, like drag, they're also art on their own—a record of the unrecordable. I like to think of them as something akin to dance masks, but in reverse: one dons a mask to channel a spirit in ritual, to perform as them, to wear them. These prints, or masks made after the fact, show the spirit who has worn me. The mask recorded the day of my fateful Storytime captures not only darkly tinted dirt and sweat from the bubble wrap dance party, but the glow that spirit felt for those youth, for their future happiness and safety in a society that I believed would treat them better than it did me. Despite performing entirely indoors that day, this is among the darkest and most discolored of my prints—as if it was trying to warn me what that day would later signify.

Two years after my Storytime, I was exhausted, and not just by the unwanted fandom. The COVID-19 pandemic upended our lives and further compromised the safety of already-polluted air, only to become more poisonous when wildfires burned from Southern California to the Oregon Coast. Tear gas, unleashed against protestors standing up to racism, brutality, and executions of Black Americans by white police, seeped into our ground and water systems and physically altered Portlanders' menstrual cycles.

In March of 2020, I fell ill a week and a half into lockdown and was left with permanent tinnitus. By October 2020, my nervous system collapsed. I spent days and weeks in a panic state, developing hyperhidrosis, a constant sweating from my hands and feet. I slipped on the floor while walking barefoot. I couldn't write, nor could I read books without wetting the pages. After not doing drag for six months—six months of pandemic, six months of terror, six months of fires and violence, six months questioning my career, and all on top of eighteen months of bigoted outrage—I put on Carla again.

As I began painting her onto me, tracing her back onto my face from memory, I felt Carla's power and confidence return to my body like a salve on raw nerve endings. I recorded a video dressed as Carla's version of *Frankenstein*'s monster, hosting a Native horror film festival to be released that Halloween. After, I took a print of her face, and, peeling hers from mine, shuddered at what I saw—I'd never seen a print with eyes before.

This one could see me.

Drag is rarely understood as a culturally specific art form, let alone *art*. Sometimes it's considered performance art, whatever that is, and

Anthony Hudson, *Carla Wipe First Queer Horror Back Since Pandemic,* 2021. Neutrogena Makeup Remover Cleansing Wipe, makeup, sweat, dirt, 7 × 7½ in. Makeup wipe print taken after Carla's first Queer Horror at the Hollywood Theater since the pandemic, the same night she was canonized onstage as saint by the Portland Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence

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sometimes performance art is considered visual art. But drag is rarely treated as such. It's considered art for queer people, at best, as my friend Pepper once put it, and art doesn't happen in nightclubs.

Regardless, many of our finest artists work with the form: Jeffrey Gibson's punching bags, beaded and bedazzled in a gloriously Indigiqueer twist on hypermasculine gym equipment, are essentially drag. Kent Monkman's lush paintings include depictions of himself as Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, the artist's own performance persona. Guillermo Gomez-Pena's performative installations and experiences utilize genderplay to evoke the hybridized identities of border crossing. Then there are the films of John Waters, including his gallery-screened remake of *Pink Flamingos* starring children: *Kiddie Flamingos*. There are the performances, videos, and paintings of queer punk drag superstar and lecturer Vaginal Davis. Leigh Bowery's costumes. The work of Dina Martina, Dynasty Handbag, Taylor Mac, Narcissister, Machine Dazzle, Ryan Trecartin, and Christeene. Even Frida Kahlo's self-portraits and the photography of Cindy Sherman and Nikki S. Lee could be considered drag.

For queer Indigenous makers, and particularly those who work with drag, we are performing, but we are also making visual art. We are contemporary, but we are also upholding a tradition of storytelling, of walking between worlds, as our ancestors did in countless traditions of gender diverse healers and medicine people across the continent. As an Indigiqueer person, my drag is how I honor myself and the many spectrums I swim.

Gibson's and Monkman's work in particular not only recognizes and utilizes drag as an art form—it demonstrates how Indigenous visual artists, like Pena's border crossers, blend form and genre in a way that makes it undefinable, if not unrecognizable, for white and Western-minded individuals who are conditioned to see and reinforce easy boundaries between disciplines. For queer Indigenous makers, and particularly those who work with drag, we are performing, but we are also making visual art. We are contemporary, but we are also upholding a tradition of storytelling, of walking between worlds, as our ancestors did in countless traditions of gender diverse healers and medicine people across the continent. As an Indigiqueer person, my drag is how I honor myself and the many spectrums I swim.

What I make is by no means traditional, but it's innately Native—even the clowning. As curator Andrea Hanley wrote for our show *Field Guide* at Ucross this year, which presented the work of Teresa Baker, Jessica Mehta, Eliza Naranjo Morse, and 40 of my makeup wipes:

> In the 19th century, Native Americans developed new art forms that sometimes mocked and ridiculed the bad behavior of the dominant culture. Traditional Native American clowns…not only provide comedic performances during ceremonies, but also serve important cultural roles by pointing out behavior that falls outside of community standards. Hudson, by way of Carla Rossi's performances, creates a narrative Native fiction

Anthony Hudson, *Carla Wipe PAM with Jeffrey Gibson,* 2023. Neutrogena Compostable Makeup Remover Cleansing Wipe, makeup, sweat, dirt, 6 × 8 in. Makeup wipe print taken after leading workshops for queer youth with Jeffrey Gibson at Portland Art Museum

> and gender bending experience, asking hard questions and presenting plain truths about American society… Hybridizing the performance art practices of Native clown and contemporary drag, [Hudson's] work also evokes other art historical references, from Marcel Duchamp's alter ego, Rrose Selavy, to performance artist Leigh Bowery.[1]

This is queer art. This is Indigenous art. If it doesn't look like that to you, then you should learn new ways of seeing.

Anthony Hudson, *Carla Does Drag,* 2023. Neutrogena Compostable Makeup Remover Cleansing Wipe, makeup, sweat, dirt, 6 × 8 in. Makeup wipe print taken onstage while lip syncing in *Carla Rossi Does Drag* at Reed, after the performance that recreated and exorcised Carla's Storytime

Five years on, I still struggle to comprehend the psychological impact of what happened after my Storytime: how children were wrongly sexualized and exploited by rabid strangers on the internet in the name of destroying people like me.

Even after lampooning this saga with a new performance in my show *Carla Rossi Does Drag*, where Carla gives a Drag Queen Storytime that goes incredibly wrong—just the way conservatives fear, but with the addition of a plunger and the Black Eyed Peas' "My Humps," and a projector repurposing shock headlines that called me a "demonic tranny clown," among many other things—I am not entirely exorcised. I no longer offer Drag Queen Storytimes. I still show up for drag engagements with Indigenous youth, but those are yet to draw any attention. In an absolutely predictable twist, conservative outrage doesn't care about Native kids, just white ones.

Today, I feel a complicated mix of grief and shame over the fact that my Drag Queen Storytime was used to fuel hatred and enact anti-trans legislation. The current "war on drag" is a coded war on trans people, using misrepresentation of drag and its practice and power to incite hatred. By legislating against "drag," which is legally (and vaguely) defined as an act of cross-dressing, anyone who doesn't wear the culturally-coded "correct" clothing, or otherwise perform in accordance with the expectations of whatever gender others perceive—or assign to them—becomes criminal. Inappropriate. Immoral. Illegal.

Drag is art, and it needs to be championed as such more than ever. To decolonize, to thrive, to be taken seriously and to become an even more viable means for

Anthony Hudson, *Carla Wipe Gloop,* 2023. Neutrogena Compostable Makeup Remover Cleansing Wipe, makeup, sweat, dirt, Cheetos dust, mylar confetti 6 × 8 in. Makeup wipe print taken after a performance of *Carla Rossi and Pepper Pepper are GLOOP* at Portland Institute for Contemporary Art

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cultural revitalization and production, we need you to stand up for this art form. Protect us. Support us. Fund us. Publish us. Give us fellowships. Save theatres from extinction by putting us in them. Show us in galleries. And leave us to define our work. Like tired debates over *drag* versus *performance* versus *theatre* versus *entertainment*, it's time to reject the colonialist reliance on taxonomy that similarly seeks to label Indigenous art as *traditional* or *contemporary* or *craft* or *visual art*.

Let us self-determine. Just hold our hair and have our backs. In return, we'll show you entire worlds—weirder, funnier, safer, better worlds—that you can't even imagine.

1 Andrea R. Hanley, *Field Guide* (Clearmont, WY: Ucross Foundation, 2023): https://online.flippingbook.com/view/841724055/8/

Anthony Hudson is a Grand Ronde/Siletz artist and writer also known as Portland's premier drag clown Carla Rossi. Anthony's performance work, from his award-winning solo show *Looking for Tiger Lily* to *Queer Horror* at the Hollywood Theatre, have earned him national fellowships, international engagements including the US Pavilion's drag clown in residence at the 2024 Venice Biennale, features in *Hyperallergic* and *Art in America*, and saint-hood from the Portland Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. A 2023 FSG Writer's Fellowship finalist and 2024 Tin House resident, Anthony's writing has appeared in *American Theatre*, *Bomb Magazine*, and *Arts and International Affairs*. He is currently adapting *Looking for Tiger Lily* into a book.

Molly Alloy

A State of Un-being

I recently read a theory that humans, when first creating tools for use, simultaneously created the first non-beings we ever interacted with. Having taken an inherently sacred expression of the living world from a state of *being* and made it into some-*thing*. The original objectification. We are not alone in this practice, as dolphins, primates, crows, and I imagine many others, also draw remnant bodies such as stones and sticks into service as tools and toys. We are undeniably the most devoted to it, however, and have followed the impulse to grotesque ends.

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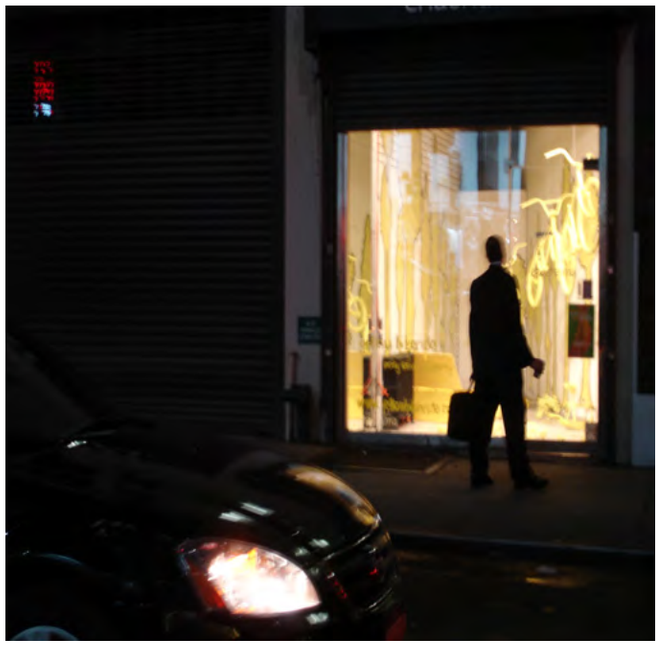
This concept strikes a deep chord with my creative practice, and illuminates a vital link between my orientation as an artist and as a museum professional.

In my sculpture practice I gather driftwood and adorn it with leather. I take this driftwood as an earthly relative in suspension between life and life—that of a tree, and that of an integrated element of the earth. I see an inherent queerness in that suspended state, and call upon these objects as portals to my queer ancestors. The leather, part of a body much more like ours and caught in the same suspense as the driftwood, is applied through very time consuming hand stitches, and is done as a gesture of care and intimacy. Through making sculpture, I am consciously engaging

in this human practice of arresting our kin and holding them in un-being as objects, with intention and worship. I am able to slow down and notice what it feels like to do, what becomes possible and what is limited from possibility by these acts.

I find that the un-beings need care, love, adoration, reverence, to sustain them while they are suspended from being. They deserve recognition as sacred, gratitude for the service they provide in their suspended form.

I have always used my creative practice to connect more deeply with myself, to heal from the trauma of living in the human world as it is today, and as a vehicle for expanding access to my own queerness. In my nonbinary and trans experience, it is natural for me to find harmony in a state of between-ness. Reaching back to some of my earliest exhibitions, I see an attraction to the release of un-being, the return of worship, such as in my installation with Chashama in New York's garment district, *Yellowbikeride*. Here bicycle frames stand in for beings returning from their arrested state and liberating themselves from function, from human servitude, positioned instead as liberated and thirsty for exaltation.



Molly Alloy, several driftwood and leather sculptures. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Molly Alloy, *Yellowbikeride* (street view at night)

Taking this lens to the museum, I see at once another form of worship in the collecting and sharing of un-beings. On the other hand I see a misguided and under-attended impact: the hoarding of suspended objects, incarcerated without the attention and relation that they need to sustain them through until they are released to fulfill their innate path towards reintegration into the whole of the earth.

Pitchfork installation view. Courtesy Five Oaks Museum. Photo: Mario Gallucci

In Five Oaks Museum's exhibition *Replenish the Root: Six Centuries of Gathering Under the Oaks* exhibition team Mariah Berlanga-Shevchuk, Victoria Sundell, and Janine Vigus have created a space for this reverence and care to return to some of these objects. The pitchfork is framed almost religiously and presented with animation implied in the positioning. The context of the exhibition relates that un-being back to the being it was—the oak tree—in a way that invokes a human longing to relate, rather than possess alone.

On the other hand, when I move through the collections space, I see that the natural impulse to object-make takes on a scale of retention that is constipating and overwhelming. In much of the professional museum realm preservation without deterioration is still the highest aim. What is an object that is kept but not seen or touched? What is our responsibility to their need to return into being-ness again? In other articulations I hear these questions bubbling up across the museum world these days.

I learned from the team at Chachalu Museum and Cultural Center in Grand Ronde that there are ways of museum-making that honor the objects' needs for contact, love, care, and relationship. To me, the question is really what are we asking of these un-beings, that we have taken them from their life-cycle to meet our own purposes, and are we being reciprocal to them for that service? When we allow the incarceration of these un-beings to run away from us, and if it exceeds our capacity for care, on whom does the deficit fall?

Five Oaks Museum storage.
Photo: Molly Alloy

In my own practice the answers are the art: the naming of an object as art becomes an assertion of responsibility to consider, to tend, to adore. In the context of the museum the answer is perhaps the story: where objects can be situated to enliven stories, they have a potential to reduce harm by inspiring care, connection, and meaning. In this service I do believe their state of un-being may be warranted, at least for a time.

Reflecting on these connections I see the significance of naming a museum after a grove of trees in a new light. There is a dedication, a reconnecting where severance has overrun. The other changes that we have made at the institution also follow this logic of finding harmony in

the suspension between. Interdisciplinary approaches are conduits for that harmony, exponentially opening space for meaning to emerge. Sharing power is an act of finding harmony between perspectives, and our museum Co-director model becomes a container for us to learn what that feels like and how to thrive in that space. Committee-based decision-making extends that further, bringing many beings together to find purpose, make meaning, and be accountable to our impacts collectively. And, most importantly of all, sharing the platform of the museum with many voices through the Guest Curator Program becomes a way to maximize the infusion of story and purpose into the act of holding so many objects in suspension. The more cultural contexts through which we consider these materials, the better their chance of being activated, finding meaning and purpose, and being received by audiences, itself a kind of worship.

Molly Alloy (they/them, b. 1981 St. Louis, MO/Osage land) makes sculptures that claim driftwood and leather as conduits of ancestral presence, shaped into contemplations of collective queer immortality. As a founding Codirector of Five Oaks Museum, on Tualatin Kalapuya land, they orient their work towards the protection of body, land, truth, justice, and community.

Living and working within the positionality of a queer, non-binary, trans, neurodivergent synesthete, white settler, and parent, Alloy uses their creative practices to connect more deeply with the natural and spiritual world, to heal from the trauma of the colonial, industrialized human world, and as a vehicle for expanding access to their own queerness.

You Are Alive

You Are Alive

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Jeffrey Gibson was born in Colorado but moved frequently and lived abroad as a child in Germany and Korea. He is a member of the Choctaw and Cherokee nations. This unique combination of cultural perspectives and exposure is essential to understanding Gibson's artworks that combine and transform seemingly disparate references drawn from both Western and non-Western sources. The objects he creates speak to historical and social narratives—specifically those that have threatened his queer and Indigenous voice. His works can be found in several collections across the US. Gibson received a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 2019.

In 2024, The Portland Art Museum and SITE Santa Fe, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, presented Jeffrey Gibson as the representative for the United States at the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. As curators Kathleen Ash-Milby and Abigail Winograd describe, Gibson's installation *the space in which to place me*, "recognizes Indigenous aesthetics and material histories as effective tools for cultural survival, innovation, and healing from the impacts of historical trauma. *the space in which to place me* joyously declares Gibson's radically inclusive vision for a future in which all people are seen, accepted, and loved."

Jeffrey Gibson, *ALIVE!,* 2016. Glass beads, tin jingles, steel and brass studs, nylon fringe, and artificial sinew on acrylic felt, mounted on canvas, 100 × 61-¼ in. Collection of Portland State University. Located in the Vanport Building. Acquired through Oregon's Percent for Art in Public Places Program, managed by the Oregon Arts Commission


They Are Alive

They Are Alive

Essay on the Work of Ka'ila Farrell Smith

...*Mukhtara Yusuf*

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Note from the Author:

My homelands are in southwestern Nigeria. I am an Indigenous Yoruba from lands which have been swallowed into this nation state formulation for the benefit of white supremacist imperialism. The seriousness with which I approach my identity as Indigenous is not one that can be overstated. As yet, Indigenous African identity, that is the Indigeneity of continental Black African's whose known/most recent ancestral connections are within the landmass of Africa, has gone more or less untouched, or dare I say, ignored. The fight for Indigenous African sovereignty is one I would argue does not get attention because positioning the fight in those terms alone is an anti-neoliberal, settler-threatening act of coalition building with global Indigeneity.

Nevertheless, that is the place from which I enter my critical relation to the work of Indigenous activist and artist Ka'ila Farell Smith, the work of a creator and activist (like me) who(like me) is of peoples who are 'precolonial' with a "narrative that is geographically, cosmologically and ontologically tied to their land. [Whose] relationship to land and identification as such, starts with territory which carries a polyvalence regarding ancestry, origin, spirituality and so forth"[1] albeit with important differences along with those similarities.

When I spoke to Farrell-Smith to prepare for this essay, I was living in an Airbnb I had rented in Portland, OR for six weeks. At the time I was working for an affordable housing organization to help secure stable housing for marginalized people, the kind of stable housing that I could not secure for myself. During that time in Portland, spending time with Farrell-Smith's work in person, via the MESH exhibition at Portland Contemporary, and speaking with her one on one, the urgency of Indigenous sovereignty struck me in new ways. After my time in Portland, I would go on to move four times in the next month and remain without long term or stable housing for about a year. The complex connections between neocolonialism, infrastructural breakdown, and resource extraction that lead to my experiencing long-term placelessness began to illuminate through my communion with Farrell-Smith and her work.

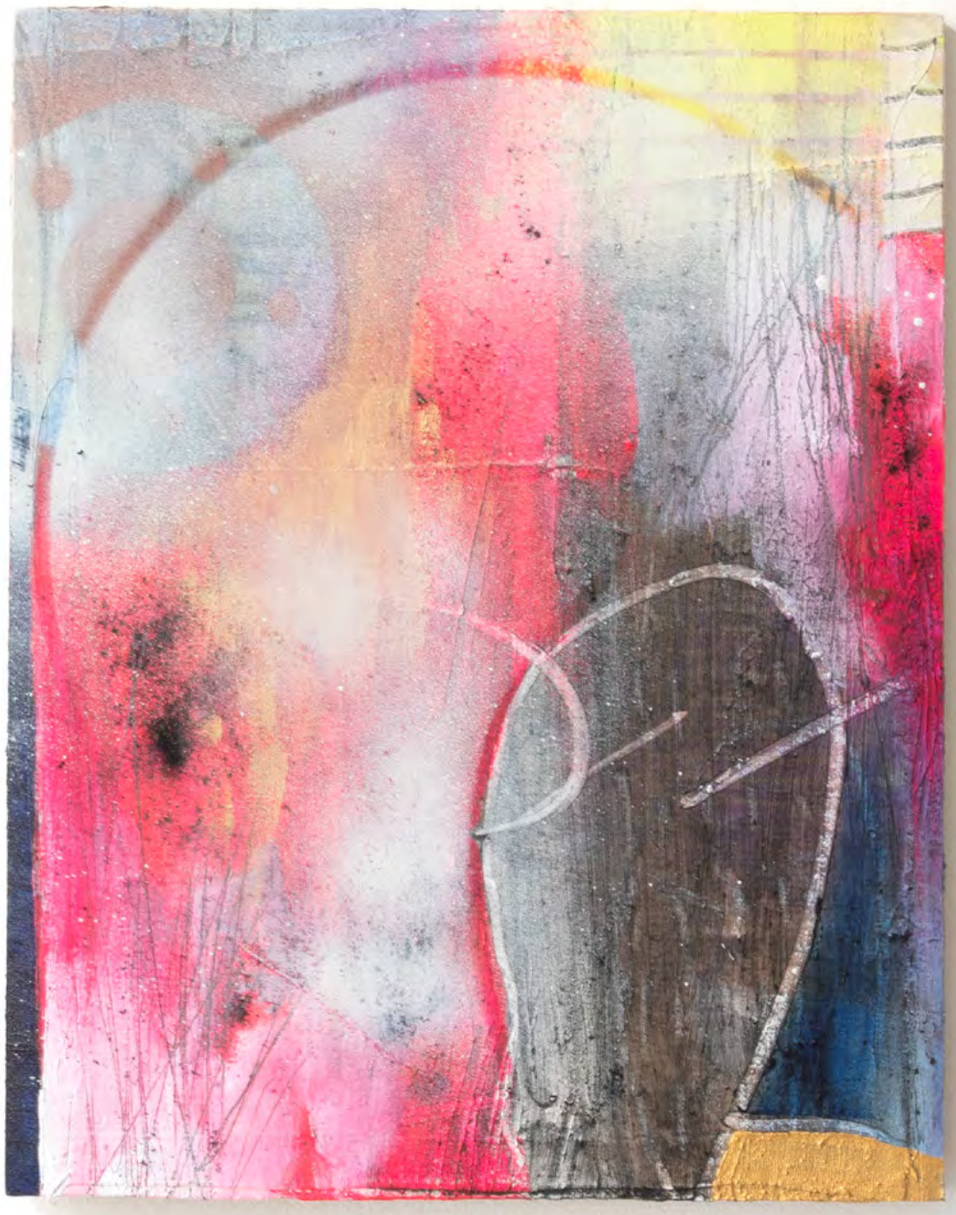
•••

Farrell-Smith's Artwork

The first works I saw from Farrell-Smith were the *Land Back* series. I was searching for works to decorate the interiors of the office of my employer. I wanted to find works that were unapologetically decolonial, that could stand as a haunting in that space, a recognition of the settler-colonialism that made the office of this mostly-white organization possible. Markings that would be there long after I left.

In her *Land Back* series, Farrell-Smith outright refuses settler claims to land and attempts to hide colonialism within some distant past. In these works, land, historically imagined by western epistemology as abstract, object, and able to be extracted from, is an alive and complex palimpsest. Farrell-Smith brings together both the material and the immaterial, the conceptual and the tangible. Wild harvested pigments from Klamath lands, barbed wire, and other detritus from the land used as stencils. Farrell-Smith takes us beyond the

Ka'ila Farrell-Smith (Klamath/Modoc), *Ghost Rider: Performing Fugitive Indigeneity* (installation view), 2021. Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon. Photo: Ditch Projects



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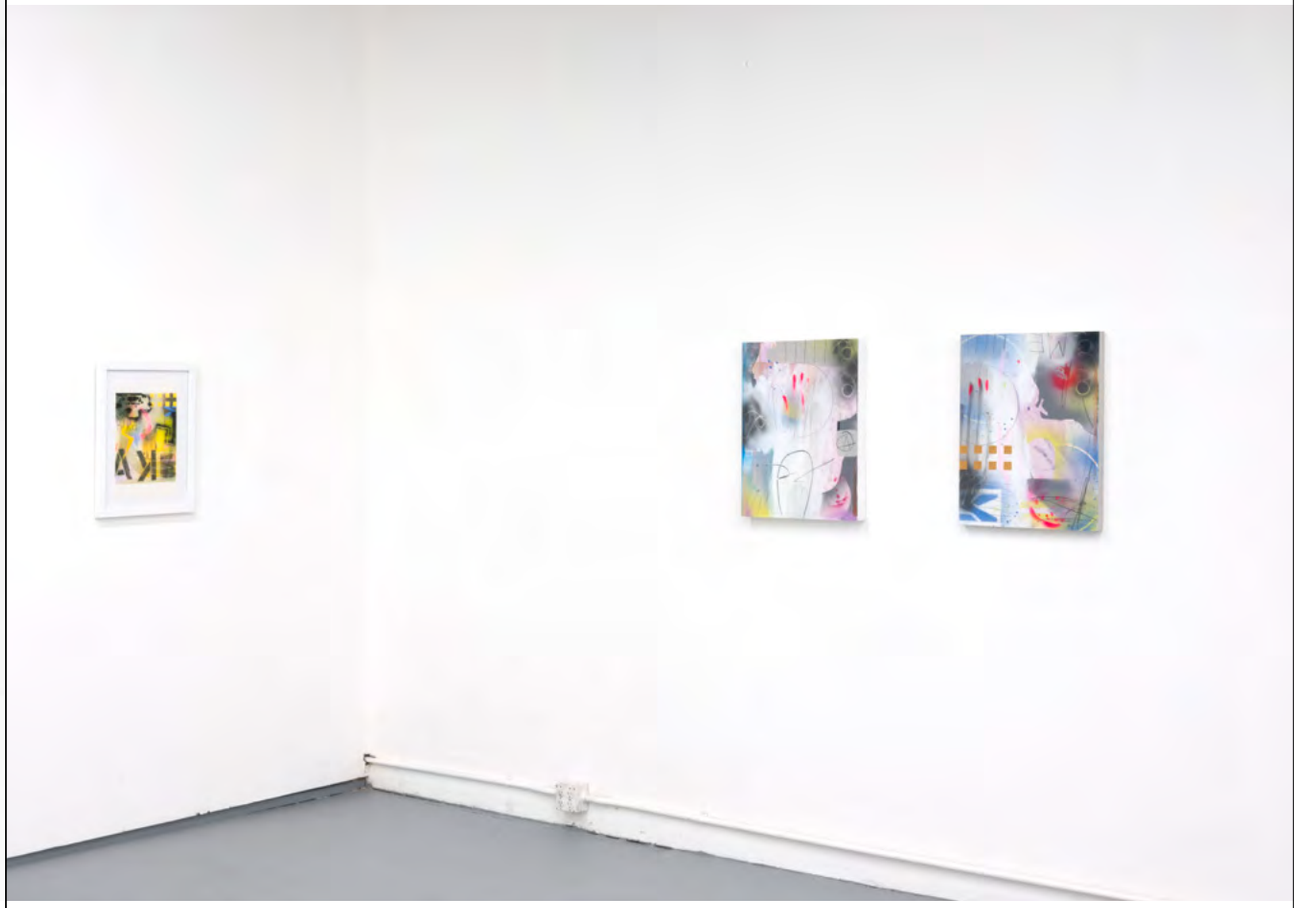
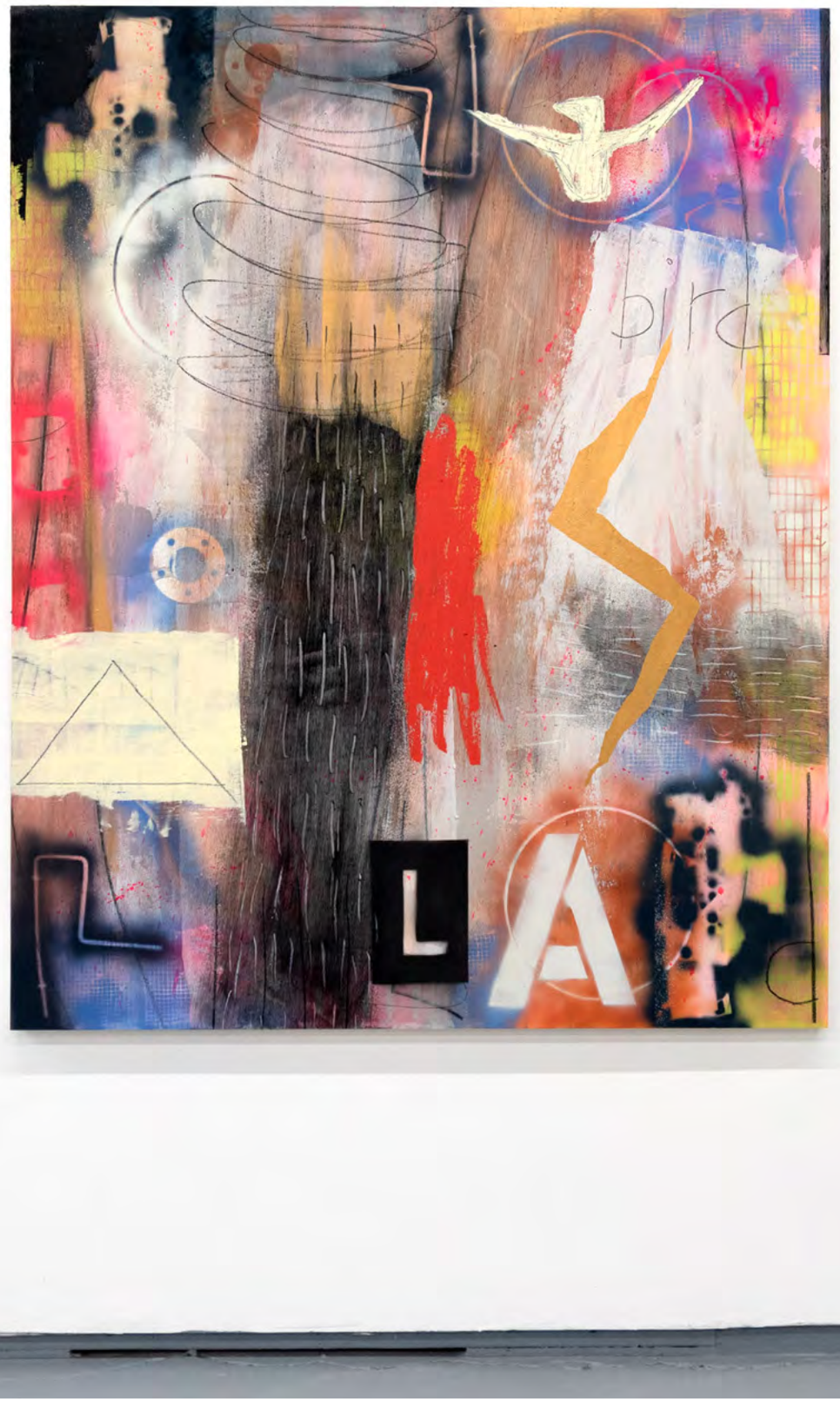
representation of the land, bringing its materiality to be felt and embodied through the works. Each piece holds an invitation to be briefly with Klamath land if we are willing to be present without needing to hold the fiction of circumscription. If we are willing to betray the colonial conceptualization of land as something static enough for colonial notions of ownership. The works offer us a chance to understand that land is not merely a site but an emergence, not a romanticisation but an archive of what was and what is.

Ascend (2021) and *Descend* (2021) of the *Land Back* series include visible strokes of rage, pain, and aggression; the red dragged hand markings repeat themselves in Farrell-Smith's pieces on Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP). Marks that look like scratches and lines that suggest movement and direction force us to imagine Farrell-Smith making the work, her hand and her tools, as well as the energy and emotions behind this mark-making. These exist alongside markings that suggest ease and respite, large sections of white paint, repetitive halo-like shapes, and conical openings that suggest ascension or landing. Explosions, consolidations, moving above, breaking through, going beyond; I see these sentiments present in both pieces. A sense of grappling

Opposite:
Ka'ila Farrell-Smith (Klamath/Modoc), *Nebula, I Spy,* 2021. Fabric stamps, fabric collage, acrylics, aerosols, graphite, oil bars on wood panel, 14 × 11 in. Photo: Ditch Projects

Ka'ila Farrell-Smith (Klamath/Modoc), *Ghost Rider: Performing Fugitive Indigeneity* (installation view), 2021. Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon. Photo: Ditch Projects





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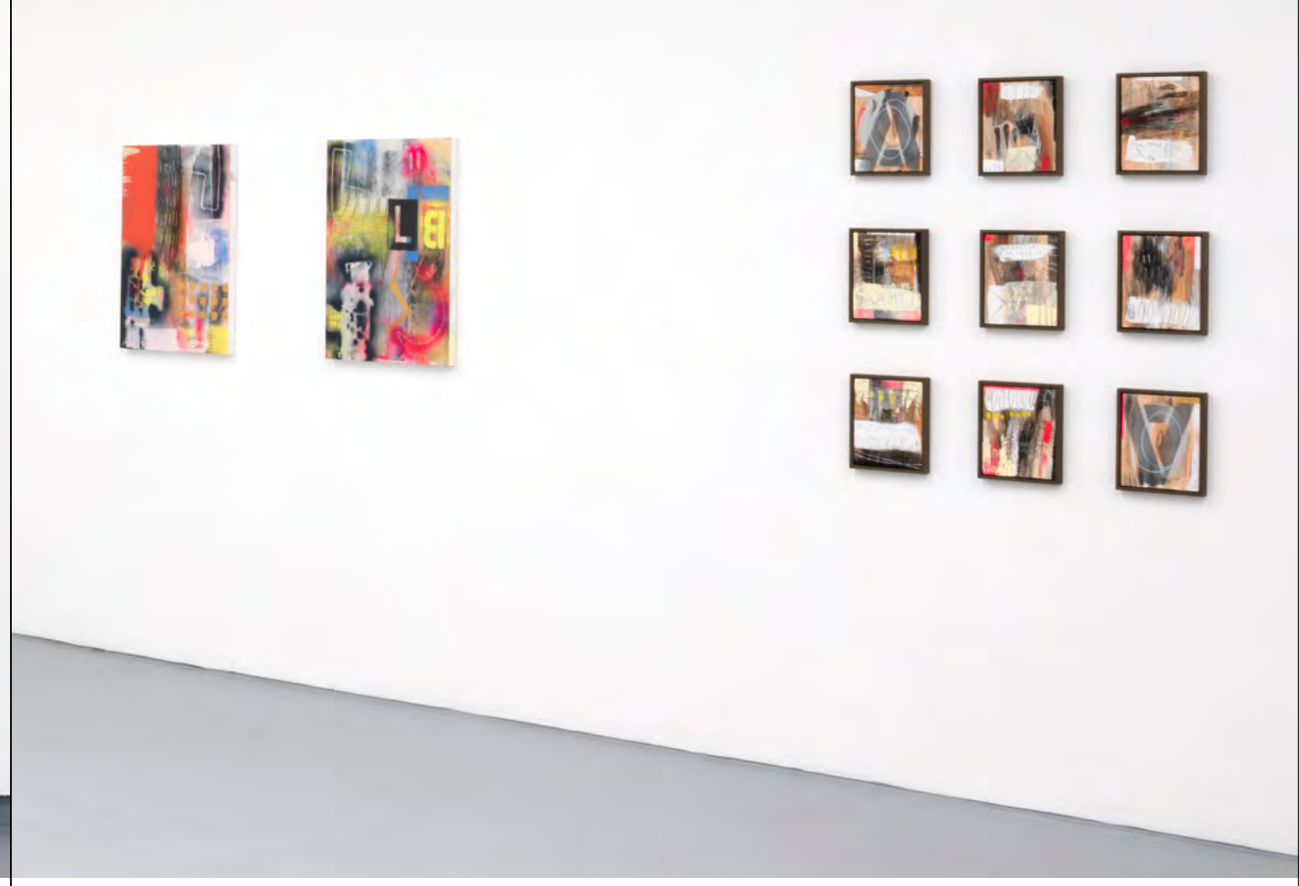
Opposite:
Ka'ila Farrell-Smith (Klamath/Modoc), *Off the Ground*, 2021. Acrylics, Painted Hills wild red, Klamath charcoal and chalk, aerosols, graphite, oil bars on wood panel. 60 × 48 in. Photo: Ditch Projects

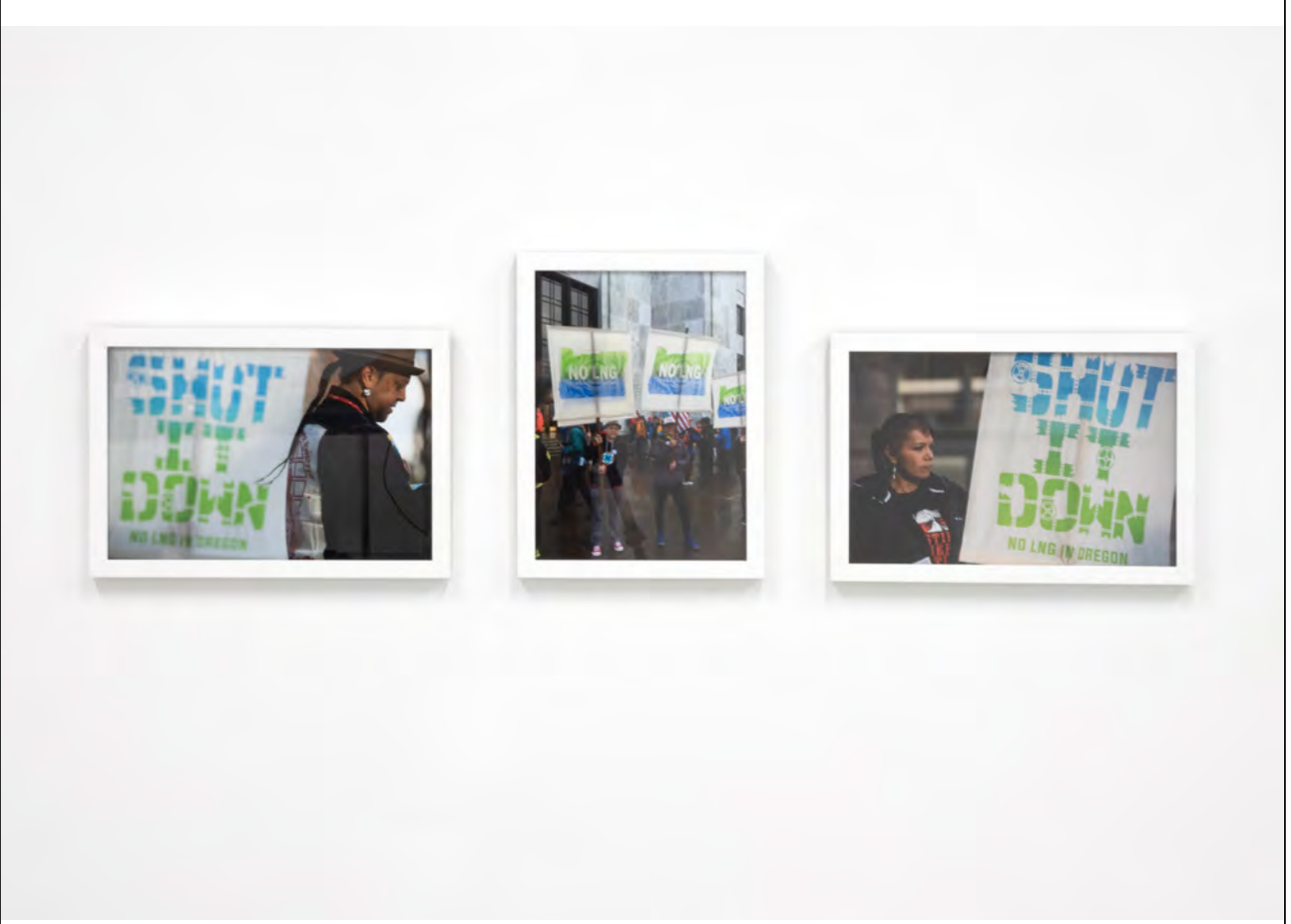
Ka'ila Farrell-Smith (Klamath/Modoc), *Ghost Rider: Performing Fugitive Indigeneity* (installation view), 2021. Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon. Photo: Ditch Projects



Martin Evans and Cale Christi, *The Banners in Action* (installation view), 2018/2019. *Umbo Room,* curated by Ka'ila Farrell-Smith, 2021. Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon. Photo: Ditch Projects

with the darkness and horror of Indigenous conditions, such as the conditions of the mass murder in MMIP. The presence nonetheless of spirituality, the notion of something beyond this material world. But in presenting these themes in both pieces, Farrell-Smith does escape the trap of romanticizing the spiritual world and erasing the gruesomeness of this one. Instead, we are shown a politicized spiritual vision between the two works that resists binary opposition. The *Land Back* series strikes me as a series of anti-imperialist living landscapes and altars that honor the every unfolding-ness of land.

Farrell-Smith's voice as a multidisciplinary artist, a writer, and painter, comes through in the poetic use of language in her work. One of the pieces that strikes me the most in its evocative use of language is her print *Alien Invasion, 1492*, a five color lithograph developed during her residency at the Crow Shadow Institute of the Arts. Amidst dark and moody colors, Black vigorous lines that fill up a majority of the canvas is the word "un-erasing". For me, these words speak to a powerful message about loss that suggests erasure or loss is not final. Whether through necromancy or ritual, perhaps through the vigorous lines made in the piece itself, the artist is undoing erasure, the most grief-inducing and ongoing legacy of colonialism. The possibility that we as Indigenous people can "un-erase" suggests a capacity to view ourselves as newly powerful within the settler-Indigenous hierarchy.



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The graphic elements of singular words can be seen throughout the *Land Back* series. Many are words that have been used as propaganda to mediate US imperialism's imaginings of Indigenous peoples in North America. "X-tinct" (*MMIP*, 2021) "Savage" (*Ghost Dance*, 2021). Others are directives that could be spells. Words that seem to, by their utterance, make something happen, or restore something. "Skoden (let's go then)" "Stoodis (let's do this)" (*SKODEN, flat 1*, 2019) or more intensely "Human" (*Get Out NDN*, 2018), "LAND BACK" (*Extraction*, 2021), and once more "Un-erase" (*I I I I*, 2018). They remind me as a viewer and artist of the layers of archival work that go into creating from an Indigenous worldview and perspective. Not only does the inclusion of these words act as a poetic element in the reading of the work, these works also mediate or label the pieces themselves in ways a museum placard or words within an archive would. Instead of creating a clean and un-messy archive, though, we are offered one full of ecology, rage, emotion, entanglements, and layering.

Whether through necromancy or ritual, perhaps through the vigorous lines made in the piece itself, the artist is undoing erasure, the most grief-inducing and ongoing legacy of colonialism. The possibility that we as Indigenous people can "un-erase" suggests a capacity to view ourselves as newly powerful within the settler-Indigenous hierarchy.

A sense of archive is present within the works that expands far beyond the lettering within the pieces. In creating energetic gestures that go beyond gentle brush strokes, that seem to erase the hand of the artist. Instead, her work leaves us with echoes of her body. We can almost visualize her making these works. In choosing to create markings that suggest and evoke her embodiment, Farrell-Smith imposes the presence of the living archive that is the Indigenous body. The works are evidence of the constantly evolving legacy of Indigenous ancestors and of those who will become ancestors. They are memories, documentation of living.

To present the directive of land return within artworks as Farrell-Smith does is critical and impactful because aesthetics are the key site of how decolonization is and continues to be abstractified, and turned into what Eve and Tuck describe as 'metaphor.' Farrell-Smith uses aesthetic mediums, the naming of her works, presence of pigments from her Indigenous land to ruin the potential for her artwork to be a site of settler comfort. These pieces all materially tell a story of Indigenous sovereignty. The drawing lines, boundaries, limitations, creating new terms of relations, new demarcations of refusal are all the documentation of Indigenous movement, Indigenous agency, agency granted from the land and Indigenous relation.

• • •

Farrell-Smith's Activist Work

Settlers of all backgrounds, whether white or non-Black people of color—as they often are in my part of the world—attempt to erase the settler versus Indigenous divide as part of the larger settler-colonial project. What moves me about Farrell-Smith's work, both as an activist-artist, is that every space she is in is about refusing to allow these attempts

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Roger Peet, *SHUT IT DOWN,* 2018. Asa Wright (Klamath/Modoc/Yahooskin), *NO LNG* (installation view), 2018. *Umbo Room,* curated by Ka'ila Farrell-Smith, 2021. Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon. Photo: Ditch Projects

to go off with ease. Several times a year, you can find Farrell-Smith placing her body on the line with other Indigenous people seeking to protect the earth. Farrell-Smith uses her voice, platform, and body to stand against pipelines, lithium extraction, and in opposition to wealthy corporations. Her work is far from symbolically activist; in 2021, she stood against government bodies like the Oregon Department of Justice as one of four plaintiffs suing the department for their illegal surveillance of herself and other water protectors opposing the Canadian corporation Pembina's Jordan Cove Energy Projects on their ancestral homelands.

In her 2019 open letter "Why I Refuse To Hang My Paintings in Governor Brown's Office," the deepest and unapologetic intersections of Farrell-Smith's activist-artist hyphen are on display. As she states straight to the point and without mincing words (emphasis my own):

> I am an Indigenous artist based in Klamath County. Recently, Governor Kate Brown invited me to show my art at her Salem office as part of the annual "Art in the Governor's Office" program—an invitation they say is "considered a lifetime honor." I declined.
>
> I said "no" *because Brown can't have it both ways*. **She can't support Oregon tribal members by showcasing our art while at the same time refusing to stand up for us when a huge fossil fuel company tries its very best to ram a fracked gas pipeline through our traditional lands**—a pipeline that would threaten our sacred sites, the natural resources we have harvested for millennia and the safety of our women.

Farrell-Smith—like any artist who claims to center their work around values of justice, purpose, and community—works and moves within the context of a dominant culture that does not share any of those values. In fact, in the neoliberal and tokenistic world of contemporary art, these values are lauded in theory and antagonized in practice. The steady stream of representative politics that is ever present in galleries is not to be questioned, and the clear conflict of interest between the aforementioned values and the powers at large are meant to be swallowed under "compromise." The social capital that is promised through allegiances with people in power is meant to have more meaning than the urgency of Indigenous sovereignty.

In the face of this environment where becoming a token within neoliberalism is supposedly the best that the world has to offer marginalized artists, Farrell-Smith said, "No." And not only did she say no, but in her open letter she invites this refusal into public discourse. It is one thing to resist the temptation to partake in an exchange of capital that is dehumanizing your people at large.t is another thing and a different act of courage altogether to post your "No" in the public sphere to honor your ancestors and start a conversation. Her "No" is a no to prioritizing representative politics above structural change, and no to the constructs that compel marginalized creators to do the same out of desperation.

As an Indigenous Nigerian artist who works within the context of Africa's most popular, most neoliberally caustic, and extractive art scene, the example is profound for me. Farrell-Smith's example of what it means to be an artist who navigates from a sense of collectivism and refusal has been life-affirming. As she states in her own words:

The role of creative fugitivity in a corporate colonial empire has become essential. As a content creator, writer, mark maker, and mentor, I've removed my labor from the urban center focusing my conceptual practice of performative painting with the land. This performance of refusal and flight is rooted in learning decolonial modes of resistance and freedom for my ancestors and contemporaries.

Farrell-Smith illuminates the risk and the great courage it takes to be an Indigenous artist living Indigenously. The risk that it is to be an artist within the extractive capitalistic framework colonialism has forced all of us into, risking loss of financial gain and, therefore, material security for the sake of their values. I am from a place where the dominant art scene is such that those who have the privilege and social capital of being able to push back against these systems are still too caught up in narratives of Nigerian elitism, a sense of victimhood, and respectability politics. Even when they know intellectually that radical refusal is necessary, but emotionally are too filled with shame and fear to attempt. The illusion is that there is no other way, no choice, and no options. Though I have always known in my heart these limited imaginings to be false, seeing a good example that affirms new possibilities has breathed more courage into me.

Opposite:
Vikki Preston (Karuk), *Salmon Run* (installation view), 2021. *Umbo Room,* curated by Ka'ila Farrell-Smith, 2021. Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon. Photo: Ditch Projects

Christi Belcourt (Métis), *Mother Earth Revolution* (installation view), 2020. *Umbo Room,* curated by Ka'ila Farrell-Smith, 2021. Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon. Photo: Ditch Projects

Natalie Ball (Klamath/Modoc) and Ka'ila Farrell-Smith (Klamath/Modoc), *UMBO Collection* (installation view), 2021. Spring water harvested from the Spring Creek Headwaters and the Williamson River, at the confluence with Spring Creek near Chiloquin, Oregon. *Umbo Room,* curated by Ka'ila Farrell-Smith, 2021. Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon. Photo: Ditch Projects

To me, Farrell-Smith's work as an activist-artist is a heartfelt example of what it means to live Indigenously. More and more, I believe that as an Indigenous person, my work in the world now is to go beyond being Indigenous by birth alone. To instead, move in a way of seeing and being and relating to the earth that honors and protects with reverence ties to land, people, and Indigenous ways of life. This is an opportunity not necessarily afforded to all, and yet for many of us that are granted this opportunity, we have—under the tide of capitalistic extraction and imperialism—lost our hope to live Indigenously and our knowledge that it is a possibility. While settler-ism relies on an attempt to erase these stories and Indigenous ties to their land, Indigenous art such as Farrell-Smith's force such attempts to face their reckoning.

In October of 2021, when I first connected with Farrell-Smith for the purpose of this essay, I was housing insecure. I spent the better part of that year, August 2021 to August 2022, housing insecure. This time of challenge has illuminated a link between housing precarity and colonialism that was previously hidden for me, hiding behind internalized meritocracy narratives, shame, and victim blaming. I have been challenged to refuse the imperialist narratives that would have made me not understand that my placelessness is the result of settler-colonialism and imperialist capitalist extraction both in my homelands and in North America.

Throughout 2021–2022, I struggled to find the words for this essay. I struggled to find what I sought to say about Indigenous sovereignty in Farrell-Smith's work and the clear courage and audacity to claim what belongs *with* us; our Indigeneity, our land, and our righteous indignation against any forces that would have us believe otherwise. Rather than belonging *to* us, Indigenous land belongs *with* us, in our hearts and daily lives, as part of our embodied experiences, art, and writing. I began to find the words that affirm this as I found my way back to my own Indigenous homeland and to my righteous indignation against the forces that have sought to erase my Indigeneity, my right to Indigenous sovereignty, and sought to make me placeless. It is no accident to me that I find the ability to express the impact of Farrell-Smith's work on me, as I also find the path to rematriate home. More than anything else, I am grateful for the kinship and mentorship Farrell-Smith's purposeful work offers Indigenous artists globally seeking to live Indigenously. I am grateful for the emboldened courage her work and ways of being have impacted and will impact people like me, Indigenous kin she may never meet.

This essay was commissioned by Ditch Projects in conjunction with Farrell-Smith's exhibition *Ghost Rider: Performing Fugitive Indigeneity*, with generous editorial support from Critical Conversations and The Ford Family Foundation's Visual Arts Program.

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1 Roxanne, Tiara. (2019). Digital territory, digital flesh. A Peer-Reviewed Journal About. 8 Machine Feeling. 70–80. 10.7146/aprja.v8i1.115416.

Mukhtara Ayọtẹjú Adékúnbi Yusuf (they/them) is the descendant of Yoruba tradeswomen, aṣọ oke weavers, onifá, and eleégún. Through practice and theory, warp&weft, writing and design, their work highlights the generative qualities of indigenous thinking, story-healing, relations, and accessibility. Their practice explores ontology and relationality beyond the individual. Through rematriation, narrative, and Yoruba theology, they explore methods to heal the ontological wounds created by coloniality, heal the Indigenous-self and recover its relationship to non-human others.

Mukhtara is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor at NYU Tandon's School of Engineering in the Integrated Design and Media program and holds a BA from Dartmouth College, an MA in Communications and Media from UCSD, and an MFA in Design from UT Austin. Mukhtara's courses cover black embodiment and spatial design, racialised trauma, settler colonialism within the African context, and black and indigenous ecologies. Mukhtara is the founder of ILẸ an indigenous agricultural healing laboratory based in Ibadan, Nigeria, as well as the organising founder of African Indigenous Sovereignty.

Ron Jude. A discography

... Simone Ciglia

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"The photograph must be silent", according to Roland Barthes: "this is not a question of discretion, but of music. Absolute subjectivity is achieved only in a state, an effort, of silence (shutting your eyes is to make the image speak in silence)."[1] Yet even if music is not literally impressed upon the surface of the medium—either physical or digital—it can still resound through multiple channels, intersecting a project's development at various points, or eliciting an aural response from the viewer. The musical quality of photography is at the center of this essay, investigated via the work of photographer Ron Jude (Los Angeles, CA, 1965).

The following discography is based on a selection of records that, for various reasons, were influential for the artist: some of them marked a biographical milestone (a period spent in a certain place, for example), while others are directly connected to his work (specifically designed for a project), still others offered aesthetic principles or ideas which then reverberated into his photographs. This discography covers a wide span of temporality, authorship, and genres, reflecting the amplitude of the photographic work to which they are related. It invokes the *vertigo of the list*, as defined by Umberto Eco.[2] According to the Italian writer, the list is used when one doesn't know the borders of the thing represented, or when its definition is only possible through an index of potentially infinite properties. As such, this catalog is just one possible sonic journey in Jude's work and does not exhaust the resonance of his *oeuvre*.

Instructions: The discography is ordered chronologically according to the release date of the albums included. Each entry is conceived autonomously and there is no continuity among them. The list can therefore be freely navigated by the reader, who may choose their preferred sequence. A series of references is provided within the texts to further multiply the non-linear path.

Enjoy!

Genesis
The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway
Charisma, 1974

The prog-rock concept album is a form that Jude was drawn to in his teens: "The somewhat cinematic, yet abstract quality of storytelling found in albums like this would eventually inform my thinking about stringing together multiple images to shape something that went beyond what singular photographs could offer, but in a way that didn't have to conform to conventional, linear storytelling. The idea that one could build an immersive world that a viewer could occupy in the same way they might experience the ephemeral qualities of narrative-based music seemed full of potential to me when I was figuring out how I wanted to use photography." The narrative intent of the Genesis album is declared in the first place by the cover. Three photographs are juxtaposed, connected by various means: in the first and second image, the protagonists are conjoined by their hands, trespassing the edge of the picture that separates them. The man in the third escapes the frame to contemplate the others, leaving his empty silhouette behind. The sequencing of images will prove to be a crucial narrative device employed in Jude's photographic project, typically articulated in his bodies of work. In his case, storytelling does not reside in the singularity of the picture:

Ron Jude, *Untitled* (*Fire #2*)
From *Dark Matter*, 2022.
Archival pigment print on
drawing paper, 34 × 25½ in

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the photographer recognizes "an impulse to deny or reduce the narrative capacity" of the photographs, whose impact "is based as much on enigma as it is on information."[3] Storytelling is rather concocted through the arrangement of pictures according to an order devised primarily within the book format. After publishing his first book (*Alpine Star*, 2006; see Godspeed You! Black Emperor, *F#A#∞*), Jude adopted this model as a guiding principle for the following photobook production: he initially conceived his project as a book and later presented it as an exhibition. The temporality of Jude's process tends to extend for several years. For example, *Lick Creek Line*, a series that follows a fur trapper in central Idaho, was developed between 1997 and 2011. He reversed this narrative approach in a recent series *12 Hz* (2017–20), where the focus shifts to non-sequential single images, intended primarily as objects to be exhibited (see Joshua Bonnetta, *Strange Lines and Distances*).

The Clash
London Calling
CBS, 1979

A punk attitude has been detected in the work of Ron Jude: "a point-and-click, found footage vibe,"[4] as defined by L.E. Ball. The photographer recounts growing up in a working-class family in rural Idaho, where, as Jude recounts, culture was not a central preoccupation. An initial, disorderly, discovery of photography was later followed by formal education, first with a BFA in studio art from Boise State University (1988), followed by an MFA from Louisiana State University (1992). This path might offer some clues for his attraction to one of punk's masterpieces by The Clash. For him, the importance of *London Calling* lies in the combination of the "'fuck you' irreverence of punk" with unlikely musical elements such as ska, and a direct and focused, somewhat anarchist world view." This unique mixture allowed The Clash "to bring a new level of sophistication to the raw energy and defiant attitude of the music of that moment. Doing something musically interesting and beyond the often-superficial one-liner tropes of punk rock seemed like a necessary part of being a compelling artist, regardless of medium."

A related approach can also be seen in the choice to self-publish his first book, *Alpine Star* (2006; see Godspeed You! Black Emperor, *F#A#∞*). The publication led to Jude founding A-Jump Books, a small publishing house dedicated to photo books, which has issued 14 publications by other photographers to date. The importance of this format in Jude's work derives from his photographic education in Idaho, where books served as the primary means of access to art, and will later be enhanced in his pedagogy, where he has developed courses centered on the photobook.

R.E.M.
Murmur
I.R.S. Records, 1983

Jude's affection for R.E.M.'s *Murmur* is mostly biographical and relates to the period he spent in the American South. Released just before his high school graduation in 1983, the album became a touchstone for the photographer, "not only in the way it represented a new wave of independent, so-called 'college rock,' but also in terms of how it made me romanticize the American South as a viable alternative

Ron Jude, *Untitled* (*Accident #10*) From *Dark Matter*, 2021. Archival pigment print on drawing paper, 34 × 25½ in

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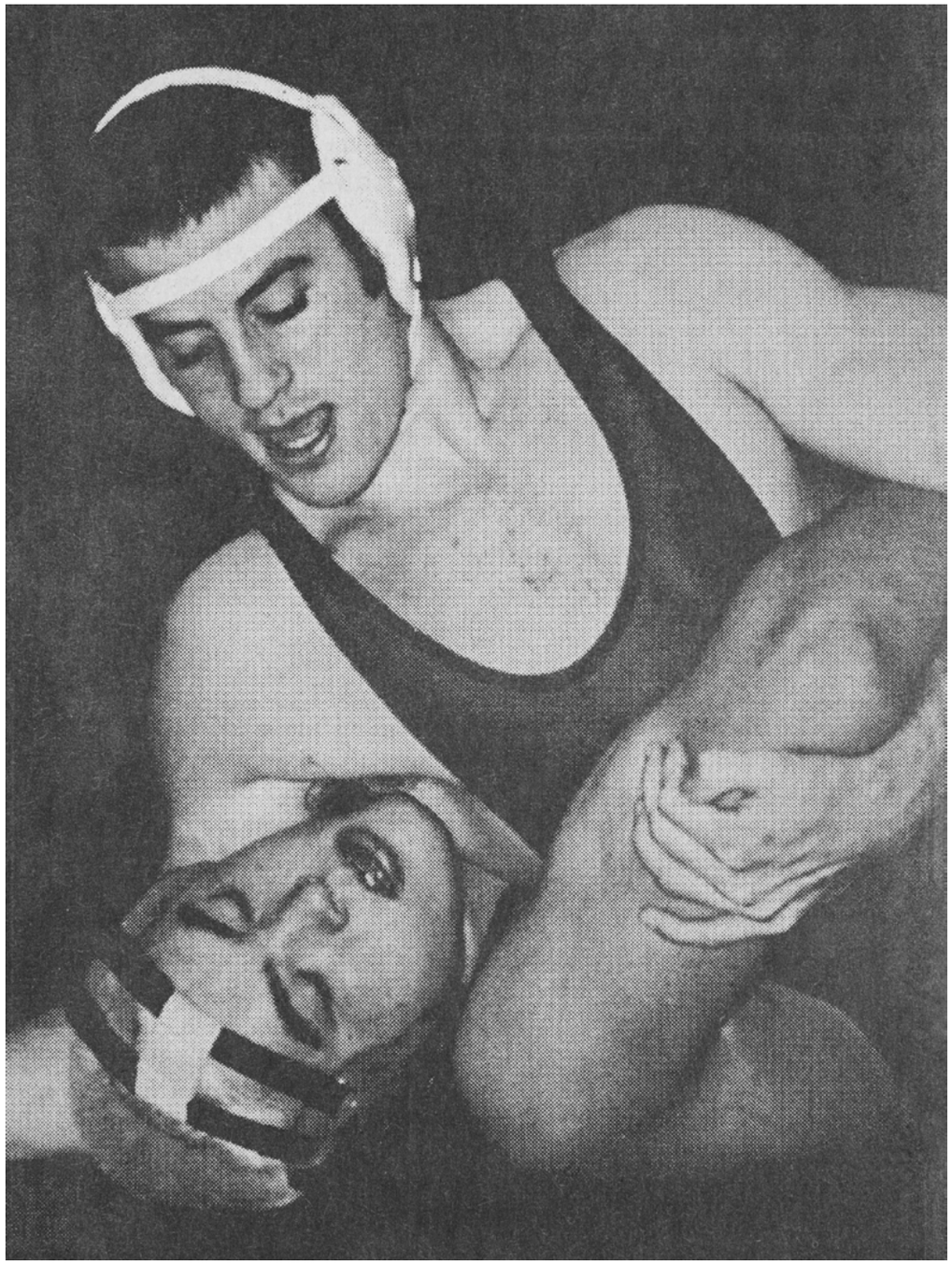

Ron Jude, *Untitled* (*Wrestlers #5*) From *Dark Matter*, 2022. Archival pigment print on drawing paper, 34 × 25½ in

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to major urban areas like New York or Los Angeles." Jude moved to Baton Rouge (LA) for his MFA at the Louisiana State University (1992) and later lived for six years in Georgia, first in Atlanta, and later in Athens. It was here that he started his career as an artist in earnest, which would lead him to upstate New York (2000–2015) and eventually Oregon (2015–current). As recognized by Mark Alice Durant, such a peripatetic life navigates the "American duality" between the urban and the rural.[5] This dichotomy, which also inhabits Jude's photography, is best exemplified from the comparison of two series. *Executive Model* (1992–1995) depicts a group portrait of corporate America in the age of rampant neoliberalism. Shot between Atlanta, Chicago, New York, and San Francisco, each episode is dedicated to one businessman, towering in the worm's-eye view under the midday sun and bulging from the frame. Few signs differentiate these subjectivities in the parade of faceless, male, white, suited men: the fabric of their suits, or details such as the document holder or a Walkman. On the other side we see *emmett* (2010) that takes place in central Idaho during the early 1980s and is based on a series of pictures Jude shot between the ages of 17 and 21, rediscovered after nearly thirty years. The iconography of the series, strung together by the recurring presence of a young man (a friend of the photographer, who functions as his surrogate), displays tropes such as drag races, horror movies watched on TV, and the bigness of nature (conceived as equivalent to culture). The book is concluded by the pairing of two quotes, again with musical resonance: "The past did not exist. Not at all" (from Jean Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, which exerted a great influence on Jude [see Talk Talk, *Spirit of Eden*]); "Remember when you were young, you shone like the sun?" (Pink Floyd, *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*). The friction between the sentimentalizing of the past and the denial of its very existence exposes the fundamental contradiction of the series.

Tom Waits
Rain Dogs
Island records, 1985

Rain Dogs was Ron Jude's introduction to Tom Waits' music, by one of his college photography instructors, Howard Huff. The importance of this album in shaping his sensibility cannot be overstated: "I'd never heard anything like it, and I became obsessed with the idea of making images that 'looked the way this music sounded.' There was a dark romance coupled with the hard-edged, experimental use of industrial sounds and, of course, Marc Ribot's guitar. Even the Anders Petersen photograph on the cover was mind-blowing. Things were never the same for me after this."

If *Rain Dogs* represents a wide-ranging paradigm in the synesthetic impulse of Jude's work, the music of Tom Waits will continue to offer clues, such as the chromatic suggestion for the *Nausea* project (see Talk Talk, *Spirit of Eden*). The color palette of the series, dedicated to public schools in the American South (1991), is dominated by muddy tones, showing the influence—among other things—of colorful descriptions sung by Waits, such as the "monkey shit brown" (related to a Buick) in the song "On a Foggy Night" on the album *Nighthawks at the Diner* (1975).

Opposite top:
Ron Jude, *Ice Flow with Seracs* From *12 Hz*, 2019. Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 42 × 56 in

Opposite bottom:
Ron Jude, *Breakers with Marine Layer* From *12 Hz*, 2017. Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 42 × 56 in

Ron Jude, *Lava Formation*
From *12 Hz*, 2019. Archival
pigment print on fiber paper,
56 × 42 in

Ron Jude, *Sea Foam Breach*
From *12 Hz*, 2020. Archival
pigment print on fiber paper,
42 × 31 ½ in

Ron Jude, *Sea Grotto* (*North*)
From *12 Hz*, 2017. Archival
pigment print on fiber paper,
56 × 42 in

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Camper Van Beethoven (CVB)
Camper Van Beethoven
Pitch-A-Tent / Rough Trade, 1986

Synchronicity is a guiding principle in Ron Jude's discography. As was the case with R.E.M. (see R.E.M., *Murmur*), the album *Camper Van Beethoven* by the eponymous band came along for the artist "at just the right moment." The LP accompanied his long sessions in the darkroom and is loved by the photographer for "David Lowery's ability to simultaneously be profound and utterly irreverent." Jude continues, "'We've got some funny ideas about what sounds good' on *Shut Us Down*, and the defiantly positive refrain of *Life Is Grand* (from *Our Beloved Revolutionary Sweetheart*) gave me permission to carve my own path and find my own sensibility during the highly politicized era of late-80s postmodern photography." This period in the United States was dominated by "culture wars" which placed photography at the center of the battlefield. Representing issues of sexuality and religion, artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano ignited fierce debate, questioning the very notion of art and its system of public support (the National Endowment for the Arts in particular). Facing this polarizing time, Jude refrained from open politicization in his work, opting for a more oblique posture. The affirmative stance asserted in the music of Camper Van Beethoven became a *laissez-passer* to artistic freedom for the photographer. This, however, did not result in insensitivity to the postmodern climate, which influenced his direction largely through the deployment of strategies such as appropriation (see Godspeed You! Black Emperor, *F#A#∞*), and the insistence on the importance of context in shaping the meaning of photography, especially through narrative (see Genesis, *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*).

Pixies
Doolittle
4AD, 1989

Ron Jude first saw the Pixies in a small theater in Baton Rouge in the fall of 1989. The artist was awestruck by "their ability to completely revitalize the waning form of rock and roll simply by pulling the right ingredients together in the right ratios," a capacity which he compares to other great bands of the era as well, such as R.E.M. and CVB. "Kim Deal's bass guitar coupled with Joey Santiago's surf guitar riffs and Black Francis's surprisingly beautiful primal scream made me feel like the entire form was new again. This was an important lesson in terms of my own determination not to abandon my core passion for photography, regardless of how in or out of fashion it was in the art world at any given moment. I knew it could always be new again." This sense of perpetual renewal lies at the center of Jude's photographic projects. Throughout his career, the artist has traversed different subjects and genres (landscape, still-life, street and documentary photography, just to mention a few), developing a plethora of strategies and formats. This diverse production is not identified by a clearly recognizable style, but rather by what the artist considers a more subtle "consistent visual tone."[6]

This approach guides his approach to codified genres within the history of photography, such as landscape. On multiple occasions,

Ron Jude, *Tire w/Citrus*
From *Lago*, 2013. Archival
pigment print on fiber paper,
30½ × 25 in

Ron Jude, *Wind Blown Detritus*
From *Lago*, 2014. Archival
pigment print on fiber paper,
25 × 30½ in

Ron Jude, *Desert Town at Dusk*
From *Lago*, 2014. Archival
pigment print on fiber paper,
25 × 30½ in

Jude broached this genre with the intent of deconstructing it, building on the expansion of the very notion of landscape itself as conceived by the New Topographics' aesthetics. This dual intention is declared in the very title of the series *Other Nature* (2001–2007), which pulls together images of different types of landscape in various locations in the US (California, Louisiana, Washington, Arizona, New York, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico) and interiors of hotel rooms. This juxtaposition breaks the dichotomy between nature and culture, as well as the separation between outside and in, thus generating a coextensive range: in this field, the vegetal decorative pattern on a chair or carpet, as well as a wooden surface of a table, for example, become equal to a forest in the Pacific Northwest or the arid undergrowth of Southern California. *Other Nature* maps a territory that extends to "some fabulous yonder, something unknown to us"[7] as Kafka points out.

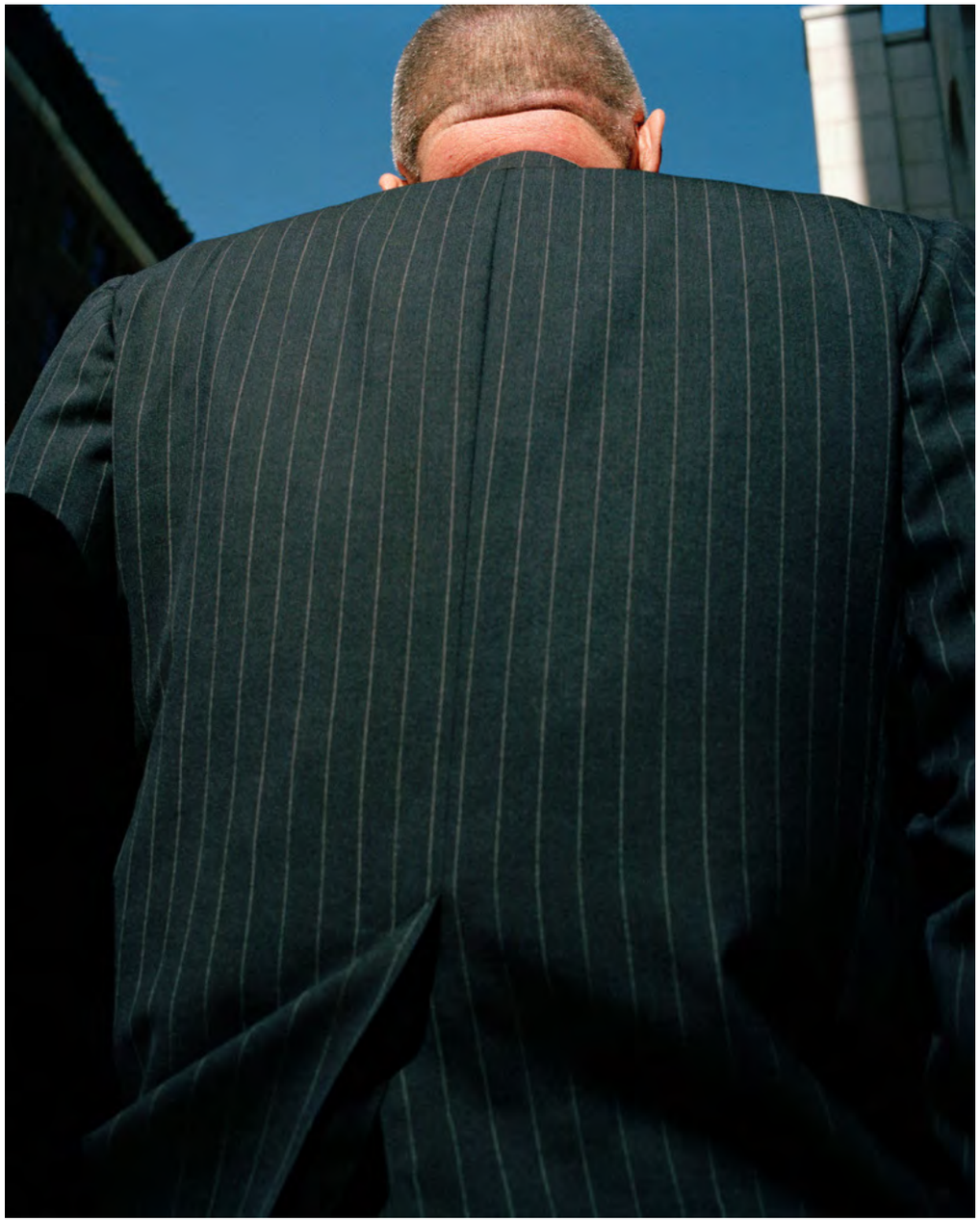
Talk Talk
Spirit of Eden
EMI, 1988

To this day, *Spirit of Eden* by Talk Talk is one of the albums that Ron Jude listens to the most. The artist loves in particular "how this band went from making fairly standard Brit-pop of this era to, by their last two albums, really moving away from radio play and into some incredibly layered and experimental 'post-rock.'" The record played on a loop at the opening of Jude's exhibition *Nausea* in 1992: "It was the first time I considered the potential of combining an aural experience with a visual one," he recalls. Taking the title from Jean Paul Sartre's book, the titular series (1991–92) is set in public schools in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Atlanta, Georgia, in the period of his MFA (see R.E.M., *Murmur*). The gaze upon the school architecture, devoid of human presence, moves between interior and exterior, from a more comprehensive view to a focus concentration on certain details, often through the interposition of surfaces (such as windows, holes). Hallways, classrooms, courtyards, and various school items transcend from mere documentation into a psychological sphere, becoming objective correlatives to the notion of "psychic oppression" as narrativized by Sartre. Jude's choice of the subject was for its familiarity, as he references the standardization of educational institutions in the US. This Foucauldian visualization resorts to "pictorial means," based on the reduction of the color palette and depth-of-field.

In his subsequent production, Jude built the sonic component into the photographic one, through his collaboration with the artist Joshua Bonnetta for the projects *Lago* (2011–2015) and *12 Hz* (2017–2020) (see Joshua Bonnetta, *Strange Lines and Distances*).

Godspeed You! Black Emperor (GSY!BE)
F#A#∞
Kranky, 1998

Ron Jude remembers listening to a lot of GSY!BE in the early 2000s, particularly this album: "Although the music at times can be a bit dramatically overwrought (which I'm a sucker for)—I've always really loved the use of sampling and field recordings in the arrangements." During this period, the artist was developing the series *Alpine Star*



Ron Jude, *#181, Atlanta*
From *Executive Model*, 1992.
Chromatic development print,
38 × 30 in

Ron Jude, *#72. New York*
From *Executive Model*, 1994.
Chromatic development print,
24 × 20 in

Ron Jude, Untitled From
Alpine Star, 2003–2006.
Archival pigment print on
deacidified newsprint, 5 × 6¼ in
14 × 11 in wood frame

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Ron Jude, Untitled From
Alpine Star, 2003–2006.
Archival pigment print on
deacidified newsprint, 9 × 5 in
14 × 11 in wood frame

Ron Jude, Untitled From *Lick Creek Line*, 2011. Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 44 × 35½ in

(2004–2006) and thinks that "both the sensibility and the approach of this music crept into what I was doing with these images." The series, which ended up in Jude's namesake book (2006; see The Clash, *London Calling*) is based on pictures appropriated from the weekly newspaper *The Star News* from McCall, the town in Central Idaho where the photographer was raised. The images, originally shot by non-professional photographers, are reproduced in crude halftone texture and arranged in sequences that compose what Darren Campion has defined as "an irrational poetics of the archive."[8] Developed in the postmodern period and consecrated by the Pictures generation (see Camper Van Beethoven, *Camper Van Beethoven*), the strategy of appropriation of images from various sources is the visual equivalent of sampling and field recording in music. In the case of Jude, this practice oscillates between the autobiographical—illustrating the *Bildungsroman* of the author—and the sociological—portraying a certain community in a specific time. In a self-reflective sense, it also proposes an interrogation of the nature of photography (and photojournalism): the decontextualization of the source (and the severed relationship between image and text) and the reproduction in half-tone, according to Jude, challenge the assumption that these photographs are "supposed to be reporting on something and that they contain some sort of factual relevance to the world."[9]

This source would prove to be generative, as Jude decided to return to it fifteen years later for the project *Dark Matter* (2021–22) which, like *Alpine Star*, is also composed of photographs appropriated from the same newspaper and sequenced in the same book format. No comment is provided on the book, eliciting storytelling from readers themselves (see Genesis, *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*).

Alpine Star inaugurates a trilogy on Idaho that will continue with *emmett* (2010, see R.E.M., *Murmur*) and *Lick Creek Line* (1997–2011). The three separate projects were reunited in the publication *FIRES* (2013), condensing a reflection on memory best captured in the words of the writer Paul Auster, cited by Jude in the book: "A long time passed. Exactly how long it is impossible to say.…The account of this period is less full than the author would have liked. But information is scarce, and he has preferred to pass over in silence what could not be definitely confirmed. Since this story is based entirely on facts, the author feels it his duty not to overstep the bounds of the verifiable, to resist at all costs the perils of invention."[10]

Oren Ambarchi
Grapes From the Estate
Southern Lord, 2006

Oren Ambarchi's *Grapes From the Estate* represents Jude's growing interest in experimental and ambient music, and in "how sound, in a more direct way, mingles with and operates in a similar way to a visual experience." He mentions other instrumental examples in this genre, such as BJ Nilsen's *Massif Trophies* (Editions Mego, 2017). This new trajectory in the photographer's work was inaugurated thanks to his friend and collaborator Joshua Bonnetta (Canada, 1979), an artist and filmmaker that "opened up a whole new way of thinking about sound, in a way that moves away from more popular forms and into the realm of experimentation," states Jude.

Ambarchi's album is a musical exercise in the creation of an environment, a quality which will feature in Jude's use of music in his most

Ron Jude, Untitled From
Lick Creek Line, 2011. Archival
pigment print on fiber paper,
44 × 35½ in

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Ron Jude, Untitled From
Lick Creek Line, 2011. Archival
pigment print on fiber paper,
44 × 35½ in

Ron Jude, *Springfield, MO*
From *Other Nature*, 2007.
Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 24 × 30 in

recent undertakings. After a first attempt at combining the visual and acoustic dimensions—when he played on a loop Talk Talk's *Spirit of Eden* at the opening of his exhibition *Nausea* in 1992 (see Talk Talk, *Spirit of Eden*)—the sonic aspect was incorporated into the development of a project, via the collaboration with Bonnetta in the series *Lago* and *12 Hz* (see Joshua Bonnetta, *Strange Lines and Distances*).

Joshua Bonnetta
Strange Lines and Distances
Experimedia, 2014

Jude's encounter with Joshua Bonnetta's *Strange Lines and Distances* happened under the sign—recurring in his discography—of synchronicity, when the photographer was making an earnest attempt to incorporate sound into his work, mostly in the form of field recordings: "Josh's layered approach to compositions using multiple field recording sources was exactly what I was hoping to do," he remembers. From this timeliness came the invitation to collaborate on the project *Lago*, which collects a four-year exploration (2011–2014) of the area around the Salton Sea in the desert of Southern California. Jude was moved by an almost forensic attempt to trace his formation, looking for clues in the locale where he spent the first five years of his life. Following his heuristic process, the photographer assembled views of the desert landscape, architecture, objects, and animals. His negotiation with memory is summarized by a citation of the songwriter John Darnielle at the end of the photobook *Lago* (MACK, London, 2015): "…I know it happened, and I have enough information about it to reconstruct the whole scene to my own satisfaction, but the person to whom it happened is somewhere so far off that I only know it's me because I can see his face, and because I'm the one remembering."[11] For *Lago*, Bonnetta created two compositions in parallel to the visual exploration of the territory, based on field recordings and contact mic recordings (*What lies in it*, *Everything that was ever something*).[12] Despite the difference between the two media—photography and sound—which mostly relate to the component of temporality, Jude recognizes the same process at the heart of both of them, which is based on the collection of raw data (images, sounds) and its subsequent composition in the studio.

The collaboration with Bonnetta continued in the project *12 Hz* (2017–20), where another composition was created as a sound element for the exhibition. Shot in different locations in Oregon, California, New Mexico, Hawaii and Iceland, the series depicts "the Earth itself,"[13] composed by its "raw materials"[14] in black and white: rock formations, lava tubes and plains, ocean tidal currents, caves, and glaciers. Reflecting the preoccupation with nature, Bonnetta's piece was based on field recordings, adding raw seismic data to the collaboration.

12 Hz originated from the convergence between personal and public events that happened between 2015 and 2017: the relocation to Oregon, Jude's loss of his father, and the election of Donald Trump. The series marked a reassessment of Jude's working method, where the focus shifts from the sequentiality of the photobook to standalone images, meant primarily as objects to be exhibited (see Genesis, *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*). In this regard, elements such as scale acquire a new priority through his choice to make large prints. Taking its title from the frequency at the threshold of human perception, *12 Hz* reinstates audibility as the *basso continuo* of Jude's photography.

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Opposite top:
Ron Jude, *Ithaca, NY* From *Other Nature*, 2003. Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 24 × 30 in

Opposite bottom:
Ron Jude, *Pasadena, CA* From *Other Nature*, 2007. Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 24 × 30 in

Above:
Ron Jude, *Morrow Bay, CA* From *Other Nature*, 2007. Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 24 × 30 in

Ron Jude, Untitled From *Nausea*, 1991. Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 16 × 20 in

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Simone Ciglia

This discography was compiled by Ron Jude and the quotes, where not mentioned otherwise, are his. I'd like to thank him for sharing his insights.

1 Roland Barthes, *Camera lucida: reflections on photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 55.
2 Umberto Eco, *Vertigine della lista* (Milan, Italy: Bompiani, 2009).
3 Brad Feuerhelm, "Ron Jude's Nausea: The Scissors and the Cockroach," ASX, June 30, 2017, https://americansuburbx.com/2017/06/ron-judes-nausea-the-scissors-and-the-cockroach.html
4 L. E. Ball, "An Interview with Ron Jude: Some Fraction of the Truth. Originally published through *FORTH* Magazine, 2015, https://cargocollective.com/leball/An-Interview-with-Ron-Jude-Some-Fraction-of-the-Truth
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14 Blake Andrews, "The Answer is 'Context'. We ask a top Eugene photographer: what makes a good photo?," *Eugene Weekly*, 07/03/2019, https://eugeneweekly.com/2019/07/03/the-answer-is-context/

Simone Ciglia (Pescara, Italy, 1982) is an art historian, curator, critic, and is career instructor in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Oregon. His areas of research focus on marginal spaces within contemporary art, including its relationship to agriculture, craft, and utopian/dystopian impulses. He works as a correspondent for *Flash Art* magazine, and writes for a variety of publications, including *Treccani* and *Zanichelli*. He has curated exhibitions internationally, including most recently the 75th Edition of the Michetti Prize, Pesaro Capitale Italiana della Cultura, Fondazione Malvina Menegaz, Fondazione La Rocca, and 16th Quadriennale di Roma.

He has taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Urbino, Italy, and was assistant researcher at the MAXXI—National Museum of XXI Century Arts in Rome. He holds a Ph.D. in the History of Contemporary Art from the "Sapienza" University of Rome.

Ron Jude, Untitled From
Nausea, 1991. Archival pigment
print on fiber paper, 16 × 20 in

• I Am Alive • • You Are Alive • • • They Are Alive • • • • We Are Living

Ron Jude, Untitled From
Nausea, 1992. Archival pigment
print on fiber paper, 16 × 20 in

Opposite top:
Ron Jude, Untitled From *Emmett*, 1984/2010. Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 17¼ × 24 in

Opposite bottom:
Ron Jude, Untitled From *Emmett*, 1984/2010. Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 17¼ × 24 in

Above:
Ron Jude, Untitled From *Emmett*, 1984/2010. Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 17¼ × 24 in

Peter Simensky: Conduit

. . . *Various*

Images from reception for Peter Simensky's posthumous exhibition *Pyrite Radio* at OUTLOOK IS___PROJECTS, Los Angeles. February 29 to March 30, 2024. Photos: Nicholas Lea Bruno

It isn't easy to know what to write when you're introducing the death of a friend—and not just any death, but an ambiguous death that happened far too soon. It's a cruel grief, doubly fraught by the realization that your friend was in pain, and you didn't know how bad it was. Peter Simensky (1975–2023) moved to Portland to become the third director of the MFA in Visual Studies program at the Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA). He followed Arnold Kemp, and founder MK Guth—and the three of them became close. This was important to Peter, to have trustworthy intimates sharing his life—to be personable with the world. Peter brought people together. He created a writing residency inside of his art studio in Portland, had innumerable get-togethers at his home, and was a truly dedicated steward of his students' work. It took a few years for Portland to grow on Peter, and when it did, a happier, more settled Peter Simensky emerged. His work became overtly playful and full of color—influenced by residencies and exhibitions in Mexico. After PNCA, Peter assumed a similar position at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco where he developed close relationships with another remarkable group of colleagues, artists, and students.
— Stephanie Snyder

The texts included here are from a book assembled by a small group of Peter's friends from different, yet intertwined, parts of his life. It's a collection of writings that reflect upon and memorialize Peter and his art, published shortly after his death, on the occasion of the posthumous exhibition *Pyrite Radio* at OUTLOOK IS __ PROJECTS in Los Angeles, from February 29 to March 30, 2024—a space run by his close friend Cara Levine. The book includes writings by Jeanne Gerrity (SF), Glen Helfand (SF), Garrick Imatani (PDX), Cara Levine (LA), Jess Perlitz (PDX), and Stephanie Snyder (PDX). It was designed by Priscilla Vanneuville in Mexico City, and published by the Cooley Gallery, Reed College.

Many thanks to Commissioning Editor Yaelle Amir for conceiving of this addition to the journal. A downloadable PDF of the full book is available at outlookisprojects.com/projects/cross-feeds-peter-simensky-pyrite-radio.

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Full texts by Oregon writers

Garrick Imatani:
How to Wire a Rock

The other day I came across my grandfather's shirt in my son's laundry. The shirt is decidedly plain and easy to overlook, the kind of thing one wears out of habit. The collar, big as a wing, offers the only signal of a different era. It turns out that when he raided my closet, my son had no clue of the shirt's origins. But I wondered, then hoped, that some inexplicable frequency had summoned him to pick it up. Without my blabbing about family, or ritualizing the act, he unwittingly put to use a simple everyday garment that now spans four generations.

I've always been fascinated by heirlooms and their magical ability to transform mundane objects into something much more meaningful and symbolic, even precious. The best artworks are similar in their transmutative powers. Like loved ones, they have the ability to change you. Offering

Images from reception for Peter Simensky's posthumous exhibition *Pyrite Radio* at OUTLOOK IS___PROJECTS, Los Angeles. February 29 to March 30, 2024. Photos: Nicholas Lea Bruno

the world through different eyes, they can forever shift your perception of the simplest moments, alter your relationship to the smallest of things; they build memories by reshaping them.

Early on, when Peter was experimenting with pyrite as a radio receiver, he spoke of learning how to wire a rock. Like many others, I had come to be so excited about Peter's most recent work because it felt so emblematic of who he was as a person: playful, smart, mischievous, deliberate yet spontaneous, comfortable in a colorful outfit, and able to make connections anywhere. On the surface, *Pyrite Radio* twinkles in its whimsy and charm, and yet seduction and value were purposefully elusive constructs in Peter's work over many years. Beauty was never something inherent, but always fabricated, its fiction not far below the surface, no matter how alluring or sparkly.

Like a snare, Peter's work propels you toward it. Initially you move in to look closely and listen, but eventually you're left standing around next to others, usually friends, huddled in conversation after a performative event. In 2019, Peter presented *unearth* at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA), a project centered around a tragic story involving fool's gold and the fatal errands it produced for would-be prospectors deep in the Oregon woods. As part of the installation and performance, pyrite light sculptures hung from the ceiling like disco balls, and red-sequin-gloved hands poked through a large, luminous stage curtain that never rose. Fusing visual and field recordings that Peter had captured inside actual Oregon caves, the multisensorial aggregate of video, sound, light, and mic'd hand gestures hissed, crackled, and glistened.

At the conclusion of the performance, it was important to Peter that a generous cart of liquor be swiftly ushered into the performance space so that the evening's events seamlessly morphed into an impromptu club-like scene. At first, the audience was hesitant to descend from their seats onto what had been a stage only seconds before, wary of being seen as equal performers complicit in a lie about cultural value. I too was slow to participate in the potential indictment, but soon laughter began to fill the air amid the exchange of heady thoughts and life updates, genuine connections and unapologetic foolishness. Those drinks certainly performed their role well. I never explicitly asked Peter about it, but I came to see his installations and performances as decoys for the real currency of exchange that ensued.

In Peter's sketchbook, a drawing shows a pyrite radio being connected to a giant tree indistinguishable in its function as either antenna, transmitter, or amplifier. A broadcast appears to radiate out from towers across a city in all directions. It reads as a grandiose vision, but also forebodes a teleological framework rooted in ownership and extraction of the natural world. By entrusting our ability to transmit our thoughts, pleasures, and values to one another through a mined yet *devalued* rock wrapped in copper, Peter couldn't help but capture the constraints on solidarity we face in the midst of the hardest obstacles and times.

I wish I could do something to bring my friend back: paddle pyrite back out into the surf, trade in all of his earthly possessions, sing karaoke backwards. I guess I will have to take solace in his spirit, which now feels akin to a fulcrum or tide. The other day someone found a piece of "Peter glitter" wedged into a crack in pica's cement floor. Still there, years later, it evoked an even earlier performance in 2015 when fake gold dust was spritzed into the air.

At the time, when interviewed by curator Kristan Kennedy, Peter

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described his fixation on the spectral dust for its ability to hover and swarm like a hive before falling and dispersing alone. I like to imagine that somewhere out there Peter has found a nook of comfort and lightness to settle into, knowing full well that his spirit will continue to float back up like an aether only to land somewhere new and unexpected. I hope as he flits between the waves, the heirlooms, the artworks, and the loved ones, the thought of being remembered through a tiny glimmering speck elicits glee in him, and maybe even a giggle.

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Stephanie Snyder:
Slow Transmission

Filmmakers have explored the properties of fast- and slow-motion moving images since the late nineteenth century, when the newly invented technology of the movie camera became reliable enough for professional, and then popular, use. In 1895, the Lumière brothers staged their first evening program of "actualities"—short films, shot from a fixed point, consisting of spectacular, thrilling events like speeding trains, heading for the audience. People panicked and fled the theater—then quickly returned for more. The first intentional technical facilitation of slow motion was released in 1904. An Austrian monk and physicist named August Musger (1868–1929) developed a mirrored drum system that allowed filmmakers to better control the rotational speed of the camera while shooting, or "cranking" the movie.[1]

In order to achieve the ideal film quality, camera operators had to remain as still as possible, even though the body is incapable of stillness. Slow motion was the result of over-cranking. The faster the operator's body moved, the slower the film appeared to be moving when played, and vice versa. These variations in speed, and any involuntary movement on the camera operator's part, were subtly imprinted onto the celluloid. The operator was the conduit that transmitted images onto emulsion, and light into an alternate reality. Peter Simensky found inspiration in the embodied nature of film's earliest forms. In particular, the connection between the visible body and the invisible spectrum of frequencies that traverse the body—inspiration for changing the speed of life in order to share something unforeseen.

Peter Simensky fixated on the space between documentation and demonstration, and his works explored the distribution of value in terms of pleasure and power, examining the status, beauty, and uses of gold. Simensky mined gold's dangerous allure with historical vim, investigating the relationship between what glimmers and what fakes its way into the limelight. In 2013, *Cabinet Magazine* invited Simensky to contribute a piece to their summer issue. Simensky calculated the cost of printing two pages of the journal—the allotted space for his artwork—and purchased the equivalent in 24-karat gold dust—7.9 grams. When the issue arrived at the Cabinet offices, Simensky misted the journals with the shining substance in ephemeral form. Visual documentation is the only way to experience the beauty and delicacy of the artist's actions, and the project's success depended on the fluidity of Simensky's gestures as he waved a metal rod above the piles of journals, like a diviner or an early film camera operator. In subsequent projects at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art and elsewhere, Simensky released gold dust into the air, filming his actions

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with digital video to create an immersive multi-channel installation of golden clouds moving in slow motion. In these videos, pulverized gold becomes a delicate and graceful miasma, slowed to the pace of breath. The radiance of each particle flares white for an instant when touched by the light, like sunlight on water.

Floating and hovering things hypnotize.

For the most part, Simensky stays out of the frame of his films—but not always. When he appears, he gently engages with the color.[2] He typically intervenes hands first, followed by his arms, head, and shoulders. He's dressed in indiscriminate surf wear: a thick white T-shirt with long sleeves and bright abstract markings, and a plain dark pullover. In contrast to the sacred and ancient character of the gold, Simensky's casual wear evokes enough slacker bravado to help us see the playful, anxious formalism of his actions. Simensky's presence highlights the contrasts in gold's significance as an economic and sacred substance over time. Covering spaces and bodies with gold was common in ancient rituals related to death and the afterlife. Beginning in Middle Kingdom Egypt, flakes and thin sheets of pounded gold were attached or dropped onto royal mummies before the first of their nested funerary sarcophagi was sealed. Simensky's gestures remind us that the hunger for raw beauty is also a quest for power and immortality.

Gold is also synonymous with greed and miserliness. As a Jewish artist, Simensky's aesthetic and purposeless use of gold (in the Kantian sense) speaks to the relationship between raw wealth and antisemitic ideology, which espouses that Jews are good with money and good at hoarding money, and that we take pleasure in the suffering of others by removing value from circulation. In conversation with Peter, I learned that he was acutely aware of this history, and had researched its nuances for himself. His interest in gold as a psychological tool also extended to its deceptive doppelgänger—pyrite, or fool's gold—which stripped many miners of their fortunes as they followed false veins of pyrite down into the earth. In a large project in 2019, Simensky explored Oregon mines where such tragedies took place. Working from period newspaper photos, Simensky acted like an oracle, reading the hope and dread lingering in the caves of pyrite.

Many kids Simensky's age grew up assembling home radios from kits with crystal or pyrite generators at their core. The strange and magical little radios picked up frequencies from the ether. The drive to listen in, to scan for invaders, was the product of World War II and Cold War ideologies. These makeshift radios came with the promise of voyeurism and surveillance—of seeking connection in an unseen elsewhere around the world, or beyond this world altogether, proposing the possibility that even a kid could pick up something cosmic from outer space—some signal, some mysterious tone captured by a rock formed in the earth over millennia, shaped by heat and pressure.

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Jess Perlitz:
I Have Seen the Sparks Fly Out

I have seen sparks fly out
When two stones are rubbed,
So perhaps it is not dark inside after all;
Perhaps there is a moon shining

Images from reception for Peter Simensky's posthumous exhibition *Pyrite Radio* at OUTLOOK IS___PROJECTS, Los Angeles. February 29 to March 30, 2024. Photos: Nicholas Lea Bruno

From somewhere, as though behind a hill—
Just enough light to make out
The strange writings, the star-charts
On the inner walls.
—Charles Simic, "Stone" (excerpt)

Peter and I have been talking about rocks for a number of years, slowly working together as artists and friends toward a show that was to come from the conversations. This process cut short, I am left with our notes, half-working sculptures, and echoes of our conversations hanging in the studio. Peter's voice drifts in and out of frequency, crackling with an interference that now feels familiar, a little like how it feels to lose vibrant people we love. In Peter's work there is an attraction to rocks that embodies the opposite of what it is to petrify. Somewhere I can hear him giggling at that sentence. But it's true. For Peter, rocks were deceptively clever—magical conduits and ambivalent actors in systems of value. For our rock show, he wanted a party and souvenirs.

As people, we are all situated within time and place, products of our individual capacities and the world as it acts upon us. Rocks can be thought about similarly. Together Peter and I imagined artworks to be like rocks too. This connection shifts our thinking about time, moving us away from the familiar historical/chronological classification of art, in which time is considered external to the making of an artwork, and instead positioning time as an integral material, inseparable from the artwork's very formation. We were drawn to how it acknowledged that extractive practices and systems of value-making are also inseparable from the objects we choose to store and trade, covet and display. We liked the joy it allowed, holding both art and rocks as nuggets of wonder from an amazing and painful world where reminders of connection and contemplation alike are needed.

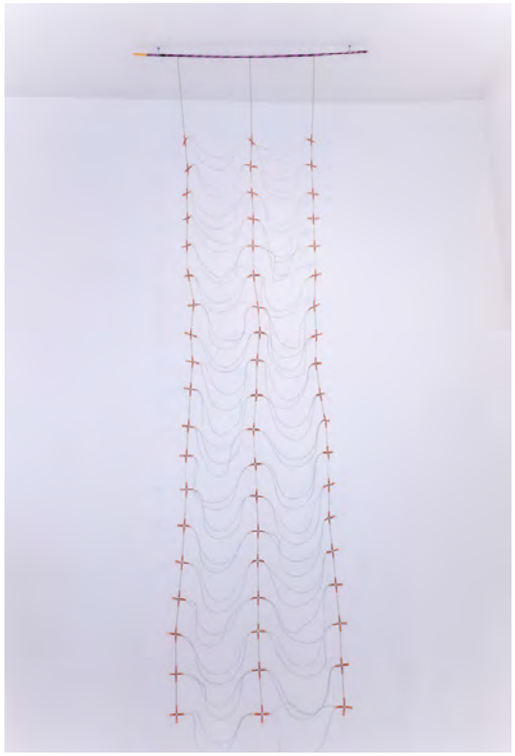
Among many things, Peter's work offers us the gift of intellectual generosity, a quality we ought to center more as teachers, artists, and humans in this world. The tactics of critique in his work never undermine the awareness and change desired, and much like his capacity for friendship, both Peter and his work are deeply kind, casting a critical eye that also demands sparkles and play.

Peter reminds me that value is in fact found when two stones are rubbed together. It is found in relationship. Dust and sparkles thrown in the air, dispersed. May we find a way to let the light shine in to remind us of all that glitters.

• • •

Excerpted from: Jeanne Gerrity,
Tuning in and Showing Up

As I walked into the cavernous, brightly lit space of the ica San Francisco on a rainy February day in 2022, the buzz of radio static punctuated by snippets of music and dialogue permeated the gallery. Dressed in a brightly colored sweatshirt and a patterned face mask, Peter was in his element, tinkering with wires, knobs, and clips. Shimmery pink, red, and gold emergency blankets seemed to levitate like ghosts, perched next to two-toned cylinders with hand-painted stripes and swirls balanced on thin tripod forms. The neon beads, copper wire, and pyrite sticking



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out of the sculptures were not just visually arresting but also functional, picking up audio from am transmissions and playing hour-long segments recorded by various people in Peter's vast network.

Popping up at different venues around the country over the last few years, Peter's *Pyrite Radio* is a visual art installation, a performance program, and perhaps most importantly, a vehicle for collaboration with artists, musicians, radio stations, and local communities. Pyrite has limited monetary value but was used as a conduit in crystal radio sets in the early twentieth century; the mineral serves as the crux of the project. As a word, *pyrite* is a convenient and amusing homophone with *pirate*, of course, and the appeal of the shiny fool's gold reverberates in the glitter and gleam of the sculptures.

• • •

Excerpted from: Glen Helfand,
After the Gold Rush

The shimmer of sound is more difficult to qualify. I am the first to admit that I've always had a harder time listening than looking. Peter's sculptures intrinsically link the visible to the audible—they conduct sound through objects, perhaps creating dissonance between what we see and what we hear. I think of some of his works as wind-chime fetishes. He uses beads, feathers, metal tubing, tethered and suspended. The coiled copper wires wrapping a cardboard tube glimmer, like a warm, metallic science project. (Fittingly, they call these "crystal radios.")

These works are makeshift invitations to communication, a harnessing of waves. Clouds of sound. Dangling lures that don't touch the ground. They rustle in air currents and vibrate to the voices and music they broadcast. Audio transmissions are choreographed and dependent on location, on what can be received. Low fidelity offers an aural patina, something far away, AM radio, sounds in another language and/or syncopation. Morning. A smiling cartoon umbrella makes the light wittier as it blocks harmful rays. Peter commandeered Rodin's bronze *Thinker* outside San Francisco's Legion of Honor Museum, as a pensive yet clever receiver for a performance preserved in digital space on Peter's Vimeo account. Still, they are happy signals.

• • •

Excerpted from: Cara Levine,
Packing + Unpacking

Last year, Peter drove down to Los Angeles for two performances, one with kchung public at moca Geffen and the other with Feels Like Floating in Griffith Park. He hauled into my living room two massive black hard-shell suitcases built to carry delicate sound equipment. Inside was a treasure chest of bright parts and pieces to be meticulously—and sometimes hastily—reassembled into *Pyrite Radio*, sculptures as antennae for stolen wavelengths.

I was Peter's close friend for over a decade, and many times, as his houseguest, I slept only feet away from his work, yet this exhibition offers me an intimacy with it that I had not previously experienced. Peter the mechanical tinkerer, Peter the divine alchemist, Peter the whimsical, coy jokester, Peter the political messenger—all, and more, are apparent here.

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• I Am Alive • • You Are Alive • • • They Are Alive • • • • We Are Living

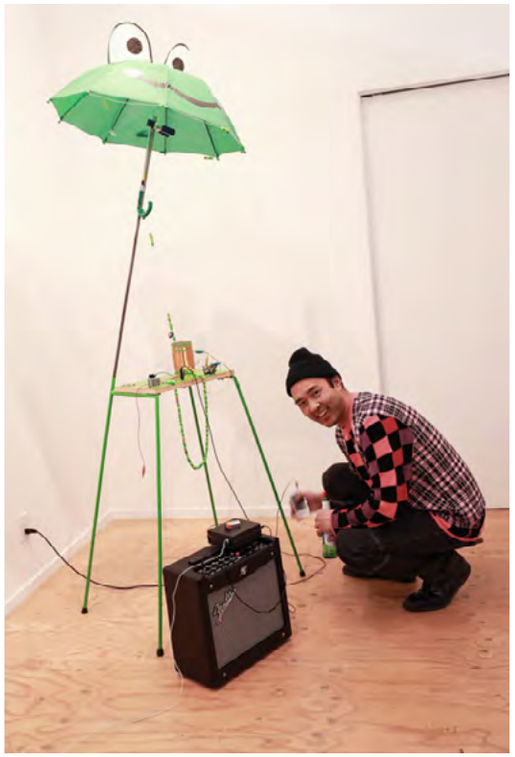
In each work, I find fleeting, poetic gestures of subversion, delight, magic, and myth. They are present in the loosely hanging speakers attached to a radio chime set with fluffy feathers for wings, and delicately and deliberately attached: stamp-size cutouts of copper mesh threaded onto audio cables; and the frog umbrella as an antenna for broadcasting artists from Gaza. Peter the conduit.

1 Gideon Reuveni and Sarah Wobick-Segev, *The Economy in Jewish History: New Perspectives on the Interrelationship between Ethnicity and Economic Life* (NewYork: Berghahn Books, 2011) 8.

Garrick Imatani is an artist who uses performance, functional objects, or physical interaction to evoke positionality and the interconnected relations between selfhood and family to larger histories and state projects. Often combining sculpture, photography, video, drawing, and installation, his projects combine absurd, nuanced, and speculative approaches to encountered research, experience, and imagination. Imatani's work has been exhibited at Blaffer Art Museum (Houston), Triumph Gallery (Moscow), Art in General (NYC), Portland Museum of Art (ME), ADA Museum at UC Santa Barbara, and in Oregon at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Chachalu Museum, Oregon Contemporary, and Portland Art Museum. He is the recipient of fellowships and awards from the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Ucross Foundation, Djerassi, and Ragdale, and has received grant support from The Andy Warhol Foundation, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, The Ford Family Foundation, Oregon Arts Commission, Maine Arts Commission, Regional Arts & Culture Council, and Oregon Percent for Art. Imatani holds an MFA from Columbia University, NY and resides in Portland, OR where he is an Associate Professor and Chair of the MFA in Visual Studies program at Pacific Northwest College of Art.

Jess Perlitz makes sculptures, performances, and public art to look at how the body exists in the landscape, public spaces, and social structures. The work disrupts established expectations and directs attention to incongruous experiences and the potential for connection alike. Born in Toronto, Canada, she is a graduate of Bard College, received an MFA from Tyler School of Art, and clown training from the Manitoulin Center for Creation and Performance. She is currently based in Portland, Oregon where she is Associate Professor, Head of Sculpture, and Chair of the Art Department at Lewis & Clark College. Perlitz has been the recipient of several awards, notably from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Oregon Arts Commission Joan Shipley Award, and a Joan Mitchell MFA award. In 2019, she was named a Hallie Ford Fellow. Her project, *Chorus*, is currently installed at Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, PA as part of the museum's ongoing artists installation series.

Stephanie Snyder is the Anne and John Hauberg Director and Curator of the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College: a position she has held since 2003. Snyder graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Reed College, and completed her graduate studies in Art History and Art Education at Columbia University. She is the curator of many original exhibitions and accompanying publications, including: *Dark Moves, Heather Watkins and Fabiola Menchelli* (Cooley Gallery, 2022); Gregg Bordowitz, *I Wanna Be Well* (Cooley Gallery, 2018; Art Institute of Chicago, 2019; Museum of Modern Art, PS1, New York, 2021); and Wynne Greenwood: *Kelly*, New Museum, New York (organized with Johanna Burton and Sara O'Keeffe, 2016), which originated at the Cooley in 2015 as *Stacy*. Snyder has



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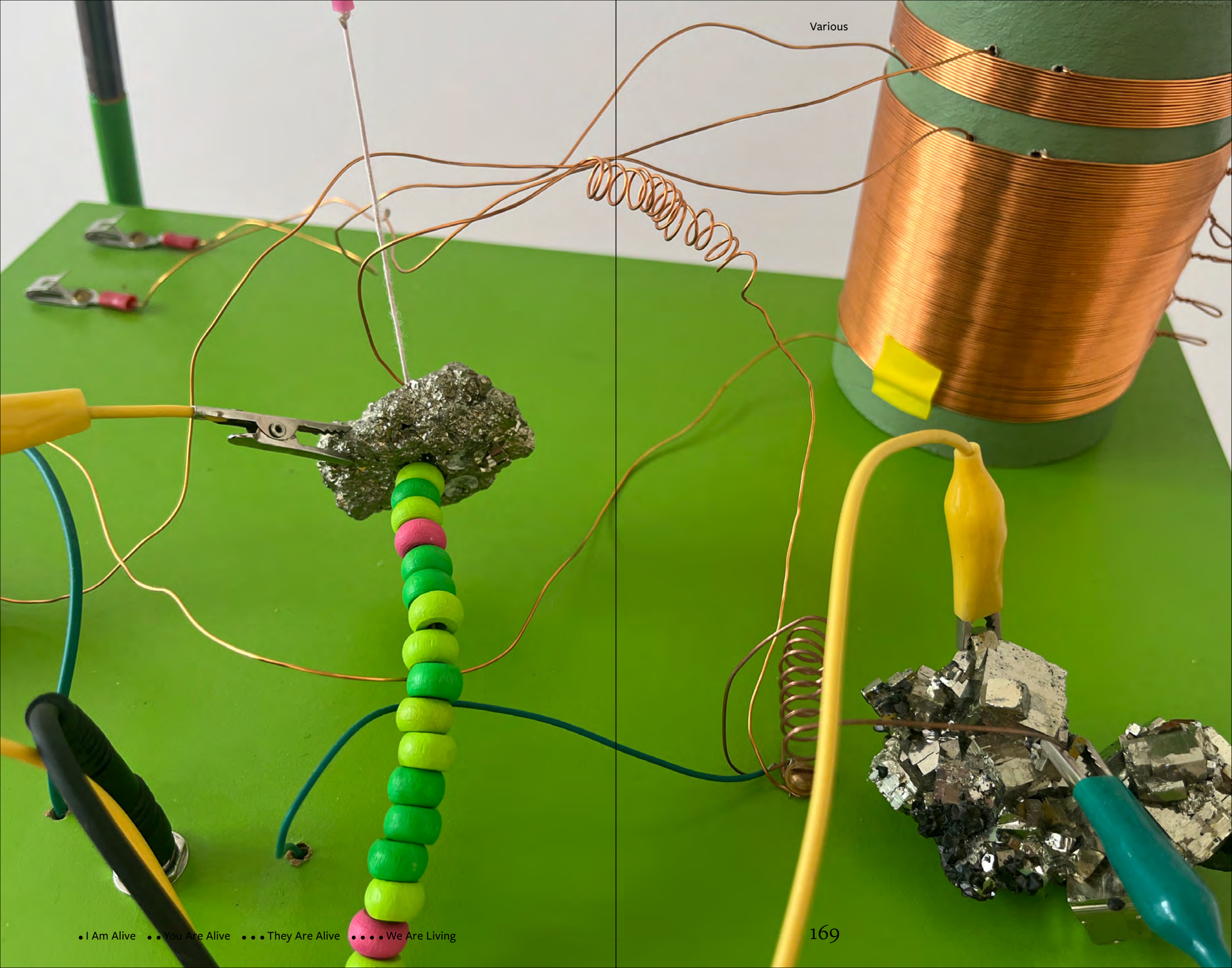
• I Am Alive • • You Are Alive • • • They Are Alive • • • • We Are Living

received a year-long Curatorial Research Fellowship from the Getty Foundation, and is an alumni Fellow of the Getty's Museum Leadership Institute. She received an award for her critical writing from the International Association of Art Critics (AICA), New York. The author of many essays, poems, and other forms of writing, Snyder is a regular contributor to *Artforum*, among other publications.

Jeanne Gerrity is a curator, writer, and editor. She is currently the Deputy Director & Director of Programs at the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco. Prior to the Wattis, she held positions at the Contemporary Jewish Museum and Southern Exposure in San Francisco, and Smack Mellon and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council in New York. She writes for *Artforum*, *Frieze*, and e-flux criticism among other magazines, as well as contributing to museum and gallery catalogs. She has a BA in Art History from Brown University and an MA in Modern Art & Curatorial Practice from Columbia University.

Cara Levine is an artist based in Los Angeles, CA. She earned a BFA from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, MI (2007) and an MFA from California College of the Arts in San Francisco, CA (2012). Using sculpture, video, and socially engaged practices, she explores the intersections of the physical, metaphysical, traumatic, and illusionary. She is the founder of *This Is Not A Gun*, a multidisciplinary project aiming to create awareness and activism through collective creative action. Her work has been presented in one-person, group exhibitions, and participatory events in venues around the world such as the The Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco (2023), MOCA Geffen Warehouse, Los Angeles, CA (2020); Creative Time, New York, NY (2019); The Anchorage Museum, Anchorage, AK, (2019), Tenderloin Museum, San Francisco, CA (2017); Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, Israel; Wattis Institute For Contemporary Art, San Francisco, CA (2012); and Kyoto Seika University, Kyoto, Japan (2006). Levine has participated in residency programs including Santa Fe Art Institute (2017); The Arctic Circle, International Territory of Svalbard (2017); Sedona Arts Colony, Sedona, AZ (2016); SIM Residency, Reykjavík, Iceland (2015); Anderson Ranch, Aspen, CO (2014); and Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT (2013). Levine is currently an associate adjunct professor at Otis College of Art and Design, a Lucas Arts Fellow at Montalvo Arts Center (2024–2027) and a Cultural Leadership Fellow at the Mandel Institute (2023–2025). Lastly, Levine has worked with the disability arts community since 2011 in roles at various progressive art studios including the Exceptional Children's Foundation, Inglewood, CA and Creative Growth, Oakland, CA. She organized the first annual Self-Taught Artists Fair with Public Annex in Portland, OR in 2017.

Glen Helfand is a writer, curator and educator based in Oakland, California. His writing has appeared in *Artforum*, *The Guardian*, *Aperture*, *Photograph*, and many other publications and exhibition catalogs. He has organized exhibitions for the Asian Art Museum San Francisco; San Francisco Art Institute; Mills College Art Museum; deYoung Museum, and others. He's an Associate Professor and chair of Graduate Curatorial Practice at California College of the Arts, San Francisco.



On Rick Silva

. . . Sean J Patrick Carney

Rick Silva, *PEAKING,* 2022. Installation at Oregon Contemporary. Photo: Mario Gallucci

The staggering views offered by innumerous trail crests along the Pacific Northwest's awesome Cascade Range can overwhelm the body and mind, producing in many a hiker what the French call *l'appel du vide*—the call of the void—a seemingly inexplicable desire to hurl oneself into oblivion. Perhaps such humbling grandeur unleashes Thanatos, or what Freud called the death drive. In 2011, a team of psychologists at Florida State University published a study in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* that described this counterintuitive urge as the "high-place phenomenon." Elevation however, isn't required, as this irrational compulsion tempts on subway platforms, busy intersections, or while driving into oncoming headlights at night. It is a version of the sublime, which can manifest in the face of beguiling landscapes or hurtling technologies.

To experience the sublime is to straddle a precipice between ecstasy and apocalypse, the divine and the dreadful, spiritual liberation and corporeal death.

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, landscape painters of the Hudson River School's second generation conjured such dichotomous vibrations through luminism, a sort of low-level alchemy where concealed brushstrokes served to exalt and mythologize

a beguiling and Biblical—though increasingly settled—American West.

Nearly two colonized centuries on, the Brazilian-born, Oregon-based artist Rick Silva wrestles with these same topographies, albeit with a set of digital tools, a contemporary miasma of spiritual contradictions, and the weight of the hyperobject that is anthropogenic climate change.

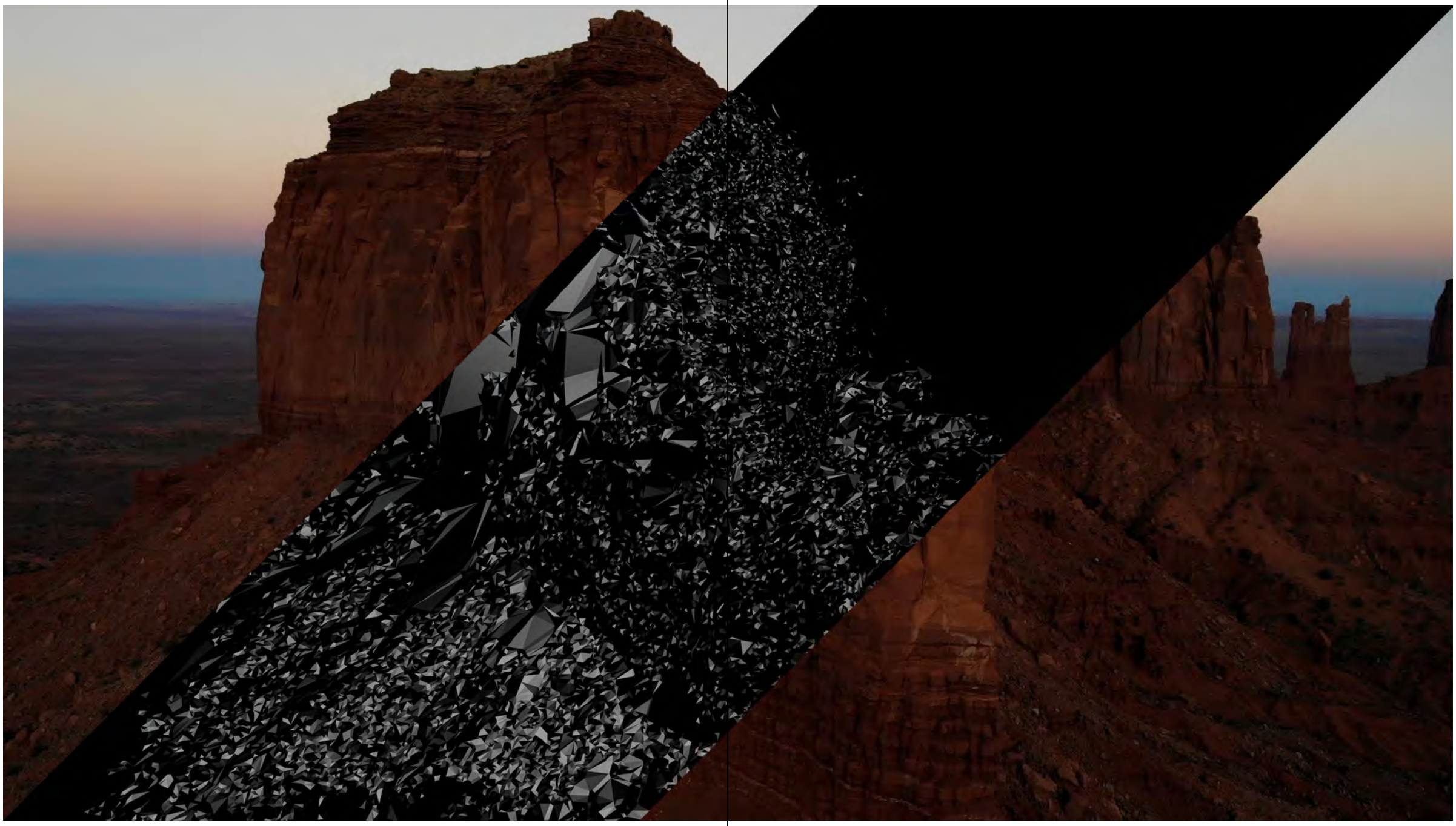
For the enveloping video installation *PEAKING* (2022) at Oregon Contemporary, Silva coded and rendered over a million variations of granite and glacial formations derived from the Cascade Range that looms east of the artist's home in Eugene. Gyrating, pixelated peaks change out at an accelerating rate as Silva's pulsing synthesizer score escalates, hinting at the inevitable spectacle and devastation of a volcanic eruption like the ones that formed Mount Hood, Diamond Peak, and the Three Sisters thousands of years ago. As demonstrated by filmmaker Werner Herzog's decades-long volcanic fixation, geologic time is captivating in its incongruities, at once a perceptively glacial but largely unpredictable phenomenon, even in the twenty-first century.

Like so much of Silva's multisensory output, the sound and visuals in *PEAKING* do equal lifting, incorporating eerie elements of the sonic sublime. Anyone who has attended a clavicle-shaking live performance by drone metal heavyweights Sunn O))) will attest that sound is very much both an aural and a physical phenomenon that can induce euphoria or nausea. There is an anxious pleasure in allowing *sound-as-object* to penetrate the body—that of a precipice having been consensually breached. Even the anticipation of such an event can agitate; imagine, safely indoors, hearing the violent cracks of invading thunder.

Experimental electronic music artist Richard David James, better known by the stage name Aphex Twin, has made use of sonic paradox since the early 1990s, collaging impossible layers of unwieldy drums atop syrupy, alternating waves of glitch and glissando. Silva has cited the Aphex Twin track "4," the opening salvo from the genre-liquidating *Richard D. James Album* (1996), as a catalyst for his own interest in digital production. Looping like an endless early-Nintendo game menu screen, "4" rides a titillating auditory contradiction. Beneath rickety, treble-boosted percussion patterns, a molten lava synth lick undulates, subverting expected studio mixing conventions of musical height, width, and depth. The track's melodically adhesive hook complements occasional violin passages that James lifted from an extended vinyl version of Kate Bush's "Experiment IV" (1986), an ethereal stomp that outlines a fascistic near-future where military scientists develop a sound that can kill. Dystopically, Bush's imagined sonic sublime has all but arrived, as militarized police forces across the planet regularly weaponize long-range acoustic devices—LRADs, or "sound cannons"—to pummel civilian uprisings.

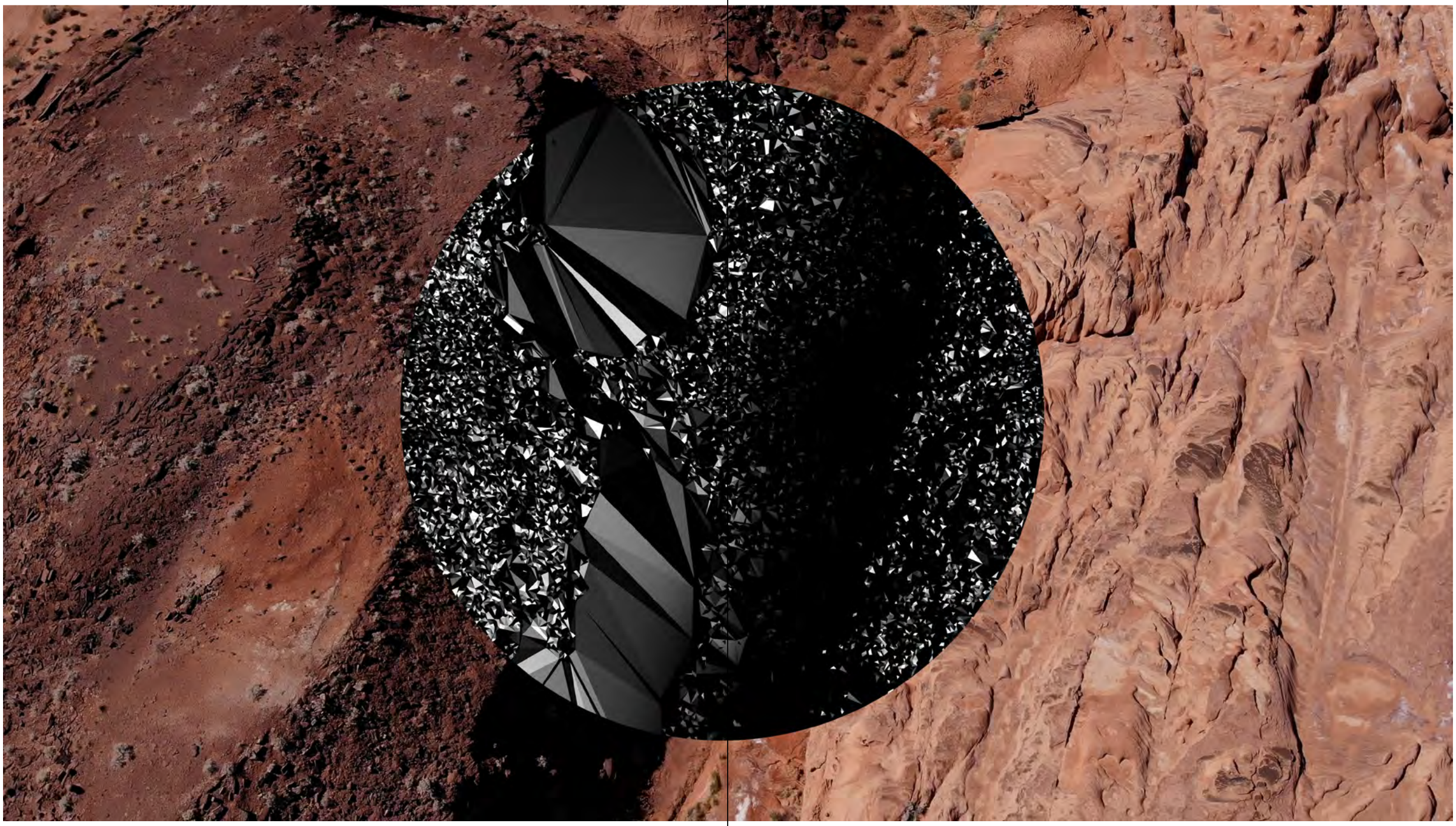
Silva's flirtations with the sublime are, however, neither fatalistic, accelerationist, nor millenarian. A diligent student of Aphex Twin's complex, careening catalogue, Silva maintains a nuanced affinity for assorted

Rick Silva, *PEAKING*, 2022. Installation at Oregon Contemporary. Photo: Mario Gallucci



Rick Silva, *Western Fronts,* 2018. Still from 18:30 minute 4k video with sound

• I Am Alive • • You Are Alive • • • They Are Alive • • • • We Are Living



Rick Silva, *Western Fronts,* 2018. Still from 18:30 minute 4k video with sound

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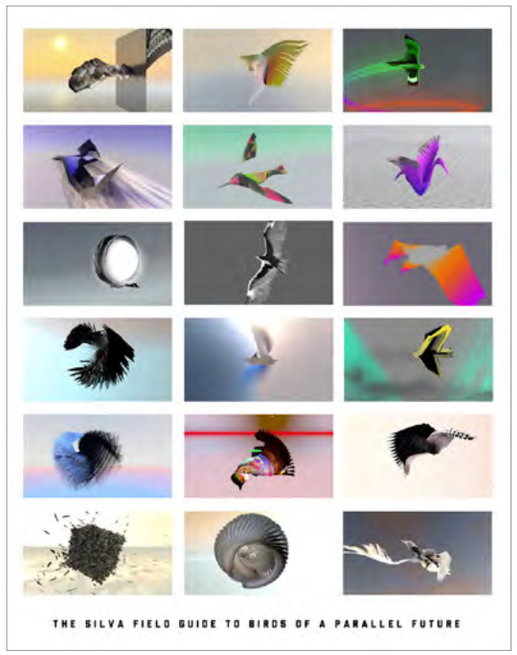
affects, leaning comfortably into buoyancy. *The Silva Guide to Birds of a Parallel Future* (2015) is practically effervescent in its speculatory bliss. Across eighteen short animations, Silva supplies a hypnotic and prismatic taxonomy of glitched-out birds whose wings wreath into hallucinatory tracers over minimalist multiversal landscapes. Silva scores each lysergic vignette with a unique spazzed-out binaural drone that, like the auditorily illusive Shepard tone, seems to ascend endlessly. *Birds of a Parallel Future* then points to another kind of peaking—a quantum one—where a heroic dose obliterates perceptual veils between divergent chronologies, enfranchising the user-viewer to consider that the forecasted political, economic, and ecological timelines of this reality are, in fact, never inevitable.

More grounded is *Western Fronts* (2019), a collection of four videos, each approximately four minutes in length, that eschew the extralinear. In stunning aerial drone footage, Silva soberly charts national monuments facing existential threat from extractive industrialists and their obsequious government toadies: Oregon's Cascade-Siskiyou, Nevada's Gold Butte, and Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears, both in Utah. Each video is pierced by a hard-edged, inky portal that reveals digitally rendered subterranean mineral bands—a chilling breach that lays bare the clinical gluttony of the capitalist's myopic gaze. Unnerving sound design by Kuedo and Holy Other makes Silva's obsidian lenses all the more haunting, invoking a perverted interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:12:

> *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

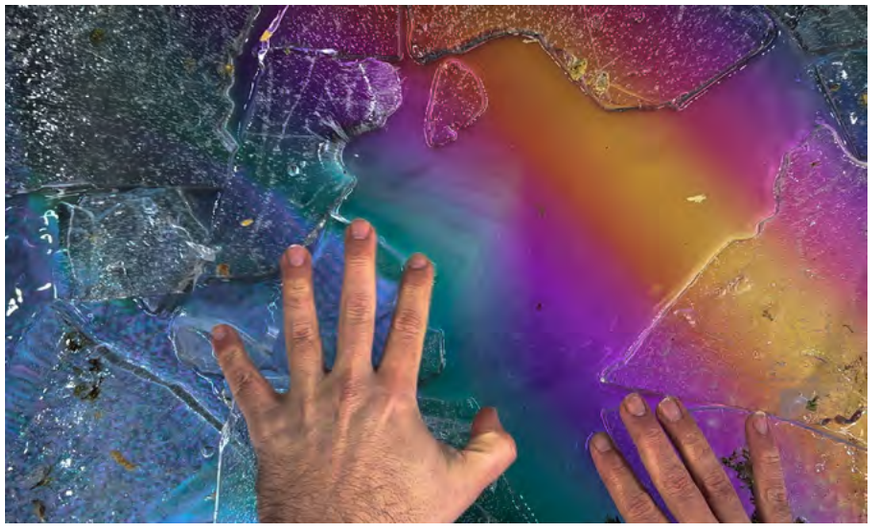
Paul the Apostle's oft-cited lyrical prose evinces humility. Until we are spiritually full, proposes Paul, we will only perceive God›s love partially, dimly, as if witnessing its reflection in a dull mirror. Manifest Destiny, the rapacious dispositional outgrowth of predestinarian Protestantism, however, surveys the divine landscape through its own glass, darkly. By slashing eldritch geometries into sacred terrains, Silva exposes the colonizer's unholy hubris, a corrupted perspective through which the sublime is subjugated, not revered. Importantly, among Silva's own multi-hemispheric lineage are men who—under the direction of other men—lanced and tamed small parts of the vast American Cordillera formation. His paternal grandfather labored in a Brazilian diamond mine, while his maternal great-grandfather crewed the construction of Old Fall River Road, the first automobile route carved through Rocky Mountain National Park.

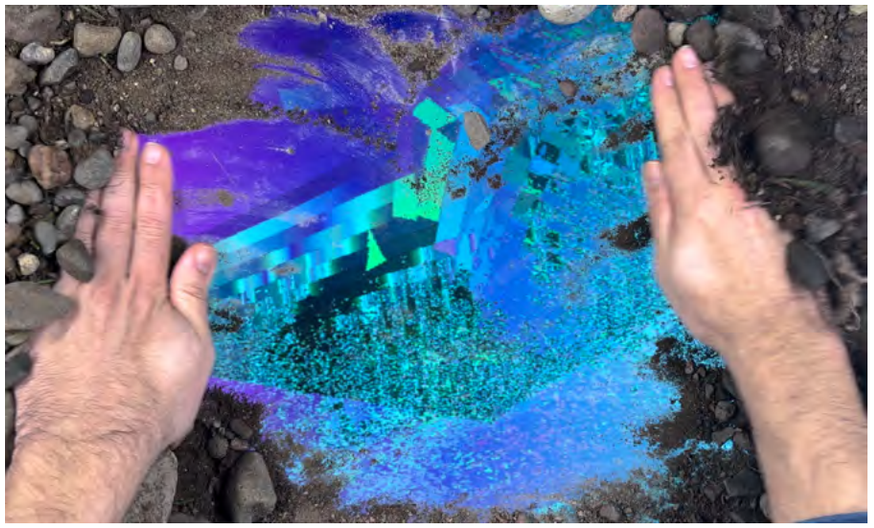
Specters of Silva's ancestors tacitly buzz in *Liquid Crystal* (2023), a suite of seven 30-second (uncharacteristically) silent videos commissioned by the Whitney Museum. Filmed from above in stationary frames, each work begins with a patch of undisturbed earth—close-cropped landscapes of saturated sand, pine duff and dirt, packed snow, piles of rocks. Quickly, the artist's hands appear and commence digging. Psychedelic screens emerge, pulsing playfully, recalling the rainbowed globules of ersatz



Rick Silva, *The Silva Field Guide to Birds of a Parallel Future,* 2014. Installation at Oregon Contemporary, as part of the 2016 Portland Biennial

Rick Silva, *The Silva Field Guide to Birds of a Parallel Future,* 2014. Poster Image





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molten rock writhing inside a dorm room lava lamp. Though diminutive in scale, Silva's excavations point critically to the extractive and refinement processes that yield indium tin oxide, zinc sulfides, and other materials used to fabricate LCD screens. Simultaneously, *Liquid Crystal* seems to speculate upon potentially liberatory paradigmatic shifts in overcultural perspectives on landscapes. There is an exuberance in *Liquid Crystal*, a geological love and curiosity echoing Herzog's amateur volcanology, bent through the kaleidoscopic coding of a post-internet tinkerer.

Speculation is very much a technology. Whether it is instrumentalized in pursuit of lithium mining, weapons development, or the radical imagining of more sustainable and equitable futures, speculation manifests realities. Rick Silva's work explores such morally diametric applications of future-casting, but his broader practice is, fundamentally, an optimistic one. Experimental, creative engagements with technologies often yield generative culture—think Aphex Twin's influence upon what is no doubt thousands of energetic, curious artists like Silva who use sequenced rhythms and algorithms for poetry, not profit. As the techno-capitalist class drags humankind towards the singularity, one of their so-called "new frontiers," it is imperative that artists wield digital tools to imagine parallel timeforks where our species refuses to answer the call of the void, opting instead to prioritize deep symbioses with the nonhuman animals, plantlife, fungi, bacteria, and minerals with whom we share this completely unlikely planet.

If landscapes of the future are to be viewed through a glass—embedded in the eye, or in the familiar form of a screen—then may they be seen brightly, prismatically, even.

Sean J Patrick Carney is an American writer, researcher, composer, and visual artist. His essays, criticism, interviews, and other texts have appeared in publications including *High Country News*, *Artforum*, *VICE*, and *Art in America*, among others.

Rick Silva, *Liquid Crystal,* 2023. Three stills from 30 second HD videos, no sound. Commissioned by Whitney Museum of American Art for their Sunrise / Sunset series

Don Bailey: Pillar of Oregon Arts Education

...*Mariah Berlanga-Shevchuk*

The painter and longtime art instructor at Chemawa Indian School reflects on his impactful career teaching Native American students and establishing the school's first ever arts curriculum.

Don Bailey is a k'iwhliw, "a person who paints" in the Hoopa language. For forty years, he was also the art teacher at Chemawa Indian School (pronounced *sheh-MA-wah*), the oldest continually operating federal boarding school in the United States. As the only fine arts teacher in the school's history, Bailey taught generations of Native high schoolers how to create, appreciate, and approach art while also maintaining his personal art practice, selling commercially and showing in museums and galleries across the country. His style of painting, cultivated over a lifetime of making, learning, and listening, makes vivid use of color and layered symbolism to provoke deeper thought about Indigenous culture, history, and the expectations placed on Native people. He is an owner-member of Blackfish Gallery in

Don Bailey in his studio

Don Bailey, *Everyone's a Winner*, 2006. Oil on canvas
Photo: Mario Gallucci

Portland, and his works can be found in various private and public collections, including the Hallie Ford Museum, the University of Oregon, and the State Library of Oregon. Throughout his academic and professional career, Bailey has always experimented with abstract and figurative paintings, moving back and forth between the two forms. Throughout his adult life, Bailey has balanced his own art practice with a strong commitment to Native education.

Bailey likes to overlay references to other artists, history, iconography, and pop culture in his paintings, creating works that are infused with multiple meanings. Here, he weaves together Native motifs, such as the raven, with patterns found on highly prized Navajo chief blankets, as well as with stereotypes of Native people used as corporate mascots.

Born on the Hoopa Valley Reservation in Northern California, Bailey has created imagery ever since he was a small child. His second grade art teacher once pulled him from class to show the principal his multiperspective drawings, and by high school Bailey knew he wanted to pursue art as a career. In his last years of high school, Bailey lived off the reservation with a foster family who valued education and hard work. His foster parents recognized and encouraged his passion for art and supported his intellectual curiosity. With their guidance, he applied to colleges and enrolled in the Blackhawk Mountain School of Art in Southwestern Colorado where he spent six weeks during the summer between high school and college.

It was at this multidisciplinary art school that he first met other people his age who were deeply committed to their art practices, as well as instructors who were working artists that both taught and inspired their students. While at Blackhawk, Bailey began experimenting with different media. His first medium was black and white photography, a considerable departure from the colorful paintings he creates today.

Bailey returned to Oregon from Blackhawk looking forward to starting college and the opportunity it provided to continue learning with other art students and professors. He decided to pursue a Bachelor's in Secondary Education Art at Western Oregon University, choosing that degree rather than one in Fine Arts because he hoped teaching would allow him to both make a living and continue his own art practice. While attending an undergraduate sculpture class, a classmate happened to be the wife of Chemawa's superintendent—a fortuitous meeting that would change the course of Bailey's life and career. Seeing that he was a talented, young Native artist, she suggested he apply to become the school's fine arts teacher. In 1978, he accepted the position and set off to design and teach the school's first ever fine arts curriculum.

Chemawa was founded in 1880 as the Forest Grove Indian School. Like other federally run boarding schools founded in that era, its mission was to assimilate Native children into Western society by forcibly removing them from their homes and culture. The curriculum was designed to prepare students for work as laborers and domestic servants. Conditions were harsh, and students were punished for speaking their Native language. Bailey's own grandmother attended and subsequently ran away from the school when it operated in this manner. Five years after its founding, the school moved to its present location five miles north of Salem and was eventually renamed Chemawa Indian School.

The Chemawa that Bailey arrived at in 1978 was notably different from its 19th century model. Today Chemawa has a full academic program that follows Oregon secondary school guidelines, with teachers that are experts in their subject area. It prepares students for college, and many

parents choose to send their children to Chemawa because it provides a more rigorous academic program as well as safer community than what's available at their local schools. Some families who live in cities or other communities without a significant Native population choose Chemawa so their children will be part of a Native community. Every year, many students who attend Chemawa have also had family members who attended and had positive experiences.

Today, students come from a number of different tribes west of the Mississippi—as many as 70 tribes from the Pacific Northwest, Southwest, and West Coast can be represented at a time. Unlike when Chemawa was founded, students are not only allowed to speak their tribal language, but encouraged to share their culture with one another. Native identity is central to the school, both in its curriculum and extracurricular activities. It's a place where students and faculty make lifelong friends and learn about other tribal cultures they may never have otherwise. When Bailey first arrived at Chemawa, he could see what good work the teachers were doing and the positive influence it had on students. Despite an earlier impulse to never work for "The Man," meaning the Bureau of Indian Affairs (the Bureau of Indian Education today), Bailey intentionally chose Chemawa to start his career.

When he began teaching at Chemawa, the only art class available to students was "arts and crafts," a course that mainly focused on leatherworking, and likely stemmed from the school's history as a vocational school. Since there had never been a fine arts teacher at Chemawa before, Bailey had a fresh slate to work with. He set off creating a curriculum of introductory studio classes, learning the ins and outs of teaching teenagers, as well as the school environment. After a few years working at Chemawa, Bailey went back to graduate school at the University of Oregon to gain classroom skills that would help him better understand and reach his students. "Back then, they didn't teach teachers how to teach," he says.

Though Bailey initially went to Eugene to pursue an MFA in painting, he ultimately completed an MA in Arts Education. For his graduate thesis, he went to Seattle and Washington, D.C. to research the history of arts education at Chemawa going back to its founding. He learned that students were systematically stripped of their language and culture while

Don Bailey, *Convenience*, 2021.
Oil on canvas

attending the school. He returned to Salem with a deeper knowledge of Chemawa's history that he would use to help students, faculty, and staff come to a more nuanced understanding of the school.

While he was growing his teaching practice, he was also continuing to push himself in his art practice. As he learned more about other contemporary Native artists, his own practice was shaped by what they were doing. Bailey has been deeply influenced by artists such as T.C. Cannon, who rewrote the definition of Native American contemporary art by depicting Natives as whole people rather than ethnographic subjects or stereotypes. Bailey's early interest in black and white photography

(combined with his appreciation for Cannon's trickster ethos in his own paintings) eventually morphed into creating paintings based on archival images of Native people, reclaiming their humanity by recontextualizing them as living people with their own agency, skills, and creativity.

In this painting, based on an early 20th century photograph of a Native American boarding school domestic arts class, Bailey has added color and contemporary references to hint at the continued expectations others have for Native women.

In his first ten or so years teaching at Chemawa, Bailey noticed that a lot of students came to class expecting only hands-on work, and that they struggled with the academic side of art class, such as color theory, scholarly reading, and group discussion. A lot of time went into catching students up on fundamentals before teaching given subjects. At that time, the student population was largely transient, meaning Bailey wasn't guaranteed the same students all four years of high school. He found that getting students to trust and open up was essential to the job. "High schoolers know when you're bs-ing. You gotta be upfront to gain their trust or they'll see through you," he says with a laugh.

In the last twenty or so years of Bailey's career at Chemawa, the school sought to include more academic classes that were relevant to Native students. Bailey successfully lobbied the administration to let him teach two history classes in addition to his fine arts classes; both became a highlight of his time at Chemawa: History of Native American Art, and History of Native American Boarding Schools. Bailey wanted his students to appreciate the history of these types of schools, and to gain an understanding of how far Chemawa has come from what it once was. At first, the prospect of this particular course made the school administration uncomfortable, but as Bailey articulates, "Just because you feel uncomfortable doesn't mean it didn't happen."

In History of Native American Art, Bailey got to draw from his own passion for contemporary Native art to bring his lessons to life. He used the class to break down the perceived barriers between "fine art" and "Native art," which have historically been kept separate by art institutions. Students learned about the formal beginnings of Native Art in 1930s Santa Fe, and moved on to current artists. They examined the work of prominent non-Native artists working within the same time period in order to see the ways Native and non-Native artists used similar elements of art, while occasionally influencing one another.

As part of creating a holistic curriculum, Bailey took smaller groups of students on trips to visit local studios and museums, going as far as Seattle, Santa Fe, and New York to meet with curators, gallerists, and other artists. He procured funding to ensure students wouldn't have to pay anything out of pocket. Doing so helped them "experience the real world, go beyond the bubble of their rez and Chemawa." Over the years, he also invited several Native artists, including Lillian Pitt and Rick Bartow, to talk about their lives and work alongside students. Throughout all of his classes, Bailey encouraged his students to consider how their art can support public engagement and enrichment, as well as be a source of income. Some of his students have gone on to become commercially successful artists in their own right, including Farrell Cockrum and Terrance Guardipee.

Bailey and students visiting his exhibition *Whil-xolik* (*Tell Me a Story*) at Luke's Frame Shop, 2016

He used the class to break down the perceived barriers between "fine art" and "Native art," which have historically been kept separate by art institutions.

Over the years, Bailey built up student confidence so that they could critique each other's work and give feedback on works in progress. He invited students into the studio he kept on campus so they could critique his own work, and in doing so modeled how to be a professional working artist, creating an environment where students felt safe to be honest with each other. Bailey's thoughtfulness in approaching students meant that he was able to meet them where they were at—no matter where they were coming from—because the structure of his curriculum was culturally responsive to student needs. But perhaps what made Bailey most proud is how the students' interest in art grew over time. This was in part due to his own scaling of the curriculum, and also due to how Bailey worked across departments to infuse art throughout Chemawa's shared spaces. He implemented a mural program, for example, where all students—not just art students—were invited to create murals about their tribes that eventually covered the walls of the school. These murals celebrate the diversity of the nations that are Native America and coexist together at Chemawa.

Bailey's work as an arts educator has allowed entire generations of Native students to experience the wonder of art and to consider careers that are often inaccessible to Indigenous people. Now that he's retired, Bailey is spending more time in the studio and staying active at Blackfish Gallery. In his own art practice, he finds himself returning to methods and forms from earlier in his life. It's full circle for Bailey, as the first paintings he sold were abstract, while he worked up the confidence to create figurative paintings. For the future, Bailey sees that he is gravitating toward infusing abstract imagery into figurative forms, a way of blending the two modes of painting that he has always straddled. Essentially, Bailey is continuing what he does best: making and sharing art that is deeply thoughtful and that inspires the viewer to learn more and look closer. In his own words: "I make 'Indian art,' and I make art." After 40 years of teaching students how to blur the imaginary lines between the two, who's to say that there's a difference at all?

Mariah Berlanga-Shevchuk (she/hers) is a museum professional and educator currently based in Portland, Oregon. She is the Head of Public Engagement at the Oregon Jewish Museum & Center for Holocaust Education, where she oversees community partnerships, outreach initiatives, and public programming. She was previously the Director of Exhibitions and Cultural Resources at Five Oaks Museum in Washington County, Oregon and Associate Curator at LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes in Los Angeles. As a public historian, Mariah seeks to make museums and cultural centers sites of social action through responsive, accessible programming and exhibitions that inspire connection and curiosity.

Don Bailey, *Apple Picking*, 2023.
Oil on canvas

The Ladder, the Letter, the Latter: Kristan Kennedy to sidony o'neal

... Kristan Kennedy

192

• I Am Alive •• You Are Alive ••• They Are Alive •••• We Are Living

U+220E 0, 2023. Inkjet, graphite, heat sink on uda gami, artist's frame made of albizia paper, 12½ × 7½ in (31.75 × 19 cm) in frame: 16½ × 10 × 10½ in (42 × 25 × 27 cm)

"*I work until the scale is so full it drops.*" This is something you said to me once, I found it in the notes on my phone, which is a reliable place in some regards. A perfectly imperfect record of broken up thoughts, lists, fragments of things—well not things—words. Strings of ideas that I want to hold onto—words that might help later. Notes as a way into knowing, a way of noting the time and intent—but they sometimes remind me to put borders up around meaning, and to protect the investment in NOT KNOWING or NO WORDS—PLEASE! Legibility may not be the end game. Maybe the reading of the work is more sensorial innate and if we put all of this language on it—the senses dull, we don't pick up the frequency of things. We don't see what is right before our eyes! There was the time you said to me "I am not interested in contributing clearly to the archive or being documented." So let's not do that here. Let's honor that sentiment.

One time a museum curator told me that "Artists lie." and that "They can't be trusted to talk about their own work." I thought to myself, "I believe in the lie and not in the museum or you!" He had told me all I needed to know. Knowing came from experiencing the moment as much as from his words. The atmosphere, location, his scarf, the paintings behind him were as revealing as the information. I already knew what he believed in; he didn't have to TELL ME. The moods of art are many and art history is a shifty bit of shifting story that shouts out to us... Where is the proof! Let's find it! This can't be all there is?

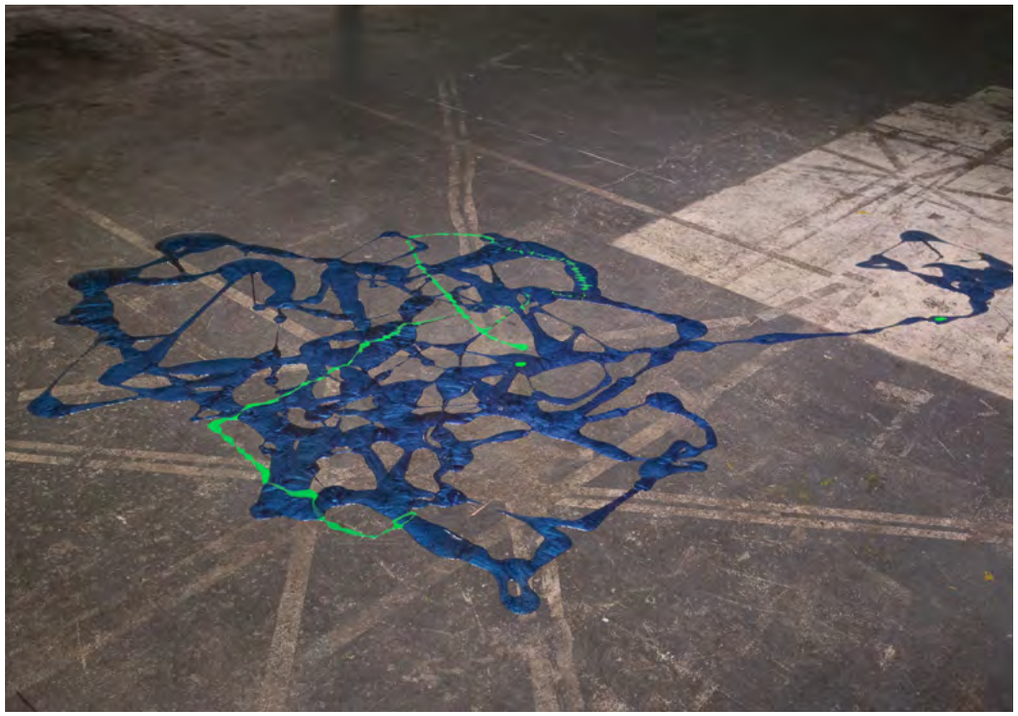
> *"I really believe the best writing is also an invitation to misread, to mishear, to synthesize, to unhinge."*

I think we both believe that a good piece of writing develops in the margins of the book. In preparation for this piece I picked up the book *On Knowing—Essays for the Left Hand* by psychologist Jerome S. Bruner from my bedside table. This book sat on my parents' bookshelf for close to sixty years. I carried it across the country recently, in an effort to save it from the recycling bin. Since my mother has passed there has been some effort to go through every little and big thing, to touch everything she touched with our fingers. To measure the dust on things as a measure of its remaining value. I saved this book (and many others) because it represented how I built the idea of who my parents were. The covers and spines of the books were particularly seductive to me. The design of the time was acute/graphic, information seeped in at first glance. Without knowing it—I started to develop what is now a long-held belief, that I could understand what was inside books just by being around them. That proximity, and piles of these objects, had the ability to communicate without diving into the words.

•••

Some more notes from my recordings of our conversations seem appropriate here:

> "It's moving—it's pile-ing it's acclimating itself in place." /
> "How much primacy do you give old ideas—what is in the residue."/
> "The dust on grapes."/ "What is in hand…medieval origins of the



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object." / "The beetle is a stand-in for the grief in the community."

I cracked the book open and scanned the contents page and landed on the essay titled "Art as a Mode of Knowing." I will save "*On Learning Mathematics*" for you. Between the two chapters exists a future conversation about where both of our intentions as curator and artist meet and where they wildly conflict.

"It is hard to talk about curves."

Bruner talks about how getting closer to the meaning of art requires an "*expression of human effort*"[1] and that the "*deep question whether the possible meanings that emerge from explaining the experience of art may not mask the true meanings of a work of art.*" As we search for images that link up with our understanding of the universe, we move with the artwork seeking the infinite. We are asymptote. We are curve against line never exactly meeting but in conversation nonetheless.

We are…"*Noise and pancakes.*"/"*The history of wool.*"/"*How I came to be. Math.*"/"*Symbols of victory.*"/"*morphing thinking and doing.*"/"*What is left at the pixel level.*"/"*Growing up in a double diaspora.*"

The thing I want people to understand about your work and way of working is that: If you can't say it you will make it and if you can say it you will write it. Or in other words when you lose the language you have to make the sculpture and moreover: the meaning of the ladder was held while looking at the ladder. There is no essay required. Only knowing.

Prevous spread:
Top Left
Hash Table 4 Tenors Like Us, 2023. Oiled steel, acrylic, 42 × 37½ × 32 in (107 × 95 × 81 cm)

Bottom Left
SHMIN FÆRMÉ ENDAN LISOGENI/POST QUANT SECURITY WON'T SAVE US, 2022. Silicone putty, Dimension variable

Top Right
le nid, 2021. Titanium, carrara marble, epoxy grout, acrylic, thermoplastic rubber, 12 × 23¼ × 2½ in (30.5 × 59 × 6.4 cm)

Bottom Right
LÉSKALYÉ A LADISTANS KOSMIK, 2022. Cast bronze, patinated steel, resin pool ladder

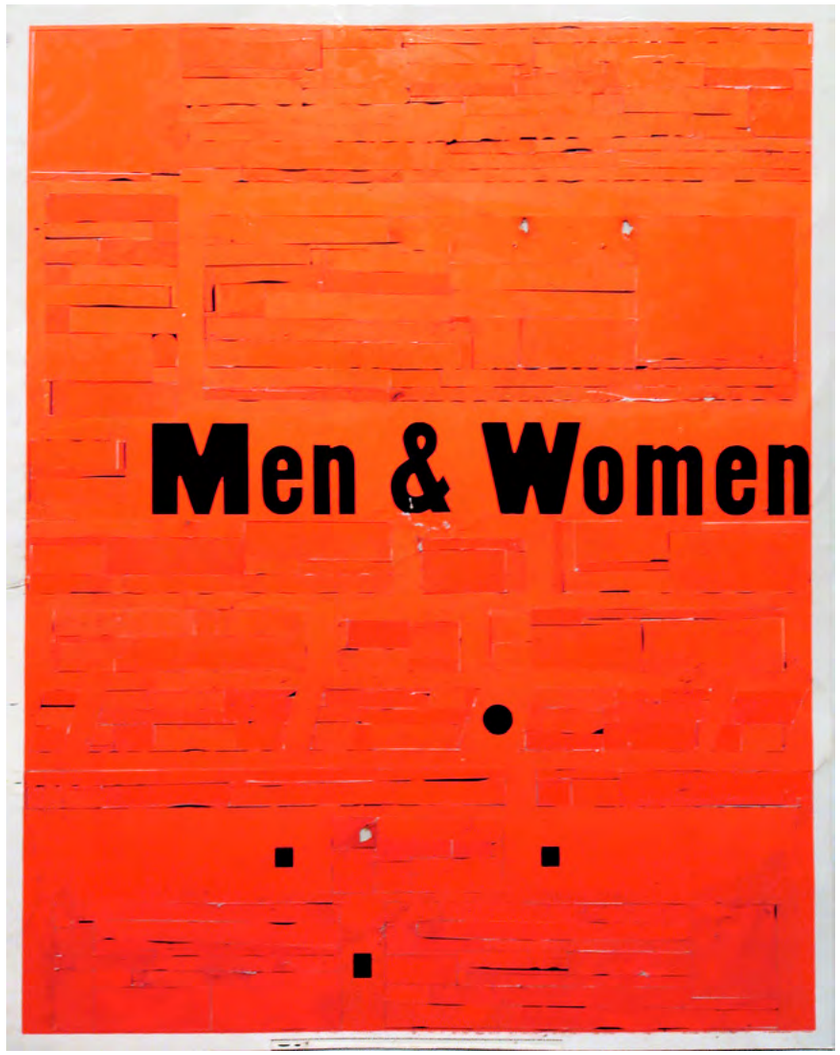
Left
meet cute 3: super farmacia, 2019. Sink, acrylic, mirror, obsidian, thermoplastic rubber, enamel powder coated steel, 27 × 19 × 18½ in (68.5 × 48.5 × 47 cm)

1 .....(p59)

Kristan Kennedy is an artist and Artistic Director, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA).

A Conversation with Christopher Michlig

. . . *Dan Devening*



1988

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During the winter of 2024, Dan Devening came to Oregon as the guest of Ditch Projects, a nonprofit artist-founded, artist-run studio, exhibition and performance space in Springfield, Oregon. While in Eugene, a lively conversation about color took place with Christopher Michlig when visiting his studio. This conversation has been edited for clarity and length.

DAN DEVENING (DD): Hi Christopher. First, I want to say that you're one of my favorite artists; I'm super excited to talk about your practice and find out more about how you think about color. I've been obsessed with what you do and how you see since I first saw your work in 2008.

It was in 2008 that I was presenting work from my gallery at the NEXT art fair in Chicago. I saw one of your cut and inlay wood type poster pieces in the booth of Jail Gallery, the gallery that was representing your work at the fair. Your source for this work was the ubiquitous Los Angeles posters printed by Colby Poster Company advertising social events, flea market schedules, real estate capers, and political candidates. I was immediately attracted to the combination of eye-catching fluorescent orange and the roughed-up material and surface that resulted in the absence of most of the text for the field. You'd then inserted small rectangles of the same color to replace missing words, but strategically left some text or punctuation in the composition. The piece said "Men & Women" in large black type. The space surrounding this title phrase featured no other text. There was something mesmerizing and poetic about the two words and the ampersand that bridged them.

I was immediately intrigued, and after much persuasion by your gallerist, I added the piece to my personal collection. What I was doing—buying art, while at the same time trying to sell the work of artists I was representing—remains a mystery.

That serendipitous meeting with your work has since grown into a rich and rewarding friendship and working relationship between my gallery and your practice. It's a relationship that continues to excite and engage me as I watch your projects evolve and grow over the years.

I'd like to start this conversation by offering my impression of an aspect of your work that I think lies at the root of your sensibility as an artist. Color appears to be one of the most emphatic threads tying together several of your series from the past ten years. For me, it's color that communicates most succinctly your view of cultural evolution. Color reveals what engages you about visuality, technology, and, possibly, the failed dreams of our advancing societies. Your use of fluorescent, plastic, and/or synthetic color—regardless how garish and aggressive that color might be—suggests that the creation of a palette of color that exists not of this world, but of some futurist society, leads me to think that it expresses something of the artificiality of our own world. Or maybe it's just a playfully absurd facet of our desire to be seen? Something cartoonish, loud, and—literally—flashy. Such a color is purely and unapologetically optical; it exists to draw attention, alarm, and declare without nuance or subtlety.

Where and how did this deep dive into the "Hi-Vis" world of color begin? For you, how and what does it communicate through your work?

Christopher Michlig (CM): Thank you for this generous reflection on my work and our relationship over the years. Our friendship and your mentorship has been central to my evolution as an artist—we've been working together since 2008,

Christopher Michlig, *Men $ Women*, 2007. Colby Poster Collage, 22 × 28 in

Jim Phillips for Santa Cruz Skateboards, Slasher Graphic, Slime Balls skateboard wheel without text, and original Slime Balls sticker design, 1974+

which is hard to believe—and you've been a consistent, generative force of encouragement and critical engagement.

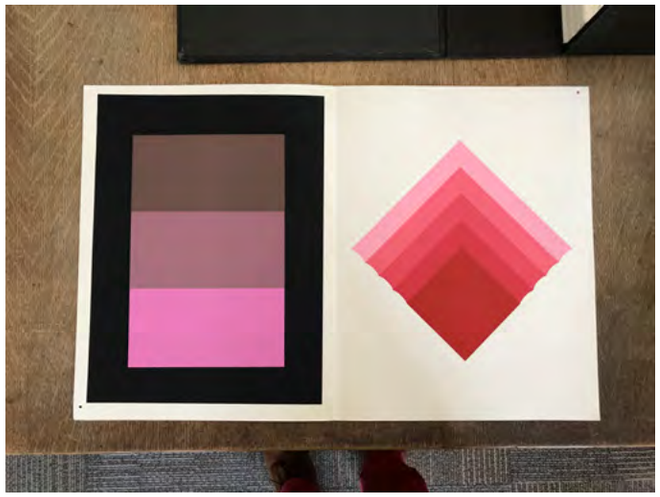
The fluorescent Day-Glo neon colors served as my introduction to art as a kid in the 1980s. I was into punk rock, BMX bikes, and skateboarding/snowboarding/skiing, and I found myself immersed in a culture where these vibrant hues were becoming visually defining elements. It was a time when punk music and these sports were establishing distinct visual identities, inviting participation through a visual language rich in color and cultural references. This language was characterized by its humor, visual exuberance, underlying critique of homogeneity, and the limiting forces of cultural norms. Neon, fluorescent, Day-Glo acid green and acid yellow dominated the palette for all of this.

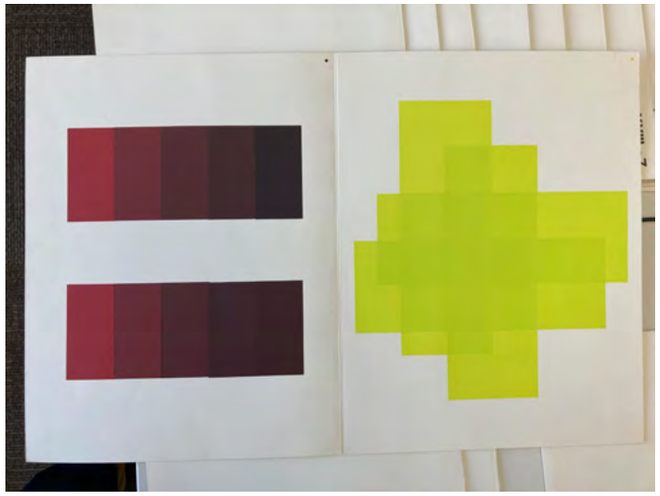
Certain color combinations left a lasting impression on me: neon pink paired with cornflower or neon blue on BMX frames accented with white enamel components; neon yellow and pink reminiscent of Jamie Reid's iconic Sex Pistols album design; neon green and pink as seen on Slime Balls skateboard wheels; the vivid ski apparel from brands like Spyder, Atomic, and Descente, which embraced neon hues. These bold colors were associated with subcultures and countercultural action sports, and for me they always evoked a sense of movement, activation, and ecstatic self-expression.

Christopher Michlig, Various paper wall sculptures, 2018+. Hi Gloss enamel on poly-coated poster paper, hot glue, 12 × 18 × 16 in

It wasn't until my thirties that I began to grasp the fundamentals of color theory, which is another concern entirely, I suppose. Among many revelations, I learned that fluorescent color exists outside the visible color spectrum—it's an effect rather than a color—and is sometimes referred to as "out of gamma." On the molecular level, fluorescence is a phenomena resulting from a photon absorbing more light than it can emit, shifting wavelengths and appearing as an intense vibration of light. Fluorescence calls attention through an oscillation between the visible and invisible light spectrum, an effect of threshold crossing which, in some sense, is ghostly. To see fluorescent color is to see the movement of energy from one wavelength to another; this shift, and the resulting degradation of intensity, is also what renders fluorescent color unstable from an archival standpoint. Day-Glo was the original fluorescent paint company; fluorescent color was discovered in the 1940s by two brothers who were experimenting with naturally occurring fluorescent compounds in the basement of their father's pharmacy. The sense of haphazard interaction still feels like an important facet of fluorescent color.

When creating the collages you mentioned, I primarily worked with found posters printed by the Los Angeles based Colby Poster Printing Company in the five most commonly used fluorescent colors: green, pink,





Josef Albers, Various silkscreen spot color plates from *Interaction of Color*, 1961, Yale University Press. The copy of this publication in the University of Oregon Design Library was given as a gift by Buckminster Fuller following his design build workshops at UO in 1962

Colby Poster Printing Company interior and exterior and ephemera. Photos: Joshua White Photography

Christopher Michlig, *Processed World,* 2014. Hi Gloss enamel silkscreen on poly-coated poster paper, 44 × 28 in. Photo: Joshua White Photography

yellow, orange, and tangerine. These colors interact in a visually intense and somewhat jarring manner, refusing to blend harmoniously with nonfluorescent colors. Instead of mixing optically, they vibrate intensely, causing black type to seemingly float on top of the neon field, almost as if intensely backlit. From 2007 to 2012, when I used found Colby posters as my primary material, the visual intensity would often lead to eye fatigue, prompting me to wear dark Ray Bans in the studio—a quintessentially "L.A." moment in my life.

I continue to use these colors, and I continue to explore new ways of offsetting, enhancing, or quieting them through pairing and combination while the underlying reference remains constant: fluorescent color is non-natural, the result of chemical and technological experimentation. It's an effect whose origin of signification is countercultural and clandestine.

DD: It's brilliant to hear you talk about how the fluorescent colors you found in the Colby Posters functioned optically while so forcefully resisting a chromatic harmony. This resistance is emphatic and what is so loved about the palette.

In the super-charged *Processed World* series from 2014, you shatter the illusion of a utopian vision of the future—in architecture, design, and culture—by literally fracturing archetypal images and then reassembling them with elements of the same fluorescent fields, patterns, and gradients that emerged from the earlier work. The feeling here is that any optimistic speculation about what comes next becomes immediately suspect and infernal. The found photographic images—often romanticized views of advancing technologies from vintage advertising and design publications—detonate in your hands. Selective

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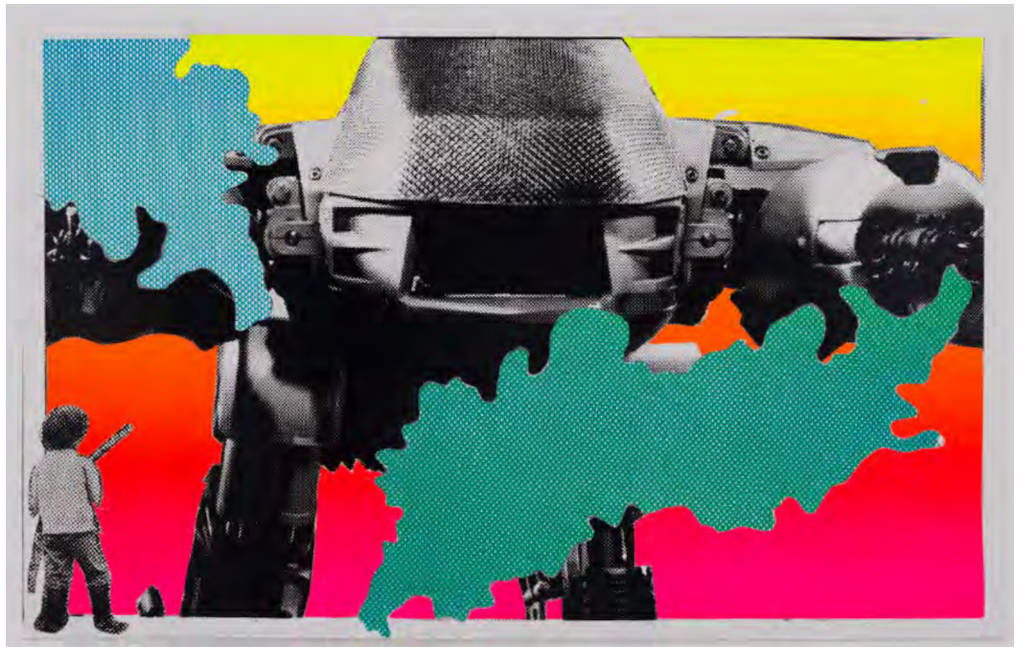
Christopher Michlig, *Processed World,* 2014. Hi Gloss enamel silkscreen on poly-coated poster paper, 11 × 14 in. Photo: Joshua White Photography

placement of neon color and pattern speaks to the potential volatility of a world driven by modernism, speed, and convenience. Can you say something about how you selected the images for that series, and how their reëvaluation through your own chromatic lens leads them deeper into a dark zone? But…maybe I'm being presumptuous here; maybe in your eyes the color speaks less to an adrenaline-driven detonation and more to something upbeat and joyful. Kids certainly love this palette. Maybe it's in this super-saturated world that they ultimately find wonder and comfort."

CM: "Detonate in your hands"—oof! I was working through layers of complex emotions when I was making that body of work. A number of things had happened that shifted my entire studio practice. Practically speaking, I was reckoning with the fact that Colby Poster Printing Company was going out of business, which meant that both the physical and visual material I'd been working with exclusively for nearly a decade was no longer going to be available. At the time, this felt like a seismic event—a catastrophe of sorts—that really caused me to question the fragility of my studio practice in relation to materials. Out of a sense of self-preservation, I sourced the exact paper and inks that Colby used to print their blanks, which I was then able to replicate. During the silkscreen process, I immediately realized that I could print whatever I wanted. The guardrails were gone: I could pull rainbow prints and gradients, I could replicate patterns, and I could introduce images as references, citations, and provocations of thought and criticism.

I wanted to capture that anarchic feeling of freedom, which also felt like a form of self-destruction or extreme risk-taking, by using found images of cultural events and objects that in my mind brought about, or were intended to bring about, culture shifting, paradigm shifting change, the results of which were sometimes wonderful and sometimes devastating. The world that emerged in that body of work was a post-adult world



Christopher Michlig, *Processed World,* 2014. Hi Gloss enamel silkscreen on poly-coated poster paper, 11 × 14 in. Photo: Joshua White Photography

filled with gnashing German shepherds, abandoned concrete buildings, gangs of kids making bonfires, plumes of toxic smoke, Le Corbusier's skeletal Dom-Ino House, RoboCop's nemesis ED-209, seized narco-subs, and analog tech objects like the original Sony Walkman and the Motorola DynaTAC brick phone. You're right that the super-saturated chromatic quality of the collages was definitely—ironically—meant to evoke a deeper, dark zone, and, yes, a place of wonder and comfort. I was building a kind of world with those pieces, and I was using color and images to make that world feel elliptical and irreducible.

DD: You just described the foundation of a rich creative practice. From the loss of the Colby Poster source, you developed something potentially richer and more flexible for your work. Very inspiring!

With that important pivot in your studio, I wanted to turn to your remarkable book *File Under: Slime*, published by Hat & Beard Press. It's your rumination on and celebration of not only the historical and pop cultural significance of slime and "sliminess," but also the theoretical context framed through the lens of science fiction, literature, film, contemporary art, and critical theory. What about the book's color? How has the evolution of that particularly toxic lime green come to signify the trope of extreme ickiness? As we see that green in your collage work, was it a factor in your growing passion about the subject?"

CM: Color is central to my interest in slime, particularly slime green, which is also called toxic waste green, plutonium green, Trinitite green, vomit green, Oobleck green, and so on. I have a conceptual and formal answer to this question. Formally, slime is signified by formlessness. It's sticky, but also sometimes slippery. It typically moves, and while it's most

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Christopher Michlig, *File Under: Slime,* Hat & Beard Press, 2022. Photo: Brian Roettinger

Christopher Michlig, *File Under: Slime,* Hat & Beard Press, 2022. Photo: Brian Roettinger

often associated with the color green, slime has also appeared as white, black, red, and pink. Slime's primary representation as green is part of its evolving history as an idea, and part of my interest in researching slime had to do with a chronology of its changing visual attributes, green being the most prominent. When I use green in my collages, I often think of it as a foil or affront to structural, ordered, Cartesian compositional scaffolding. I like the idea of "sliming the grid," and green is my go-to color for engaging this idea. Conceptually, slime signifies threshold crossing, often bringing about a sense of existential dread, or, inversely, a feeling of euphoria. For Jean Paul Sartre, slime was a threatening substance, while our contemporary association is pretty Goopified, and has more to do with wellness, self-care, and the low-grade euphoria of homemade slime and ASMR videos. File Under: Slime was anarchic in a similar sense as Processed World. Both were an effort to open up rather than close down or demarcate. In other words, like the *Processed World* collages, *File Under: Slime* has no thesis. It's a presentation of a range of color references intended to ricochet off one another to achieve a specific ambiance of visual and textual information.

DD: This book is a treasure. Who would think that slime, posited through a deep dive into a historical, cultural, and theoretical lens, would make for such a pleasurable reading experience? In this case, that would be me! I've had fun sharing your book with my painting students who like to joke that "of course an academic had to get his hands on slime and make it all important!"

One last question. You recently discovered a cache of Letraset Pantone poster papers and gradients, some of which you've incorporated into your inlaid works on paper. The material is historically significant because of its use by designers and architects in a pre-digital era when layouts were entirely analog, handmade and tactile. This library of colors, patterns, and field blends created by Pantone was intended to

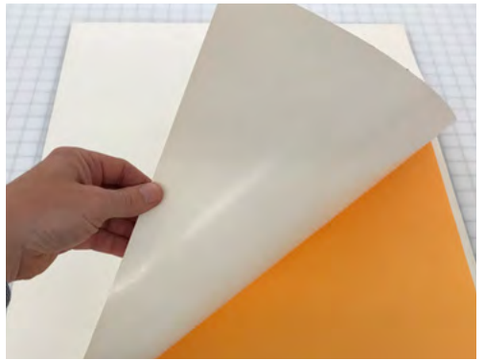
help designers speed up the process of illustrating visual and chromatic options in va layout. Your collection is not only a physical manifestation of late 20th century graphic design; it also reflects the taste and range of hues that were most acceptable at the time. As a visual artist, what does the collection represent to you? Is it an historical artifact, or a formal tool used to manifest another side of your passion for, and research into, color?"

Christopher Michlig,
File Under: Slime,
Hat & Beard Press, 2022.
Photo: Brian Roettinger

Found abandoned archive of
Pantone Letraset poster paper
printed between 1969–1980

CM: First of all, I think this is an opportunity to share that I sometimes sit with an idea, or in this case a material or archive, for years before knowing how to move forward in the studio. The Pantone paper has been both an historical artifact and a valuable formal tool to explore my haphazard, enthralled research into color and cultural production. I discovered the stack of 1000+ Pantone Letraset color sheets in a forgotten broom closet. It was like unearthing a treasure trove of color history. Each piece of paper was in its own meticulously labeled giant manilla folder. For me, the collection is like a time machine that allows a glimpse into the era from 1969 to 1980 when these sheets were in production. It's hard to describe — it was like looking through a microscope and a telescope at the same time. There's something immediately tactile and perceptible about the paper, but there's also an elusive, enigmatic quality related to the history of standardized color reproduction. As a company, Pantone scaled color reproduction such that most manufactured goods have become indexed to its color matching system, which is a closed loop of reproduction and perception.

My immediate point of interest in the paper had nothing to do with color. There's

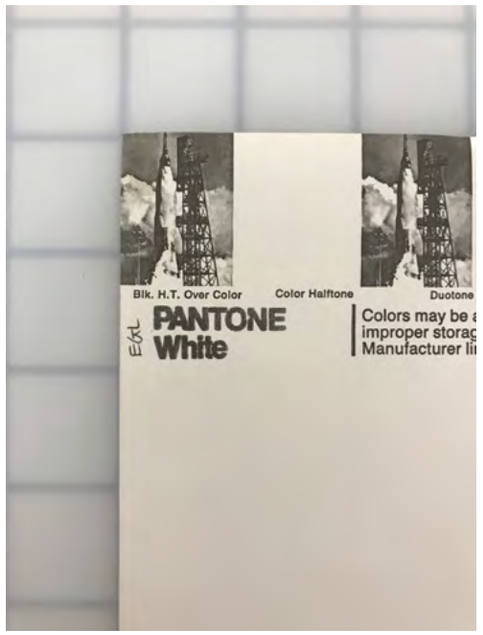


Pantone Letraset posters in their archival sleeves

Pantone Letraset print quality detail and Mercury-Atlas 6: Friendship 7 Rocket, Launched February 20, 1962

a test strip along the top edge of each Pantone sheet featuring repeated images of the Mercury-Atlas 6 "Friendship 7" rocket, launched in 1962; the paper itself was produced several years later. This seemingly incongruous connection led me to delve deeper into the story behind Pantone and its founder, Lawrence Herbert. Herbert's background in chemistry intersected with the printing industry's need for standardized color reproduction, culminating in the creation of the Pantone Matching System (PMS) in 1963. I love this type of conceptual thread because it's contextually rich while fundamentally separate from the phenomenal dynamics of the colors themselves. This kind of formal-conceptual dynamic is something I continually gravitate toward — this is Mike Kelly thinking — since it considers the high and the low at the same time.

Pantone's use of an image symbolizing technological advancement, such as the Friendship 7 rocket, on its early color sheets announced a spirit of innovation and progress that defined the mid-20th century. The rocket on paper is frozen of course in a perpetual state of pre-launch, which is wonderfully critical. Technology has evolved exponentially since these posters were produced, but the visible spectrum hasn't. In a sense, color retains a fixed quality despite its elusive and psychodynamic character. Its presence is tethered to human physiology on one hand, and language, symbolism, and connotation on the other. Whereas much else around



Christopher Michlig,
Work in progress: Pantone
poster collages, 2024

Dan Devening is an artist, educator, curator, writer and gallerist based in Chicago. He's currently an Adjunct Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; was Senior Lecturer in the Department of Art Theory and Practice for 15 years and held full-time teaching positions at the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of New Mexico. His paintings, works on paper and installations have been shown extensively including recent exhibitions in New York at Geary Contemporary, Launch F18, Apex Art and Printed Matter, Inc; at 65Grand, LVL3, Autumn Space, ebersmoore gallery, Roy Boyd Gallery and Julius Caesar in Chicago; and at Kinkead Contemporary in Los Angeles among other national venues. His recent international projects include exhibitions in Germany at Grölle Galerie in Wuppertal, Kunsterverein Recklinghausen, the Museum Kurhaus in Kleve, dok25a in Dusseldorf, Renate Schroeder Gallery in Cologne and galerie oqbo, Schau Fenster, Scotty Enterprises and Neues Problem in Berlin. He has also shown his work in Vienna, Austria; Brussels, Belgium; Tokyo, Japan; Toronto, Canada; Monterrey, Mexico; Melbourne, Australia; and Amsterdam, The Netherlands. He has curated exhibitions nationally and internationally including projects at oqbo in Berlin; dok25A in Dusseldorf; Hagiwara Projects in Tokyo; the Hyde Park Art Center and the Block Museum of Art in Chicago among many others. His essays and reviews have been featured in several recent publications including *Out of Place: Artists, Pedagogy and Purpose* edited by Zoë Charlton and Tim Doud and *Clay Pop, What's New in Clay*. Devening founded and currently directs Devening Projects, a gallery project featuring exhibitions by emerging and established artists.

us is evolving beyond detection, recognition, or comprehension, color is always experienced. It also is experience.

DD: Christopher, this has been such a pleasure. We've had some great conversations about our art obsessions and color passions in the past, but this exchange has gone to the heart of a few things that you've generously shared. It's not easy to lay out the details of how one thinks and works as an artist; you've brought us with you to your studio and through your processes, and for this I'm grateful.

Elbow Room Takes on the Contemporary Art Scene

... Hannah Krafcik

A pair of "sister shows" at Elbow Room and ILY2 showcase a talented group of artists and the ingenuity of the close-knit community of the Portland art scene. The artists all work out of Elbow Room's SE Portland studio and gallery.

Install image of *A Berry, A Boot, A Building, A Blue Door: New Works by Mike Young* at Elbow Room. Full image of Untitled, 2023. Colored pencil and ink on paper. Photo: Emma Ganger-Spivak

When I look at the works of artist Mike Young, I think about drawing class where I learned to render perspective and proportion. The practicalities of math and metrics aside, there is no perfect way to go about this. Accurate perspective and proportion lie in the eye of the beholder. I find myself mesmerized by the artist's approach to these aspects of drawing—illustrated through shoes, hats, creatures, bottles, doors, and chairs. In reading Young's bio, I learn that Young is deaf, blind in one eye and quite nearsighted in the other and that "He draws inspiration from books and magazines," which he observes in intimate proximity, "bringing his face close enough to nearly touch the pigment and paper." In viewing Young's work, I experience a viewpoint much different from my own, but with tangible logic that pulls me in.

Young works out of Elbow Room, a studio and gallery space in industrial southeast Portland where folks experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities create and share their art with the world. Young's work is currently on view in *A Berry, A Boot, A Building, A Blue Door: New Works by Mike Young* at Elbow Room's gallery, one of two simultaneous "sister shows" of works by Elbow Room artists curated by Kristan Kennedy. The other exhibition, *The circus and the beach*, is across town in the commercial gallery ILY2.

I wanted to find out more about the impetus

Install image of *A Berry, A Boot, A Building, A Blue Door: New Works by Mike Young* at Elbow Room. All works colored pencil and ink on paper. Photo: Emma Ganger-Spivak

for and unexpected outcomes of these offerings, so I spoke with both Malcolm Hecht, Elbow Room's Co-Founder and Co-Director, and Kennedy, a tour de force in the local art world.

Our conversations traced the winding threads of relational history in Portland's art scene, knitting together a story of rich collaboration platforming neurodivergent and Disabled artists: I learned that, in late 2023, Kennedy accepted Elbow Room's invitation to curate one of its annual shows. Prior to this arrangement, Kennedy was no stranger to Elbow Room, having worked with the organization as a community partner in her capacity as the Curator of Visual Art at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art. But this time, Kennedy would join up as an independent curator.

Jumping into the energy of this fresh collaboration, Kennedy's longtime friend, Jeanine Jablonski, suggested adding a concurrent exhibition of Elbow Room artists at ILY2, where she works as Senior Director. The result: Two Elbow Room shows opened the same weekend in April of this year, offering portals into the world of making that unfold in the studio on a daily basis.

Young's *A Berry, A Boot, A Building, A Blue Door* was conceived first. Young is relatively new to the Elbow Room but a prolific artist. His work stokes my curiosity about what fits together and how. Every shape on each page can be viewed as part of a set, forged through palpable associations and similarities that do not erase their divergences.

In her curatorial writing on Young's body of work in this exhibition, Kennedy notes that "we are invited to consider relationships and the proximities, the slivers of space and the smart shapes start to fit together in a kind of perfect puzzle." "Close looking begets close looking," she adds. In my encounter with Young's works, this rings true.

I find an array of boots and hats, and many of these seem to be tipping or wafting over to the right. In contrast, a blue flower (maybe a morning glory) holds its ground on the left of this composition. Here, I begin to sense the motion in Young's creations, a motivating force across the page that offers a hint of disorientation.

Tess Bidelspach, Untitled, 2024. Marker on canvas. Courtesy the artist and ILY2, Portland, Oregon Photo: Mario Gallucci

I notice one drawing that looks illusory: It features numerous chairs of all sorts—mostly brown, but some are red, yellow, orange, and blue—all portrayed from different angles. I directly face one chair, look up at another, and down at another. The limbs of some chairs overlap, confusing my eye further. All of the chairs are empty, with nothing to hold in sight, complete as they are in togetherness and arrangement.

My perspective becomes more warped in a pleasurable way by a large drawing of many different kinds of bottles and boxes, which seem to bulge and waver. One bottle holds a human form, illuminating the themes of collection and containment that thread through Young's drawings. I see a bike, a red drawer, an animal, a house, a chair, a bed, a tree, and the list goes on. Each element nestles snugly among the rest, with a palette of perfectly paired colors and wobbly, intuitive balance. I trust Young's scenes because they are places where my eyes can dance.

During my conversation with Kennedy, we discussed the notion of "simultaneity," the coinciding of many ways of being, sensations and perceptions, which coalesce experientially without obfuscating one another. Mike Young renders simultaneity through titular sets of entities and objects held together by both difference and affinity. The works of Elbow Room artists exhibited at ILY2 offer up an experience of simultaneity through their distinct visual languages that converse in the gallery.

Mohamed Omar, *Leopard Hop,* 2022. Acrylic on canvas. Courtesy the artist and ILY2, Portland, Oregon Photo: Mario Gallucci

The work of the three artists—Tess Bidelspach, Elmeater Morton, and Mohamed Omar—finds shared framing in the "sense of memory as a source," as per the exhibition text. Here, I enter sensorial universes, both familiar and unfamiliar, transmuted through rich color, evocative texture, and self-assured personality.

Bidelspach was born in Romania and raised in Portland. Her hypnotic spirals and mark-making bring an uncanny sensibility to her work. In an untitled work made this year (2024), I follow lavender marker lines spinning on the canvas, cloaking the hues of light blue and red that peek through the spiraling chaos. Balanced perfectly to the right of center, I find the name "Tess" written in beautiful red ink, curling slightly as if it were being sucked down the lavender vortex. Is this work a self-portrait, I wonder?

Mohamed Omar's works, on the other hand, operate in bold swaths of color that jive where they meet. *Leopard Hop* (2022) depicts the title painted in what reads as an optical illusion in letters of red, black, yellow, and pink layered in a delightfully confusing fashion. The chromatics pop with bands of dark red and bright green running through the center of the piece.

I learn from his bio that Omar was born in Somalia and moved to Portland at age five. He is a part of the audiovisual collective Videotones and records music under the name M. Omar. His penchant for popular culture and media in its many forms manifest across all his works at ILY2. His use of words in these works begets a certain lyricism that might also be fitting for a song or a movie.

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Elmeater Morton, *She Told Me Black*, 2023. Mixed media on canvas. Courtesy the artist and ILY2, Portland, Oregon Photo: Mario Gallucci

When it comes to words, Elmeater Morton also has a lot to say. Her artworks are striking and their titles add a whole other dimension. The work of one of her fabric sculptures—made from patterned material and sutured with chaotic interstitial thread—bears the curious title, *What he does*. This work emanates sound, a mashup of Morton's voice speaking.

The names of Morton's collaged works further intrigue me: *They move in their white house with their bags*; *These people on here they go to the hospital*; *She told me black*. Her titles are profound and provocative as poetry, requiring me to stretch my interpretation of the collages, which are full of intuitively chosen photographs and illustrations surrounded by Morton's own mark-making.

Morton's work in *The circus and the beach* stands apart, the only one in the style of its kind from her contributions. Within it, various patches of color bend and tilt together toward the upper right side of the frame. The wildness of the circus overtakes the beach, becoming both a mood and a scene. The theme of the entire show—works by Bidelspach, Omar, and Morton—emerges here: *The circus and the beach*, both the

Elmeater Morton, *The Circus and the Beach,* 2022. Mixed media on paper. Courtesy the artist and ILY2, Portland, Oregon. Photo: Mario Gallucci

drawing and the show, illuminate visual languages that converge and transmute.

In speaking to Kennedy about the Elbow Room shows, I found out a bit more about her history as an artist as well: she told me about her time as an art counselor at a camp for developmentally Disabled teens and adults during her time in High School, which exposed her to the praxis of these so-called outsider artists and awakened feelings of peer relationship to them. Her own practice as a professional painter included mark-making in the vein of Morton's work.

I also learned that Jablonski is Kennedy's former gallerist and has a distinct understanding of Kennedy's aesthetic. The aesthetic affinity they share paved the way for their collaboration on *The circus and the beach* at ILY2: Jablonski helped Kennedy select works of the Elbow Room artists, and the two hung the show together. "We're jumping up and down at how excited we are about the energetic conversation happening in the room between the work," Kennedy said of this experience.

Though the artists at Elbow Room are deeply committed to their crafts, a dearth of opportunities exists to show in formal gallery contexts like this. And so these Elbow Room shows mark a special occasion, made possible through a fairy dusting of community connections.

During my conversation with Hecht, he explained that, oftentimes when Elbow Room artists are offered the chance to show work, it's via "an Elbow Room-specific show" or an "artist with disabilities-specific show." This is riddled with a history of segregation dating back to previous iterations of programs for neurodivergent and Disabled artists in Oregon and nationally.

However, *A Berry, A Boot, A Building, A Blue Door*: *New Works by Mike Young* at Elbow Room and *The circus and the beach* at ILY2 manage to shirk the pall of segregation by connecting the dots between Elbow Room to ILY's downtown gallery in a concurrent fashion, projecting outward and drawing audiences in at once. "Work sold from the show," emphasized Kennedy of the ILY2 show, adding that people are "interested in the artists and their work."

To interact with the work of these Elbow Room artists is to grapple with self-assured aesthetic sensibility and reckon with the simultaneity of experience offered up by the work. "I do think that it is critical that people start looking at these artists and putting them in their programs," said Kennedy, as we neared the end of our discussion. "They are a part of contemporary practice."

Hannah Krafcik (they/them) is a Portland-based interdisciplinary neuroqueer artist and writer whose work emerges from ongoing reflections on social patterning and censorship, (over)stimulation, perseveration, and intuition. Their practices span dance, writing, new media, and sound design. Hannah continues to be influenced by their collaboration with artistic partner Emily Jones.

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How to Say Friendship: Maren Hassinger and Senga Nengudi at Cooley Gallery

…*Ella Ray*

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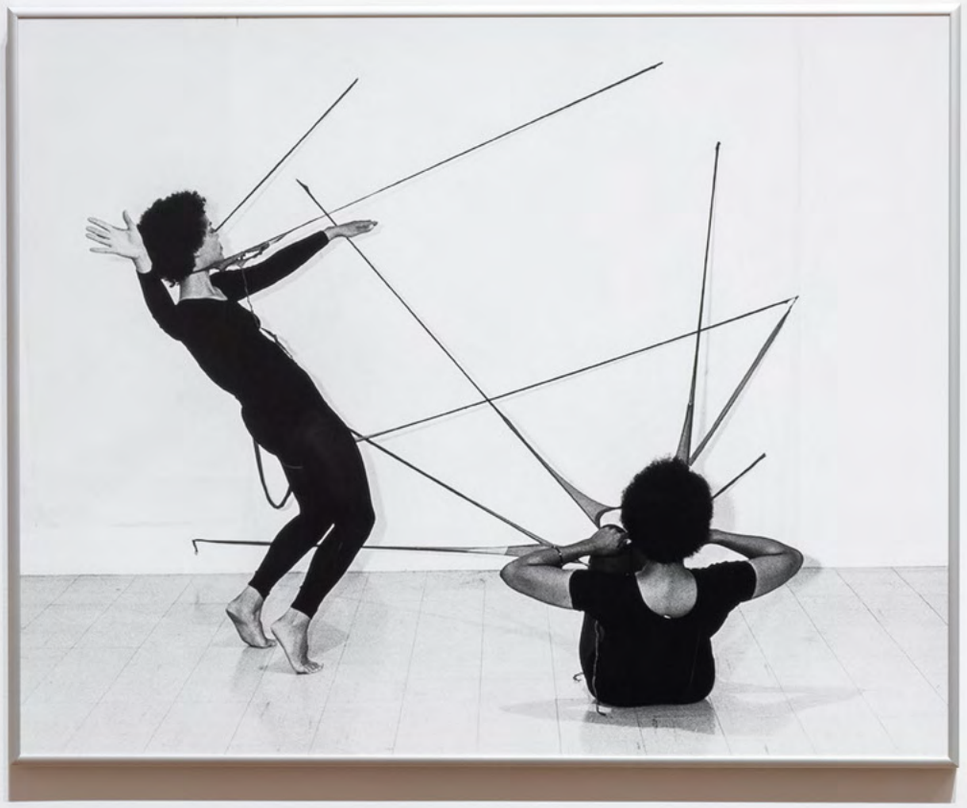
"A zillion sisters ain't enough. To be a girl among girls, I feel as if I am at the height of courage and creativity."
— Lisa Jones

As our worlds prioritize digital communication, our archives are beginning to weigh less—the postcards, grocery lists, posters, rough drafts, tapes, love letters, and recipes illustrating lives lived are no longer stowed away in the file cabinet or in a shoebox under our beds, but exist in figurative clouds. *Las Vegas Ikebana: Maren Hassinger and Senga Nengudi* is heavy, not in subject matter, but in the exhibition's reverence for the artists' multi-decade material kinship that lives in between and alongside their individual and collaborative artistic practices.

Nengudi's choreo-sculptural work *R.S.V.P.* × (1976/2014) and two of Hassinger's agrarian wire and rope objects, *Splintered Starburst* (1981) and *Leaning* (*maquettes*) (1979), are foregrounded in the single room gallery. Together Nengudi's fleshy nylon burst, pulled tautly between two white walls and punctuated by sand and rose petal filled sacks that droop irregularly, and Hassinger's piercing, voltaic sculptures—positioned both on the ground and on the wall—foretells the pair's commitment to experimentation in material and process that proves enduring for Nengudi and Hassinger. These more acclaimed pieces are couched within a cosmology of correspondence that is inseparable from either artist's oeuvre. Curatorially speaking, giving the audience some of Hassinger and Nengudi's most acclaimed work is a bold, but thoughtful choice that requires digging beyond what is expected of this

Senga Nengudi and Maren Hassinger, *Talking Book,* 1988. Twigs, moss, Walkman, audiocassette, 12:17 min. 2.5 × 15 × 9 in. (book open). Courtesy the artist and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC



Left:
Senga Nengudi and Maren Hassinger performing with *R.S.V.P.* (*Performance Piece*). Pearl C. Woods Gallery, Los Angeles, May 1977. Archival pigment print. Courtesy Senga Nengudi, Sprüth Megers, and Thomas Erben Gallery. Photo: Harmon Outlaw

Right:
Carmen de Lavallade, James Truitte (Nengudi's teacher), and Lelia Goldoni (Hassinger's teacher), performing *Another Touch of Klee* as part of the Lester Horton Dance Theatre, 1951 Archival pigment print. Courtesy the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Archives. Photo: Constantine

exhibition. Pushing past these touchstones, respectfully, into the minutia of their ceaseless exchange is when the exhibition and its ambitions take shape.

The archival material—artworks in their own right as the documents and objects construct a clear view of Hassinger and Nengudi's singular mark making, rhythm, and poetics—not only illustrate the artists' steadfast artistic collaboration that survived multiple cross-country moves and interpersonal and institutional hurdles, but a sisterhood forged through intentionality and consistency.

"Time Travel" from *30 Day Exercise* (2004), composed of an archival inkjet print of ghostly body moving through an undefined space and a handwritten, diaristic confession from Nengudi, collapses praxis, practice, and friendship. The long-exposure image is dancerly as is the winding text where she tells her friend that her blackness is at odds with her continual "yearning to time travel." The artist's solution is to turn toward history, a deep study of her personal visionaries. On one hand this letter is a life update—Nengudi goes on to speak casually about recently reading and enjoying a Benjamin Franklin biography—and on the other, this is an assemblage of larger ideas that persist in rough drafts and final works.

Their cyclical letter writing and mail-based collaborations exist within Hassinger and Nengudi's choreographic grammar. As evident in the performance documentation in the exhibition, movement as a means of connection is the bedrock on which all artworks are built. In footage of *Art Moves* (1983), Hassinger, Nengudi, and other members of the experimental performance group Studio Z push and pull languidly as they goad each other to step into the center of the floor. What does it mean, artistically and otherwise, to reach out and bring someone with you?

Above:
Las Vegas Ikebana: Maren Hassinger and Senga Nengudi (installation view), 2023. The Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery at Reed College, Portland, Oregon. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Right:
Senga Nengudi, *Chain Mail*, July 2001, Sent to Maren Hassinger. Nylon and paper collage. 68 × 9 in. Collection Maren Hassinger

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Whether prompting the other to build upon the sender's words and images or a tender birthday card filled with the type of praise and fellowship that comes from true love or dance choreography drafted on the backsides of scrap paper, these lines of communication shape my understanding of both Hassinger and Nengudi as artists self-actualizing in tandem. Nengudi's tongue-in-cheek *Chain Mail* (2001), a series of circular paper collages strung together with brown pantyhoses, similarly arouses the notion of giving and taking. The presence of Nengudi's signature nylon material—a symbol of her career defining exploration of the quotidian object as it pertains to her body from "tender, tight beginnings to sagging ends"—in this format confirms that these letters between friends are serious artistic experiments where the receiver and the sender are engaging in a reciprocal creation and critique to this day.

I like to imagine receiving this work in the mail and opening the envelope to find a chain of images of Black women and girls looking at me. I'd smile back at them. I'd let it blow in the wind like a wind chime on my front porch or drape it above the kitchen table like a "Welcome Home" banner. These artworks and their related ephemera conjure feelings of familiarity, bringing a layer of warmth to this slightly overwhelming amount of material. The physical excesses of friendship affirm that even our most brilliant artistic endeavors cannot and do not happen within a vacuum. In making their partnership visible on this scale, the show refuses the singular-genius-artist trope in exchange for a genuine embrace of artistic interdependency. The gentle, overlapping sound of the multiple video works within the gallery only aids in rendering the presence these two have in each other's practices/lives.

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Hassinger and Nengudi's experimentations and improvisations, and to some degree their friendship, are always earthbound—using the outdoors as an elastic site where the human body intersects organically with the natural world. From the the inclusion of Nengudi's *Proposal: Afro-American Pop* (1982)—in the artist's words, "an environmental piece" about Black girlhood—to *Talking Book* (1986), a moss covered audio-book, which according to the wall text reveals that this work is their first long distance collaboration recorded by sending the cassette tape back and forth through the mail, it becomes clear that flowers, branches, moss, water, and gravel are indispensable to their ethos. At each turn within the gallery, I was brought back to earth. It would be easy to read this as a representational reclamation, but in the context of the exhibition, nature reads as an extension of a dance studio, as a site of play and sovereignty.

In the object label for *Talking Book*, Hassinger notes that she is always thinking about "ever-vanishing nature." The depleting, fleeting natural world mirrors our body over time—ultimately limited, but

Senga Nengudi, *Chain Mail* (detail), July 2001, Sent to Maren Hassinger. Nylon and paper collage. 68 × 9 in. Collection Maren Hassinger

bountiful when cared for. The backyard, or a field or a park or an ocean, then becomes a stage for positioning the physical frame up against itself in an audio-visual-embodied entanglement that gently probes at the boundaries of the body, particularly the gendered/racialized body, and of our earthly settings in an effort explore an alternative ecology and the limits of personhood.

She Said (2024), a pair of LED screens installed high above the other works on the walls, proves the collaborators haven't run out of things to say to one another. The continually scrolling black screens present a glowing text that reads like both instructions and a journal entry. I stood and watched the phrase "the air is thick with fear, become a river…" roll over and over. Just like "Las Vegas Ikebana," the playful compound created by Nengudi and Hassinger to encompass their worldbending approach to artmaking that welcomes absurdity and duration, the pair are sharing secrets with each other publicly, we just aren't hip to the spells and annotations they are making yet.

The messages emanating from *She Said* cast a glow onto the ephemera encased in glass and onto the screens within the gallery. The words dance across Hassinger and Nengudi's papers and prints from all vantage points. This visual bleed gets to the root of *Las Vegas Ikebana*, making visible the technologies of friendship that are the scaffolding for the artists' five decade-long embodied transmission of ideas and dreams.

This visual bleed gets to the root of *Las Vegas Ikebana*, making visible the technologies of friendship that are the scaffolding for the artists' five decade-long embodied transmission of ideas and dreams.

Ella Ray is a writer, curator, and library worker concerned with the manner in which refusal and worldbuilding can be embodied in visual and performance art. These lines of study are augmented by Ray's investment in Black feminist thought, formal and conceptual experimentation, and cross-diasporic community. Currently an Associate Editor at *Variable West*, Ray's essays, reviews, and research have appeared in/on *Variable West*, *Cult Classic Magazine*, the Studio Museum in Harlem's website, in exhibition catalogs for King School Museum of Contemporary Art, and others.

This essay was first published by *Variable West* on May 21, 2024, with support from Critical Conversations, The University of Oregon Center for Art Research (CFAR), and The Ford Family Foundation.

Las Vegas Ikebana: Maren Hassinger and Senga Nengudi (installation view), 2023. The Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery at Reed College, Portland, Oregon. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Good Taste: interview with Courtney Daley from Nike

...*Amelia Rina*

Good Taste is an interview series with West Coast creatives in all industries.

When I went to school for photography, I had a painter friend tell me that my medium wasn't Art. At least, not in the way painting and sculpture are art. I remember thinking she was narrow minded and ignorant to the nuances of what art is and can be, but I also always felt uncomfortable calling myself an artist. I was a photographer. There was some difference I didn't know how to name.

Later, in grad school studying art criticism, I learned that the definition of what art is and is not came from a select group of powerful people in art history (spoiler: white men). Thankfully, there have always been people testing the boundaries and finding new, generative ways to weave creative practice into our lives.

One distinction that still feels particularly rigid is between art and design. In my experience, the two communities stay relatively distinct despite the fact that many artists have professional careers in design and related fields. Wanting to know more about the relationship between the art and design communities, I talked to someone who has been fluidly existing in both worlds.

Courtney Dailey is the VP of Accessories Design at Nike and an impressively active supporter of the art community here in Portland. We talked about what it's like leading a team of creatives, what inspires her daily, and, of course, how artists and designers differ and are similar.
—Amelia Rina

Amelia Rina (AR): How does the design of the world around you affect your mood and/or inspiration throughout the day?

Courtney Dailey (CD): Oh dear, this is such a huge question! When I encounter systems, objects, and experiences that are considered and thoughtfully created, it instantly lifts my energy. If something is beautiful and well-functioning, it's the best feeling! I get so much satisfaction and pleasure out of a seamless encounter, but also appreciate those experiences or objects that introduce productive friction, causing me to step back or consider a different perspective.

AR: What has your team of designers and creatives taught you about leadership?

CD: The importance, above all, of creativity, collaboration and care for what we do, and for one another. As a leader, I need to be sensitive to where folks are engaged: sometimes we need freedom to explore, and sometimes we need a frame within which to move around. And it needs to be fun sometimes!

AR: Where do you find inspiration in the world?

Trying to pay attention to big and small things I'm seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting. I try to put myself in situations where I know that I'll find something new or unusual to encounter: travel, magazines, and books, working in the garden, hanging out with friends and pets, spending time with art, going to live performances or sports, visiting amazing stores.

Left:
Courtney Dailey. Artwork pictured by Amy Dov

Poster made by Courtney in early COVID lockdown, 2020

I started taking ceramics classes this summer and just messing around with clay, with no specific agenda. It lets me just get lost in the making of something.

AR: How are art and design different? How are they the same?

CD: There are so many ways that artists and designers push against any kinds of boundaries or edges of these distinctions; when I was in university, the debate was about Art vs Craft, and I've realized the Art vs Design conversation is pretty similar.

My very general distinction is that artists tend to create their own questions (and work to respond to those questions), while designers tend to solve problems posed by the world or by others (through a brief, for example).

Training for artists and designers is quite different (though they are frequently in the same schools!): though both are responding to prompts, there seem to be more asks of artists to be subjective, to insert themselves and their experiences into their work, whereas a designer is asked to imagine a client or customer and respond to the assignment/problem with them in mind. Suggesting, however, that designers are not bringing subjectivity and bias into their work, or that artists aren't thinking about audiences is where the distinctions start to get pretty fuzzy…

AR: What advice would you give to someone working with an artist or designer for the first time?

CD: Trust! You've chosen them for a reason—articulate why, and remember that they have some expertise or perspective that you're hoping to access. Be as clear as you can be so they understand where you're coming from and why you want to work with them. If you have an outcome or piece of the puzzle that you're set on, tell them!

AR: What is the most memorable design you've encountered recently?

CD: The Nami Project in Ucluelet, Canada. I am scheming about getting up to Ucluelet to stay at this incredible spot. And Atelier NL. We have been using these ceramics for over three years, and every time I pick up one of the plates or cups, I am excited about the idea of digging up clay from the ground. I love when materiality and concept fuse so thoughtfully, like they do in this ongoing project.

AR: How does your experience in the art community intersect with the design community?

CD: I trained as an artist and curator, and my paid work experience has mostly been in design. For me, the two are weaving toward and away from one another all of the time. But there tends to be less overlap with "designers" and "artists" than many folks would think.

Every profession has its own language and customs, and though designers and artists are both "creative," their words and experiences are distinct. When you learn to approach the world with a set of concerns and terms (mostly from school, but also from self-directed or communal learning), it can be hard to feel at home in other groups. There is a lot of overlap and potential for collaboration, but a bit of translation is required.

Top:
Ceramic bowl made by Courtney

Middle:
Atelier NL's Clay Service collection

Bottom:
The Nami Project in Ucluelet, Canada

As chair of the PICA Board of directors, I try to bring experiences and resources that I have as a result of working in design to an incredible art organization, and I gain access to curators and artists and learn how they're engaging with the world, the questions they're asking. Both sides feed one another, no doubt.

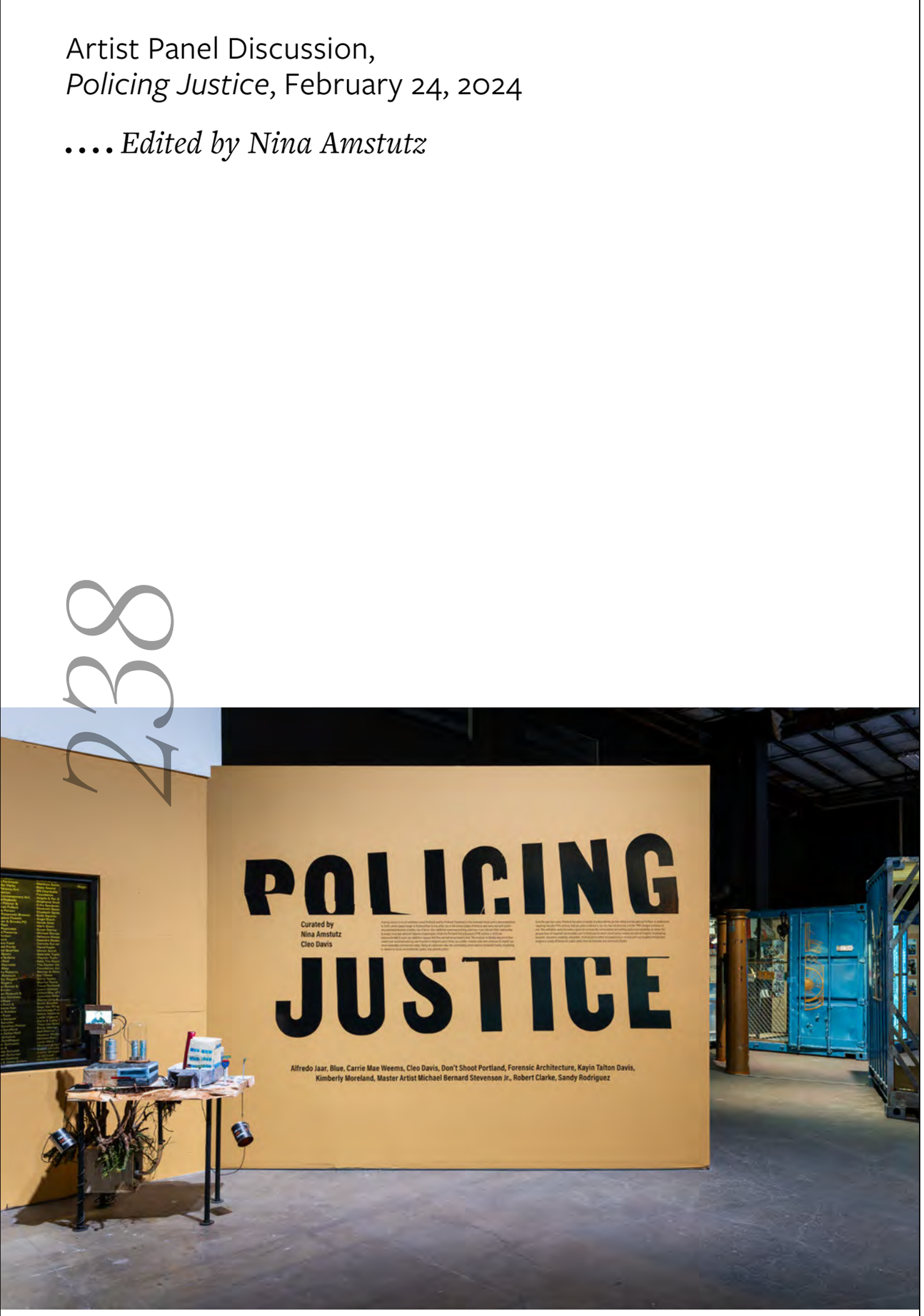
Amelia Rina is a writer, critic, and editor based in Portland, OR, on the unceded territories of the Clackamas, Cowlitz, and many other Tribes along the Wimahl (Columbia) and Whilamut (Willamette) rivers. They are the founder of *Variable West*.

This interview was first published by *Variable West* on November 10, 2023.

We Are Living

Artist Panel Discussion, *Policing Justice*, February 24, 2024

.... *Edited by Nina Amstutz*



Policing Justice opening wall text; installation view of Michael Bernard Stevenson and Blue, *Mapping the Pipeline: The Cottonwood School of Civics and Science*, 2024; Photo: Mario Gallucci

The following text is an edited version of a public panel discussion held on February 24, 2024 in conjunction with the exhibition *Policing Justice* at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA) in Portland, OR, curated by Nina Amstutz and Cleo Davis (February 23–May 19, 2024). Panel participants include: Taishona Carpenter, Robert Clarke, Alfredo Jaar, Kimberly Moreland, Sandy Rodriguez, Master Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr., and Robert Trafford. The panel was moderated by Mac Smiff.

Mac Smiff (MS): I want to start off with a basic question....Everyone here is contributing to an event that talks about policing justice. I would like to understand ...why you chose the piece of art that you did to express this exhibit.

Sandy Rodriguez (SR): In 2020, I created various small studies of national demonstrations against police violence sparked by public killings at the hands of officers. One of these studies, *The First Weekend of Protests*, was included in a solo exhibition at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth, Texas. As time passed, I reflected on these events and began a large-scale, 8-foot by 4-foot map depicting the locations where residents were tear-gassed by local and federal police across the country based on a *New York Times* article. This project started as a personal endeavor, something I felt compelled to create.

In 2022, I met Nina Amstutz, learned about her exhibition, and began sharing ideas with her on the artwork *Tear Gas Map of the United States*, (2021–2023). Over the past few years and through numerous conversations, I decided to expand the 2020 national tear gas map and include additional paintings focusing on the prolonged protests in Portland, such as *Tear Gas—Day No. 26*, *Day No. 57*, and *Day No. 58* (2024). We chose to pair this work with the *Calavera Copter* (2018) to create a comprehensive and evocative presentation.

Alfredo Jaar (AJ): I created *06.01.2020 18:39* in 2022 for the Whitney Biennial in reaction to the brutality and illegality of the way the police in Washington, D.C. treated the protesters in front of the White House. The work was a pure reaction to that event. Nina Amstutz, one of the curators, saw that work in New York and invited me. As always, I requested information and I was very impressed by her exhibition concept, its depth of thinking and the people she had invited. And that is why I'm here. So, she chose that work. I didn't.

Kimberly Moreland (KM): What I love about our exhibit, *BAS RUT 3000* (2024), is that it...goes beyond the Black Lives Matter movement protests; it includes that, but it also expands the definition of policing. We've been policing Black bodies in Oregon since its inception in 1859, when the state included Black exclusion laws that forbade Blacks from settlement here, from real estate transactions to buying land. We couldn't take part in the Oregon Donation Land Claim Act in 1850, and later in the Homestead Act in 1862....We were denied that opportunity to build wealth.

Robert Clarke (RC): I'll just add onto that a little bit. When we were first coming up with the concept of the shipping containers

and what we wanted to contain in them,… how we wanted the Black audience to feel about Black stories was very important. I think the way our stories are being told in the mainstream media sensationalizes our dehumanization. Our project sheds light on important issues, but it also offers joy, it offers hope, it offers all the things that you may want in the future, and a little tablet of why to keep going. We want you to leave this exhibition with your head up with knowledge and… pathways forward. Those were the first ideas of what we wanted to do, and that's when we looked into Afrofuturism and the Black citizen. We created this project from a humanistic standpoint of how we would like to learn history years from now, and what would history say about us and how would we have authorship over Black stories. We tried to figure that out through the design process of not only the content, but how we frame that content, how we lay the contents of that content, and how we bring the human aspect back to these stories.

Master Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr. (MBS): ….During opening night, a lot of people came to this event like it was a party. They were like, this is cool, I love this. And then on the way out, they were all like, actually this is hard stuff. That dichotomy is what is alive for me in *Mapping the Pipeline* (2024). I was approached to do a piece about juvenile justice, to weave that into the larger tapestry. I entertained it, as I do work with young people and I do work in the prison. And it would have required making new connections with young people, which I am doing and want to do. But I didn't want to do it on a timeline and I didn't want to do it directly in service to some sort of deliverable. Those folks are in the most uncomfortable place of their lives. The kind of work that I do and feel is important is supportive work that is actually supporting someone's life to prosper, and that sometimes gets "artified."

Installation view of Black Aesthetic Studio, *BAS RUT 3000*, 2024. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Detail of Black Aesthetic Studio, *BAS RUT 3000*, 2024. Photo: Mario Gallucci

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So, *Mapping the Pipeline* is essentially a justice for juveniles project. It…starts to turn a gaze towards the myriad of circumstance that put a person growing up into a circumstance in which they might get into an altercation with the police. A lot of the collaborators of that project, including my main collaborator who is credited as part of the exhibition, Blue, are formerly incarcerated people. And so I collaborated with formerly incarcerated folks and was able to pay them through the commissioning of the work. But what is also really important to me…is actually doing projects with young people who are healthy and maintaining that healthiness, so that they prosper and are not in circumstances in which they can be brutalized, attacked or killed, etc. I was also able to collaborate with youth groups and will continue to collaborate with youth groups throughout this exhibition to enhance the work. Again, that's the dichotomy that hopefully spurs you all into some form of personal engagement.

Installation view of Michael Bernard Stevenson and Blue, *Mapping the Pipeline: Columbia River Correctional Institution*, 2024. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Installation view of Michael Bernard Stevenson and Blue, *Mapping the Pipeline: Harriet Tubman Middle School*, 2024. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Robert Trafford (RT): Forensic Architecture is primarily an investigative research agency. We think and act through investigative research and by producing investigative materials that we then seek to make operational in different kinds of interventions.

….We're also academic researchers. We want to see what happens when the methodologies that we're working and thinking in—which are based in digital research, visual analysis, open-source investigation—how these change and evolve and what we learn from coming into contact with such rich and situated expertise as I'm sharing the stage with here.

To put a timeline to it, we were also doing mapping and documenting work around the 2020 protests and trying to serve

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as a sort of locus for documentation of police violence against protesters, journalists, legal observers, and medics, and trying to turn that mapping into something that could support accountability efforts. We ended up submitting some of that research, for example, to a handful of UN bodies…. But we find it is actually much more valuable, interesting, and ultimately richer for us to come to spaces like this and to see that work activated in conversation with experience. So that's the spirit that we come in. It was around that time, 2020, 2021 that we were fortunate enough to meet Nina Amstutz and to begin a long conversation, which drew us towards working on Portland and transferring some of that attention specifically to this city. That produced the first video, the *Tear Gas Tuesday* piece.

As we were in the closing stages of producing that film we came back into contact with an old friend, a really excellent investigative reporter and researcher, Rob Mackey, and through him we were able to make contact with the survivors of the Normandale Park mass shooting. Robert had done really fearless work to gain the trust of those survivors and witnesses, and we are forever indebted that that opportunity came to us to help them tell that story and to offer the methodologies that we think through in terms of investigating and analyzing a moment like that, …its causes and consequences, the fabric in which it is sewn, to bring those techniques into contact again with the situated experience of the witnesses and survivors.

Taishona Carpenter (TC): We did *The Center of Injustice* (2024), which is a new piece [created in collaboration with Media Pollution]. A lot of the installation work we do is based on year-round programing that we have through Don't Shoot Portland….This is the first time that we've done something on this scale, and it was mostly to lift up ten years of advocacy work that we've done. And when I say we, I do mean Don't Shoot Portland, but I also mean Teressa Raiford, my mom…. She has done so much for this city and for survivors of gun violence and racial violence….She has inspired my ability to do this work because it is very difficult, the subject matter is very difficult and upsetting. We just wanted to be able to affirm every single person that has been on the front lines the last ten plus years.

We were saying recently, there's a center of injustice in every city, and that can mean literally what it means. There's a place where you're supposed to feel like you can get justice, there's a place where you feel like you can

Previous spread:
Installation view of Forensic Architecture, *From Toxic Air to Toxic Language* (The Murder of June Knightly), 2023–24. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Below:
Installation view of Forensic Architecture, *From Toxic Air to Toxic Language*, 2023–24. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Following spread:
Installation view of Forensic Architecture, *From Toxic Air to Toxic Language*, 2023–24. Photo: Mario Gallucci

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count on your representatives, and that doesn't happen. It's not a reality that a lot of us face. A lot of us are dealing with trauma. We're dealing with sudden tragedy or loss of life. And those people have sought out Don't Shoot Portland, again, Teressa Raiford as a critical response source. And through that we've been able to help get justice for people, get accountability for people, make sure that their stories are actually told rather than the media misleading our communities and actually making things a lot worse for the survivors of these attacks.

Portland, Oregon, as you can see in this *Policing Justice* exhibit,…the history of this city and state is extremely violent. All these works speak to this history. It is a lot to reckon with and to know about and to acknowledge. And the communities of resistance that have been born here, people that are not even from Portland that have sought this place out as a beautiful place where you can express yourself and be yourself and love yourself and be celebrated for that, unfortunately they have been drawn here under false pretenses. When you're here, you realize that you are now a part of these communities of resistance, regardless of whether that's intentional or not, it could just literally be in your daily life.

We wanted *The Center of Injustice* to show that there has been a timeline of violence here in Portland and globally, but also to show that it really does matter when community can speak up, not be afraid to speak on what's going on, the injustices, and to show up, because that's how you create community and that's how you can create love and continue to show up even in the face of tragedy.

We never know what the next day is going to give, especially when you're fighting for loved ones you've lost. When you come together in protest and you make art together, you are able to express yourself and unite. I think that's extremely important, so that is why we brought the piece here.

….With that scale, I think everyone feels the history of ten years; everyone feels the efforts of so many individual people: lawyers, activists, street medics, corkers, people that keep us safe and want to change the world….

MS: ….Tai, I met your mother years ago on the ground, just walking these streets, marching, fists in the air. I credit Teressa all the time for a lot of the work that I do because she taught me how to discern where I should and shouldn't be and how to trust people that say that they are on your side. I distinctly recall, I think it was the Mike Brown protests, walking across the bridge over the I-5 corridor at Skidmore and Teressa walking us through the history of Kendra James, which I lived here for and watched on the news, but her talking us through this, I realized that not only is she a historian on these things, but also that her family and your family have been directly impacted in so many ways, as so many of our families have by police violence, police injustice, police lies, and police schemes. So the question I have for you, after all that, is: how emotional, how difficult is it for you to go out there and put 400/500 pages of history that directly impacts you and your lineage on the wall for everyone to see?…

TC: I love wheat pasting. I think it's fun; it's meditative as well. And I'm so familiar with the content that I know it's not fun, but I am in love with the way that—even though I know this is going to come down—it feels like forever when you're looking at those pages and you're throwing them up in this pattern. And I know it's very repetitive, I know it goes to the ceiling, but that was a very specific vision, because as an installation artist I think it is incredibly important to take up as much space as you can, physically. You want to create an immersive environment, and I think that we did that because you can see the history of the state. There are pages pulled from legislative policy, there are pages from

Detail of Don't Shoot Portland, *The Center of Injustice*, 2024. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Following spread: Installation view of Don't Shoot Portland, *The Center of Injustice*, 2024. Photo: Mario Gallucci

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a petition against Negroes settling in Albina, there is racist propaganda from the desks of public officials that have been made public record; imagine that, people were so comfortable creating and reproducing and sharing all sorts of disgusting things. The importance of being able to show that in a way that everyone can see it and be reminded of it, is that I think data gives you a shield in a way, if you are speaking about very real issues.

Some people do not want you to say those things or bring light to them. A single phrase like Black Lives Matter can be misconstrued and misunderstood and someone can get violent towards you over that. When people see the writing on the wall themselves, if you're upset and you want to target me, that's fine, but how about you go and read some more? How about you go and read the history? If you recognize someone's name on that petition and you happen to live in that home, or that happens to be your…twelve generations of Oregonians, maybe you have something to reckon with or talk about with your family, not with me.

So for me, this art is a protective barrier. It's a vehicle for communication. It can create conversations that people are tired of having, that people shouldn't keep having to have. So in a way it's difficult, but it's also affirming.

I also love that I'm giving people an opportunity to self-educate…I think that's such a beautiful opportunity. It's a learning opportunity and you can expand yourself, you can deepen your knowledge, you can deepen your advocacy and your views in order to care for each other more deeply in this world. So it is vulnerable, but I think on a large scale like this, people need to see that.

Installation view of Black Aesthetic Studio, *BAS RUT 3000*, 2024. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Following spread:
Installation view of Black Aesthetic Studio, *BAS RUT 3000*, 2024. Photo: Mario Gallucci

MS: We have talked a lot about 2020. And this exhibit obviously talks a lot about 2020, because that was a real flashpoint for us in this city and really across the world when it comes to the greater understanding of the threats of policing in general, not just at tragic times, but just in general.

***BAS RUT 3000* goes out to the year 3000. We often talk about policing, the problems in policing, how we're going to fix it. We deal with these things, but we don't always talk about how to imagine a better future and what those futures could look like. This particular project with the really large blue shipping containers, …with the Afrofuturism and all that, it talks about a better future. It talks about a future for Black people that is self-reliant and self-determined….**

…As you were putting together the past, the present, the future, the far future, how do you transition in your minds from where we are now to opening that gate toward liberation and self-determination and creating the future that we want to see?

KM: One of the questions we asked in that Afrofuturism time capsule is, what is your utopia? ….What is a society where we're not policed, where there is true justice,…where Blacks can walk freely without having to be afraid for their lives? It's not a normal experience for us, I don't care what age you are. I mean, how do we live in a place of peace? So I love Robert Clarke's interpretations of Afrofuturism. And I think we're beginning to see a lot of that, such as through the Black Panther movie, where they imagined a society where we are powerful and our brilliance shines. It is really about knowing who we are. We are all of that now, and we come from a rich culture, but we were told to forget about that culture. To me, when I look at some of the images, it's really reapplying our historical place to the future, where we came from, where we were doctors and lawyers and philosophers, going back to who we are, knowing who we are, what we're made of.

RC: This concept of the year 3000 started a little bit with a group we work with AVT, Albina Vision Trust, and they did a 50-year plan of reclaiming Albina, building that back up, bringing in Black families that were displaced and reestablishing wealth, education centers, and really having a thriving city that has its own authorship and jurisdiction.

• I Am Alive • • You Are Alive • • • They Are Alive • • • • We Are Living

And so for casting that forward, it was a thought experiment: if the 50 year plan is a breadcrumb, what would the cookie look like? And so we first were looking at the 50 year plan, but then looking back at the bigger historical identity of the African diaspora, we started looking at 15th-century African civilizations that were experiencing their golden age during the European Dark Ages and the cities that were prospering during that time, in times of peace, in times of economic prosperity, and then going further back to the cradle of civilization, looking at Egyptian and Nubian empires and seeing the architecture and societies and the laws and the languages and the peoples and the flourishing that happened there, and having a bigger understanding of the African identity that does not start at the movement here and the stories that were told about where we came from. Understanding that we come from a place of prosperity, a culture of prosperity, a culture of self-authorship, of identity and spirituality that manifests itself and through our thriving civilizations that have been infiltrated by certain forces.

We have established tremendous, thriving civilizations throughout the history of this world. Looking into the year 3000, how can we protect that from interference? And the history of Portland has a tremendous amount of interference from certain forces…How do we create something beautiful and protect that, not for ten years, not for 50 years, but a Pax Romana, a thousand years of prosperity and beyond that?…. How do we learn from the past, the beauty and the tragedy of history, and use that as a device to create positivity out of negativity and create a world we want to live in.

MS: Sandy, when you first walk into the exhibition, there is a tricked out fancy helicopter. You have a name for it. Can you tell us more about the helicopters and where they came from? You use them a lot in your art, they're pretty prominent, and the giant one is pretty impressive. Tell us more about that.

SR: In 2000, a statewide proposition in California, known as Proposition 21, was introduced. This proposition, related to the Three Strikes Law, mandated that juveniles be tried as adults and reclassified certain misdemeanors as felonies for infractions that had previously been treated as misdemeanors, such as defacing a bus bench. Living in Los Angeles and being aware of the legislation that disproportionately affected young people of color by funneling them into the prison-industrial complex, I saw an opportunity to bring attention to this issue through an exhibition I titled "Three Strikes."

In this exhibition, I created monumental 19th-century American Western-style paintings depicting several prisons in Los Angeles. Additionally, I designed a series of Calavera copters, inspired by the LAPD's fleet of helicopters that patrol the city and county. Over the years, these copters have evolved. The initial Calavera copters, which featured skull-faced LAPD helicopters, were small mobiles reminiscent of those seen over a baby's carriage, with the idea of projecting light through them and projecting dozens of copters overhead.

As part of the exhibition, I installed an artwork where I painted militarized police figures using pearlescent white paint on a flat white background. This installation included motion sensors with blue and red lights mounted in each corner. There were also three sets of footprint outlines I painted on the floor, highlighting the notion that if three people dressed similarly—such as in black, a common choice for art gallery attendees—they could be perceived as being in a gang and subsequently arrested. This element played with the audience's understanding and interaction with the work.

• I Am Alive • • You Are Alive • • • They Are Alive • • • • We Are Living

The Calavera copters have evolved over the past 20 years, adapting to new stories and narratives that are crucial to tell.

MS: One thing I like about your art, Sandy, is that it carries these themes. And if you're looking at it, you have to keep on looking at it, because all these themes keep on going through it, like these Calavera choppers. And just the idea and heaviness of that, that we're constantly being surveilled and not just here but in cities across the country and across the world, we really are being surveilled by the same apparatus that we're all here talking about.

I wanted to jump back over to Robert Trafford. Robert, you took on a very heavy piece, a piece I have not been able to watch all the way through yet. …There are so many parts to it. That same surveillance system and carceral system, …it makes a point to confuse us. Confusing us is not an accident. Putting out the wrong information, every single police report, …is not an accident. Creating headlines that then change over time to the truth eventually after no one cares anymore is not an accident. When we talk about our homegrown tragedy here at Normandale, you and Rob Mackey made a whole film about this…. There are a million stories out there. Only a few of them are true. I want to understand what your process was in…deciding what all to put in the film.

RT: It's a good question. We conducted many more hours of interviews with the witnesses and survivors than we see in that film. …What did we want to put in that story, in that film, which parts of that story? It's like you said, Mac, Normandale Park is one of a great number of tragedies that Portland has suffered, …and it's an honor even to tell one of those stories. There are certain things about these interviewees and the way that they work, the way that they see the world, that we share with them. They think in maps. Maps and satellite imagery and remote sensing are part of our fundamental methodology, the way that we see and understand the world and tell stories about it. We were also just instinctively taken by what a community practice corking is. And I don't want to focus only on the corkers because we know that through them we see that there are so many networks of situated experience and situated knowledge, knowledge which is now symbiotic with Portland's geography and what Portland is and who is here. Those corkers, for example, they might have a claim to be able to do that role better than anyone else in the world. I don't need to tell you how long Portland was out in the streets for in 2020, 2021, and since. For us to get to work around that was really rewarding, and it doesn't stop there. We see through them what an incredible network there is with so many similar stories. So we wanted the film to tell some of that as well.

The story of the incident is bookended by what corking is and what police misinformation is in this case. We talk a lot at Forensic Architecture about these incidents having a kind of double violence to them. There is obviously the violence of the incident, the often kinetic, the physical violence and what horror that was. But then there is also this long and slow and drawn out and

Previous spread:
Detail of Sandy Rodriguez, *Tear Gas Map of the United States of America in 2020*, 2020–23. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Below:
Installation view of Sandy Rodriguez, *Tear Gas – Day No. 26, Day No. 57, Day No. 58*, 2024. Photo: Mario Gallucci

enduring violence of this lie. And again, I'm at pains to reinforce that this stands for so many other cases in this city. We see that even still. The last response we got from the Portland police was that "no, we've corrected the statement." What do you do when somebody says they've done something, and it's not there?

We're just so happy to be here with you all to figure out what kinds of new responses to that fundamental lying and that long, slow violence we can create in a space like this.

MS: Speaking to that policing misinformation piece, it was recently brought to my attention that even in the trial, the D.A. corrected the record for the police to say what actually happened. The D.A, who works with the police, intentionally went on the record to say, hey, what the police said, it was wrong, this is what actually happened. And the police followed up by saying, yeah, we made a mistake a couple of times in the beginning and we fixed that on our record. But that doesn't change any of the impact of the lies that occurred in the beginning. So thank you so much for capturing those things. I know it means a lot to a lot of people here in our community....

RT: ....It is one of the hardest stories we've had to tell, because of the material that we have available. Really, it's quite shocking. One of the things that you'll see in that film is a practice that we use that we call situated testimony; it's a way of using digital models to interview. We've worked with this methodology maybe 10 to 12 times now and something that we find very commonly across the interviewees or witnesses and survivors that work with us in this practice, is that they very routinely come to understand themselves as very close collaborators, co-investigators, co-producers of that story. There is something about a digital model of a scene where something terrible has happened to an individual, that it both is and is not that space. And we find that our interviewees, who we bring into this conversation with this model with a great deal of care, we find that they come back to something, an event that they were so passive within, that was really things happening to them and quite shocking things, with such creativity and productivity that breeds so generative. It breeds a kind of co-creation. I guess I want to say it wasn't just us that made that film.

MS: ....This carceral violence that we're talking about is not a thing that's unique to us. It often seems like it is, but it's been seen in other places as well around the world.

Alfredo, you have seen things in a lot of places and you came here and you developed this film.... It's a very enveloping experience that feels a lot like being in a protest, a very intense protest.... I was like, yeah, I'm in a protest right now, but I had to stop myself and say, no, I'm in an exhibit right now, this is not real. It is real, but it's not real for me right now. You've got a great mind. I'm still trying to get my pulse on you because you're evasive with the answer sometimes. I'm going to try to get a question that's going to really nail you in.... I know that the curators asked for this exhibit, and I can 1,000% understand why, as it ties a lot of things together and it creates a feeling that is hard to find anywhere else. I say it's 10 out of 10. What are your experiences, though, outside of the U.S. when it comes to police, incarceration, fascism? ...I know you have







Robert Trafford of Forensic Architecture, Alfredo Jaar, Kimberly Moreland, Master Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr., Robert A. Clarke, Sandy Rodriguez, and Taishona Carpenter of Don't Shoot Portland speaking in *Policing Justice* Artist Panel Discussion, February 24, 2024. Photo: Ali Gradischer

a lot of history on you, … I know that there's more about this, it's not just the George Floyd protests that drove you. Give us some historical context as to what drove you to be this person that you are.

AJ: How do I do this?… Well, on Tuesday, September 11, 1973, I was in the kitchen with five brothers and sisters, having breakfast. This is in Santiago, Chile. And in the middle of the breakfast, my father came into the kitchen and said, "children, I am not taking you to school today." We were shocked. We asked, "why, Daddy, what happened?" He responded, "Something very grave has happened," and he couldn't say more. This was our September 11. That day a military coup took place and our democratically elected socialist president, Salvador Allende, was killed and a military dictatorship started that lasted 17 years. I was 17 years old when it started, and it changed my life and it changed the life of my generation. It changed the life of my country. I lived under a curfew for many years. We couldn't leave the house after 8p.m. We didn't have parties because more than three people together was considered a political meeting, so there were no parties for my generation. For many years we lived under censorship. Thousands of people disappeared, a million-people left Chile and went into exile. As you may know, this military intervention, this coup was funded by the CIA, courtesy of Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Nixon. This is just one intervention out of 393 interventions in the world by this country. So, when we talk about the brutality that we see in our streets, the repression, the injustice, it is really just a small mirror of what this country is doing outside of the borders of the United States, unfortunately.

Installation view of Alfredo Jaar, *06.01.2020 18.39*, 2022. Photo: Mario Gallucci

The United States funded many coups around the world and particularly in Latin America, they also created a military school for officers from different local armed forces, from Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and so on. They taught these officers how to torture and how to kill dissidents. One of the systems they taught these officers of how to kill was using helicopters. Basically, they would take a dissident and would tie their feet, put a weight on their feet, a weight that was equivalent to at least twice the weight of that person. And then they would take them on a ride on a helicopter and would throw them alive in the sea. And of course, the weight at their feet would bring them down. So, when you were a prisoner and they asked you "what is your weight?" you knew what that meant.

This image of the helicopter throwing bodies is the one that I have in my brain, I cannot help it. So when I observed what happened in DC that day on June 1st, 2020, first the violence with the bullets and the tear gas, and so on, but then they brought in the helicopters, I immediately thought about Chile. What they did in DC was extremely illegal and extremely dangerous. In my film, you will see that one of the helicopters is one foot away from the roof of one of the buildings. If the pilot had gone just one second lower, it would have fallen down on the protesters. This would have been a major tragedy. And what shocked me more than this fact, this completely illegal, brutal fact, was that it was reported in three lines in the newspapers, three lines, and I couldn't believe it. The docility of the US media is revolting. But that is also another issue, that is another story, that is another project. But I need to mention that I was shocked to realize that, too. So that is what moved me to do this work. And of course, that, as you suggested, reflects my personal sentiments about helicopters and US interventions in general. Everything is connected, sadly. So as an observer of international politics, I see what is happening here, but when I observe what is happening in other countries around the world, I see the US very often in the shadows organizing it, it is just part of the same system….

MS: ….Michael, … you've got a piece here that you worked on with a giant group, more than 20 people. You guys have mapped out

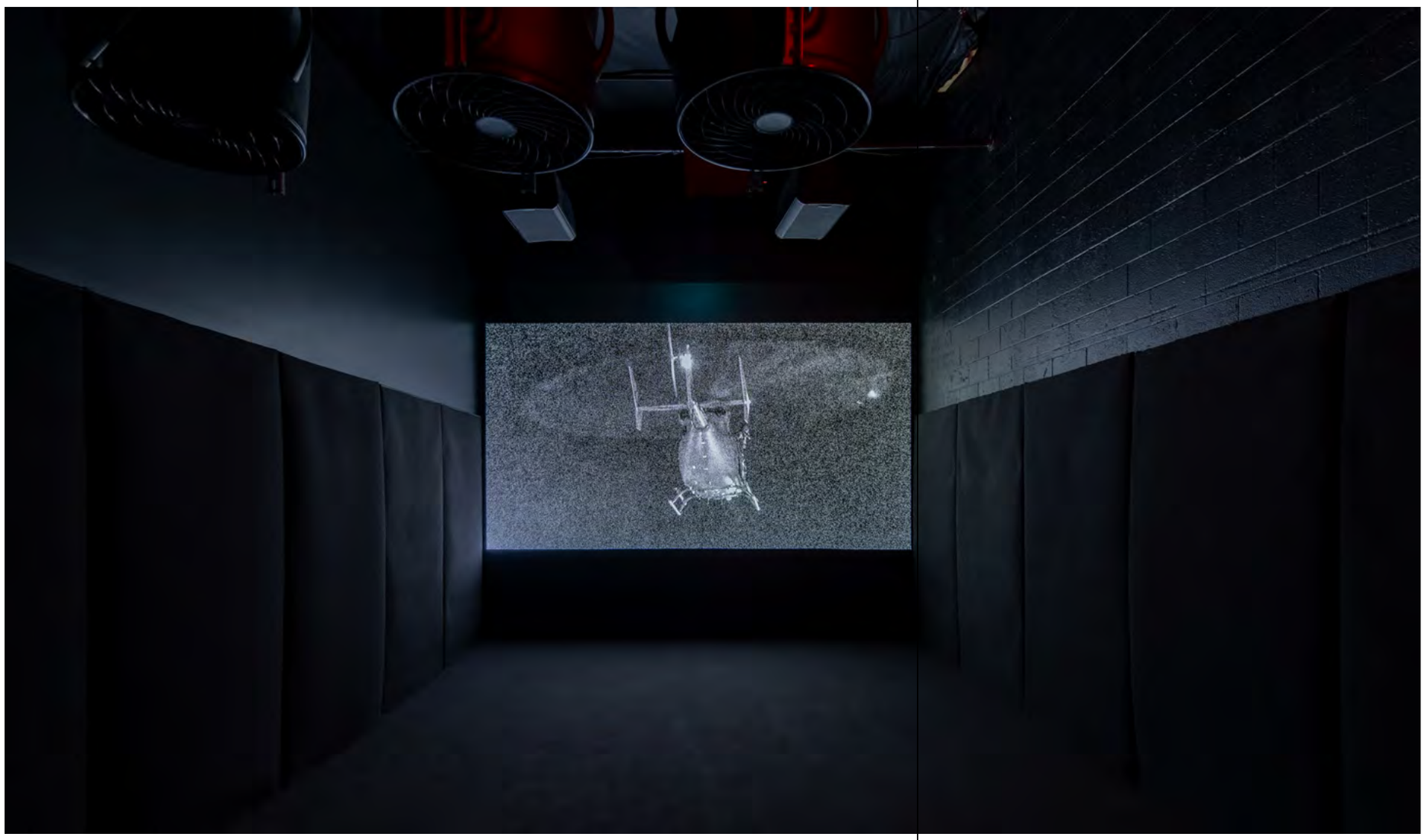
neighborhoods on wood [tables] and then you guys are talking about and discussing the impacts of environment.

We talked a bit in Alfredo's piece about how everything is connected, and while policing is one thing specifically, we've also discussed today how policing is really a lot of things. It is not just the police. There are so many ways that we are policed as people, especially around brown people in this country, and also as handicapped people I've learned these the last few months. It's very difficult….

Michael, your piece works on schools. The school to prison pipeline, environmental impacts at schools and neighborhoods, how they are impacted by environmental violence, by zoning violence, political violence, which is somehow often fueled by the police, or perhaps less fueled and more enforced by the culture of policing that we have than the actual police.

Talk to us a bit about what your exhibits show and what you want people to see when they look at the images of the schools, of the roads, the signs, of the police figures. What do you want people to take away from that?

MBS: ….For those of you who may have seen less of the show, my own work is deeply connected to the other disparate pieces within the larger gallery space. The Cottonwood School of Civics and Science was essentially what really inspired the larger work.



Installation view of Alfredo Jaar, *06.01.2020 18.39*, 2022. Photo: Mario Gallucci

I learned through talking with Nina Amstutz and Cleo Davis that part of the studies that were done were during the protests of the ICE facility, which is also on this map…along I-5. This is a facility that houses the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, US Department of Homeland Security and the Office of Homeland Security…. And I learned that during the protests when they gassed everyone, they essentially poisoned the soil to this elementary school. That was a really impactful sentiment to me as an artist, activist, community organizer, etc.

My relationship to art is peculiar. This tier of exhibition and presentation is not my focal point. My focal point is in community. And so I was looking for a way into this conversation and the symbolism of poisoning the soil to a primary school education center is, I feel like that's it, I don't have to explain it.

Embedded in all of these islands to help you find your way, … there is several hours of audio and video content. The video at the Cottonwood School site we were able to get through … Juniper Simonis, who was there and collected a lot of footage of that gassing. It's crazy, if you're looking at the video, you hear them say, "they're fogging this place, I got to get out of here." And then you hear them say, "oh my God, are they gassing the school? This is a school, the kids are trying to be at the school." … You can hear the desperation in the voice of this activist who's being poisoned and is concerned about the future of society.

Also on that island, I was able to interview two students who go to that school and it was a really interesting interview because I didn't want to freak them out by telling them that the cops are in their backyard. But I was able to talk to their mother, who has already kind of debriefed. They're in a Black household, so there's a lot of that. She's wanting this kind of engagement. And one of the two brothers, Kaleel, actually saw a woman get ejected from the ICE facility. And it was so compelling to him that … he did all this research on ICE. So when I asked in this interview, "do you know that building?" He's like, "well, actually, I do know, let me tell you all about ICE." Also in the video and in the interview is his brother, Kamari, whose mother, at the end of the interview said, "do you want to read your poem?" …. It's essentially a perpetual reciting of,

> "I can't breathe. Stop. You're hurting me. I can't breathe. Stop." He's like, eight or nine. When we're talking about poisoning the soil, these are young, resilient boys who have a wonderful household and they go to school and they are poised to be community leaders, world leaders, but he pulls out this old poem he has, "I can't breathe." This is the kind of stuff we're sitting with. So the soil is poisoned, even if it's non-chemical, in the ideologies, in the way that we feel, children feel. So that's the beginning.

Nina Amstutz is an art historian and curator based at the University of Oregon. She completed her PhD in the History of Art at the University of Toronto and was subsequently a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Department of Paintings and Sculpture at the Yale Center for British Art. Nina's research explores the boundaries between art and nature, and the relationship between the human and nonhuman since the 18th century. As a curator, she is particularly interested in work that supports environmental justice.

Taishona (Tai) Carpenter (she/her) is a writer, gallerist and community archivist with a passion for social impact in the realms of art and civil rights. She is also the founder of *Compose Yourself Magazine*, an independent online publication spotlighting music, culture and social justice. She has curated political art installations, facilitated panel discussions and organized artmaking workshops centered on civic action with Portland Art Museum, University of Oregon's Special Collections and University Archives, Society of American Archivists, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Shift Collective and Documenting the Now, among others. Her work allows her to intersect two passions, art and civil rights, to create a more equitable and creative world by utilizing critical research to facilitate dialogues around art in relation to current social movements. Tai is currently the Board President of Don't Shoot Portland, a community-based advocacy nonprofit and Director of The Black Gallery. Most recently she was Gallery Coordinator for the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at Portland State University, Gallery Manager at HOLDING Contemporary and an Archives & Records Management Coordinator at the City of Portland Archives.

Robert A. Clarke is Assistant Professor of Architecture at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. As a designer, educator, and theorist practicing at the intersection of culture, identity, and architecture, Robert aims to develop and canonize Black aesthetics, thus authenticating it as a lens through which to practice architecture. His design office, BAS (Black Aesthetic Studio) was founded by him with Cleo Davis and Kimberly Moreland; their studio explores how to unearth new aesthetics that are immensely specific to African American culture, experience, and identity. Previously, Robert was Activist-in-Residence at UCLA's City Lab, Wilson Smith III Design in Spatial Justice Fellow at the University of Oregon's College of Design, as well as Research Fellow at Newlab under the supervision of architect and New York University Associate Professor of Practice Mitchell Joachim. Before opening his practice Clarke worked for many years at architectural firms across the globe including HOK, Terreform ONE, Gensler, and Archi-Union.

Installation view of Carrie Mae Weems, *Painting the Town #4*, 2021; Michael Bernard Stevenson and Blue, *Mapping the Pipeline: Columbia River Correctional Institution*, 2024. Photo: Mario Gallucci

Alfredo Jaar is an artist, architect, and filmmaker who lives and works in New York. His work has been shown extensively around the world. He has participated in the Biennales of Venice (1986, 2007, 2009, 2013), São Paulo (1987, 1989, 2010, 2021), as well as Documenta in Kassel (1987, 2002). Important individual exhibitions include The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1992); Whitechapel, London (1992); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (1994); The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1995); and The Museum of Contemporary Art,

Rome (2005). Major recent surveys of his work have taken place at Musée des Beaux Arts, Lausanne (2007); Hangar Bicocca, Milan (2008); Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlinische Galerie and Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, Berlin (2012); Rencontres d'Arles (2013); KIASMA, Helsinki (2014); Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK (2017), Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town, South Africa (2020) and SESC Pompeia, São Paulo (2021). The artist has realized more than seventy public interventions around the world. Over sixty monographic publications have been published about his work. He became a Guggenheim Fellow in 1985 and a MacArthur Fellow in 2000. He received the Hiroshima Art Prize in 2018 and the Hasselblad Award in 2020. His work can be found in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art and Guggenheim Museum, New York; Art Institute of Chicago and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; MOCA and LACMA, Los Angeles; MASP, Museu de Arte de São Paulo; TATE, London; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Centro Reina Sofia, Madrid; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; MAXXI and MACRO, Rome; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaeck; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art and Tokushima Modern Art Museum, Japan; M+, Hong Kong; and dozens of institutions and private collections worldwide.

Kimberly Stowers Moreland, MBA, MURP, is wife of Michael L. Moreland and the mother of four amazing young adults: Katherine, Mike Jr., Kristen, and Karina. She owns Moreland Resource Consulting and has over 25+ years of experience in the public sector, urban and historic preservation, community development, and urban planning in Portland, Tacoma, and Salem. Moreland serves as the President of the Oregon Black Pioneers, and their mission is to preserve the history of Black Oregonians. On behalf of the Oregon Black Pioneers, she authored *Images of America: African Americans of Portland* (Arcadia Publisher). She is the Vice-Chair of the Portland Historic Landmark Commission and a member of the Portland Landmark Commission. As a community historian, Kimberly has documented Portland's Black history for 30+ years. As a city planner with the City of Portland, she worked with the community advisory committee and local historians to produce the History of Portland's African American History (1805 to the Present). She was on the project team that produced Cornerstones of Community: The Buildings of Portland's African American History, published in 1995. She was subsequently involved in the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) history project, which builds on the Cornerstones research to produce African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, from 1851 to 1973. This research brings attention to sites related to Portland's Black history so they can be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In 2023, she partnered with Robert A. Clarke and Cleo Davis to establish Black Aesthetic Studio (BAS).

Sandy Rodriguez is a Los Angeles-based Chicana artist and researcher. Her ongoing series Codex Rodriguez-Mondragón is a collection of maps and paintings about the intersections of history, social memory, contemporary politics, and cultural production. Her works are in the permanent collections of Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, AR; Amon Carter Museum, TX; The Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Garden, CA; Denver Art Museum, CO. She was awarded the 2023 Jacob Lawrence Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, 2023 Hermitage Greenfield Prize, Caltech-Huntington Art + Research Residency, Creative Capital Award, and Migrations Initiative from Mellon Foundation's Just Futures Initiative and Global Cornell. Rodriguez and her work have been featured in *BBC News*: *In The Studio*, *Hyperallergic*, *LA Weekly*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, Spectrum News 1, and others.

Mac Smiff is a longtime journalist focused on Northwest culture for outlets such as *The Oregonian*, *Portland Mercury*, *Vortex Music Magazine*, and his own vehicle, *We Out Here Magazine*. Well known for holding police and government entities accountable, as well as his call to Defund The Police, his social justice activism has been chronicled by the *New York Times*, *LA Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Intercept*, *NPR*, *Rolling Stone*, and others. A professional problem solver, his hobbies include gardening and raising children who understand basketball analogies.

Master Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr. is Black, Italian, Queer, Nonbinary, Neurodivergent, and practices primarily in America. Their collaborative approach results in artwork by and for the people. Stevenson's practice has been dedicated to supporting young people ages 4 to 18 in developing the necessary skills to encourage advanced imaginative thinking and self-confident expression. In 2019 they developed the Afro Contemporary Art Class at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School which has had many forms since, including Afro Futurist February, and three years of Fred Hampton Summer Camp. Supporting community efforts as well, taking the shape of support for the effort to Save Dr. Martin Luther King School from being displaced by the expansion of Interstate 5, which has triggered the need to move Harriet Tubman Middle School. Stevenson is currently working in the Albina community to develop a Living Archive at Jefferson High School with students, community, and the architectural design team. Stevenson also has a robust portfolio of artist projects centering food and gathering around it, projects involving sculpture, drawing, and photography, and new work in collaboration with currently and formerly incarcerated folks. These include Tin Can Phone, a podcast all about life in and outside of prison, and Gallery Blue, a curation and exhibition project both of which are owned and operated by formerly incarcerated individuals. Stevenson pursues these professional and creative goals passionately because they believe that empowered and open-minded young people and communities are the best and most direct way toward ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for all.

Robert Trafford is Assistant Director of Communications at Forensic Architecture, a research agency based at Goldsmiths, University of London, that investigates human rights violations including violence committed by states, police forces, militaries, and corporations. His role involves open-source research, data mining and analysis, as well as writing and editing for scripts and exhibitions, and occasional reporting. He is also a project coordinator. He completed an MA in Investigative Journalism at City University of London in 2017, gaining a distinction. He previously studied Philosophy and Theology at Jesus College, University of Oxford, graduating with first class honours. Before joining Forensic Architecture, Robert was a freelance journalist, including reporting on the refugee crisis from France and Greece. His work has appeared in *The Intercept*, *The Times*, the *Independent*, and elsewhere.

A Conversation with Ralph Pugay

.... *Roz Crews*

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Ralph Pugay, *Dog Stabbing Contest*, 2010. Acrylic on panel, 16 × 20 in. Courtesy the artist and Upfor Gallery. Photo: Mario Gallucci

In May 2024, I sat down for a Zoom call with painter Ralph Pugay—a Portland-based artist whose work I've adored for nearly a decade. First, we dove into Ralph's paintings to identify some of the philosophical and political notions that he's explored over time: "The Nature of Existence," "Cultural Dynamics and Identity," "Social Systems and Institutional Management," and "Survival and Coping Mechanisms." These are categories Ralph gave his own work based on groupings of paintings that I suggested for discussion. We had a plan, we logged on, and what came next was unpredictable.

That's what I love about Ralph—his willingness to meander and wade through the mess of everyday life until he makes something stunning that ruminates on the truest forms of humanity. We ended up with a conversation that unpacked the relevance of transformation, world building, and mindful living within his painting practice. We've rambled together before—making projects in schools and corporate hotels—so as our conversation morphed through topics like video game design, haunted theme parks in Singapore, Hell and the like, I felt confident in our ability to circle until we found ourselves on the right track.

Living with Ralph's work and being in his orbit makes me feel valid as the queer weirdo I am—less alone, and able to stay grounded in the here and now, even while I dissociate. What else could I want from a painting? From a friend? I'm endlessly grateful for having this extraordinary person in my life, and honored to share the conversation that follows.

• • • •

Transformation

Roz Crews (RC): Ralph, when I left Portland in 2020, you were so generous, and offered me a parting gift—a painting of my choice from your studio! I remember carefully looking at years' worth of images, and reflecting on your rich imagination. I was trying to decide which story from your world would enter the realm of my daily life. In my own art, I'm constantly experimenting with and commenting on social dynamics, primarily through research-based social practice interventions. I related to your work, in part, because I knew I wanted to live with people from your universe—but I wasn't sure which ones. I landed on the painting *Dog Stabbing Contest* (2010) because I was excited by the complicated implications of the work.

I've lived with the piece now for four years in three states and four homes, and I'm happy to report that the painting is a true conversation starter. My partner and I both work in museums, and we're around art every day—yet we rarely see images like this one. Hanging such a strange and violent picture in our living room has opened up possibilities for serious discussion—and outbursts!

In the simplest terms, guests are mortified when they see this painting, and they comment on the blood and destruction of household pets: *I thought you loved dogs!* One friend, a curator of contemporary art and a vegetarian, was on the verge of tears when he saw it. Luckily, I was there to provide context, and to share a more nuanced explanation than a gallery label could. This work has transformed how I relate to interpretation as a museum professional, and it's challenged my expectations of what a work of art should do, and maybe even what the role of an artist is in society.

Would you ever expect a painting to transform someone?

Ralph Pugay (RP): Well, I don't expect someone to take up skydiving because a Rothko really moved them. But I think a painting that gives someone a feeling of being alive again, something to think about, an insightful topic for conversation or an unrecognized experience in their body, can be transformative and have a lasting impact.

I think the sensibility of my work comes from moving to the United States and seeing my family navigate the trauma of that experience. I witnessed people close to me responding to the urgency of alien cultural realities through different trauma responses. As a young person, I was able to both connect and disconnect via the internet and video games. I enjoy divergent-ness in my work because it has a pace that feels similar to these formative events in my life.

I consider my practice to be transformative for me in that it provides a place to practice shadow work as well as be attentive to my experience of my own body and spirit. I'm aware that other people might not experience my artwork in this way. I balance this out by always being aware that part of my practice is also presenting my work to an audience, but I don't see myself as a person who feels compelled to be prescriptive. I'm thinking about painting and exhibition-building as a form of constructing visual poetry. I absorb things from the world—mostly from my everyday experience and internet culture. I process both, and I present them in the way the work needs me to.

I'm trying to sort out how to taxonomize themes in my work, and this conversation feels like a good opportunity to do that. It feels like my practice has been an ongoing existential negotiation between what I see it as, what I want it to be, what I fear it might be, and what it is in actuality. Themes recur, but they also transform and meander and take shape in ways that I wouldn't expect. Sometimes they go places I don't want them to, but I try to remind myself that my practice is living alongside and in front of me, and I roll with it.

I love that you've lived with *Dog Stabbing Contest* for four years now, and that it's brought about transformation in how you relate to people in your home.

RC: I love the attentiveness to your own body, and the needs it requests from your painting practice. To have a productive place to do shadow work is like having a warm home to come back to, a place to twist things around and get back to where you want to be. How would you talk about *Dog Stabbing Contest* within the theme of transformation?

RP: In 2009, when I painted it, I was thinking about the enjoyment I got from watching reality TV while getting used to living in the United States. It helped me acknowledge that people do a number of unusual things to make money and feel seen. I was thinking about this

Ralph Pugay, *A Creature Open to Metaphors,* 2018. Acrylic on linen, 12 × 16 in. Courtesy the artist and Upfor Gallery. Photo: Mario Gallucci

painting as a reality show where there's a contest, but the contest is to stab a bunch of dogs. Whoever stabs the most dogs wins.

As I'm looking at the painting on my screen now, I'm reminded that I painted the contestants' faces as feeling somewhat distressed, as if they're not angry, or as if they're not enjoying what it is that they're doing. They're just performing and doing their best. I had a mentor at a residency tell me that this painting reminded them of Eichmann in Jerusalem.

I do have these somewhat transgressive narratives that I've painted, and I end up painting the figures with a little bit of compassion for the things that they're going through. I feel compelled to paint them as if they are attempting to perform their roles in the most competent way they know how despite being misguided, or in the face of the unexpected. I think much of the painting reminds me of my own experience moving to the US, or going to a new school, or taking a new job. There's so much pressure to perform that often you forget to what extent you can be present in the midst of it all.

RC: To riff off the notion of reality TV—as we know, the reality presented in those shows is highly structured and often scripted, depicting exaggerations of everyday life. The scenarios can be absurd, not dissimilar to the scenes you make.

Sometimes I see your paintings as part of my fantasy life rather than my real life. For example, I wish I could be on the beach with *A Creature Open to Metaphors* (2018). He's crying, like many of the sentient beings in your work, but is he also mourning?

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RP: I don't want the viewer to understand what this merman is grieving about. It's important to me that viewers acknowledge the sentimentality in it. I also want them to see this creature at the beach with all of this garbage, but also that plump butt.

People often think the creature is crying because of all of the garbage surrounding it, but to me, the beach towel and butt placed front and center complicate the narrowness of this reading. I like when the work can teeter between being simple and not so much. Like they're begging for you to simplify them, but if you continue to look, they get a bit more slippery. There's potential there for you to continue wondering what they can truly be.

I don't always know what the elements of a painting mean in relation to each other, which makes things exciting for me, but the process of making the painting allows me to ponder what these creatures are going through. Even as an acrylic painter, it still feels like a slow medium. I get to spend time with the environments and characters enough so that they take on their own personality. I enjoy the process of being a conduit and witnessing it all take shape.

RC: I wonder what the people in *Sacred Canopy* (2024) are going through. What are we seeing there?

RP: For me, it brings up the housing crisis, and it also points to recreational pseudo-spiritual events like Burning Man. I wanted to create an image that could represent different realities simultaneously. I titled it vaguely for that reason. Most of my titles are either tersely descriptive or dramatically open-ended because I want viewers to project their own associations of meaning.

I wanted the painting to have figures that are both inside the tent and outside. From a formal standpoint, I wanted the negative shapes of the people passing by to add a dynamic quality to the composition, and to counteract the weight of what's in the tent. I like scenes where characters, regardless of how they're positioned, all have a part to play in shaping the dynamic of the world that's being created. Audience members and sideline figures appear in a lot of my works. I think being Asian in America, and also having attended grad school with social practice artists, makes me hyperaware of the significance of those not center stage.

RC: I think you achieve that in *A Tornado of Dancers* (2023). Wherever they're falling from, it seems like they're undergoing a stress-inducing activity, and they all seem pretty cool with it.

RP: A lot of characters in my work are fighting, fleeing, freezing, fawning, or finding themselves wilfully delusional. Visually representing these responses often leads to absurd results, which I think draws people in, but from a more serious vantage point, making art that points to these types of responses is also a way of bringing to mind the complex and nuanced ways people are able to cope with pain and survive. I think back to our project, *Schemers, Scammers, and Subverters Symposium* (2019), and I feel like it speaks to that. But despite their circumstances being read as unusual, unfortunate or indulgent, I want my characters to evoke a sense of composure and grace. I'm going through a phase where I want my characters to feel lightfooted—the same as how

Left:
Ralph Pugay, *Sacred Canopy*, 2024. Watercolor on Yupo, 12 × 16 in. Photo: Adam DeSorbo

Following spread:
Ralph Pugay, *A Tornado of Dancers*, 2023. Acrylic and Flashe on canvas, 24 × 30 in. Courtesy the artist and Adams & Ollman. Photo: Area Array

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I want to be as I grow into middle age. These days, when I'm looking at a painting I'm working on, I ask myself if it's really what I would want to look at while eating dinner. I think this is what's compelled me to incorporate inks and watercolors as part of my studio practice. I want these figures to be demonstrating grace under fire, so to speak.

• • • •

World-Building

RC: This makes me think about your religious upbringing, the conversations we've had about morality, and the way people search for coping strategies within the devising of personal mythologies. Would you talk a little about the influence of spirituality in your work?

RP: A lot of my earliest paintings started out reflecting on my first entry point to seeing art, which was growing up being an altar boy and seeing all these catholic reliquaries. I lived three blocks from the church, and I was hanging out there all the time. Seeing Catholic imagery informed the way I initially saw art, which was that it's meant to communicate a narrative to a viewer.

Being exposed to art that was communicating in these moralistic ways, but also in these very simplistic and extreme ways, was interesting. Some of the Catholic pamphlets I read were meant to convince children of these morality tales, so I was influenced by those, but then, at the same time, I was consuming a lot of secular comics. Upon immigrating to the US, the media that I engaged with most was video games, which simplify stories in both a graphic and narrative sense—not unlike religious pamphlets and comics.

It feels like all of those things combined were about these linear stories of cause and effect. Within all of them, there was a suggestion that the world is very much black and white. I saw the potential of linear narratives to be recognizable to people, but coming from a homogenous, collective culture into a multicultural and individualistic one, the experience of encountering a multitude of perspectives felt overwhelming and fascinating.

Making paintings felt like a really good way of thinking holistically through the many possibilities of existence—a way to think fluidly as opposed to something more crystallized. With visuals, I learned to paint without representational sources by calling to mind how simplified a lot of imagery was from materials like Catholic ex-votos, daily cartoons, and video games like the Sims. By learning how to paint through them, it felt empowering to imagine worlds that expand upon and provide nuance to the binary ways of thinking that one might inherit from consuming these materials. Eventually, in my brain, it stopped becoming about expanding binary ways of thinking about the world altogether, and it became more about following threads of thought.

For example, *Hell Rendition* (2023) came about from remembering a book that I encountered when I was a kid. It showed different people's paintings as well as cultural depictions of Hell. In that book, I remember seeing these heads that are halfway stuck in a bed of ice, and there's a death figure walking through that bed of ice. I was thinking about reincarnation, and I wondered, "Um, if you can reincarnate as a different kind of animal or a different type of person in a different context altogether, can you reincarnate as a pancake?" The source of inspiration for this painting was very morbid to see as a child, and so, as I was making this painting, I was trying to figure out how to soften what that depiction of Hell looked like. At the same time, I remember trying to capture what each of the spirits in this pancake might feel like, despite being in this fluffier existence.

RC: I like that you use painting as a way to explore empathy and compassion. What are you trying to understand in *Funeral at the Ski Resort* (2022)?

RP: Part of having lived in a religious community is seeing rituals. In the Philippines, similar to New Orleans, funerals have elaborate ceremonies. I love the pageantry of ceremonies, because the more people they have involved, the harder they are to coordinate, and the more compelling they become.

As with this painting, sometimes images emerge out of thinking about a setting and asking myself, "What are my preconceived ideas?" In this case, the setting is a mountain with a ski lift hosting a funeral. I wondered, "What would it look like for these figures or this community of people to be grieving, but in this leisurely, inaccessible place?" And "What does the tension of grief feel like when combined with the experience of excess?"

I'm really interested in creating painted scenarios where people are living in communities that might be well known for celebrating

Ralph Pugay, *Hell Rendition (Variation I)*, 2023. Acrylic and Flashe on panel, 9 × 12 in. Photo: Area Array

Ralph Pugay, *Funeral at the Ski Resort,* 2022. Acrylic and Flashe on canvas, 30 × 24 in. Courtesy the artist and Adams & Ollman. Photo: Area Array

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individualistic culture, but ultimately the individuals are part of a collective body. To me, it makes the world not feel so far apart. In this painting, I think a rhythmic form helps evoke harmony despite the distress of the subject matter. That thin line between cultural distinctions is something I like thinking about.

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Mindful Living

RC: You've mentioned family, resilience, how people find community, and how as individuals we're sort of embedded in a form of collectivity. How do those topics connect to the site-specific drawing installation you did at Adams and Ollman (2023). When I look at the installation, I see references to queer family-making and other explorations of what community is, and it also inspires reflection about the ways these activities can be simultaneously stressful and supportive.

RP: This installation came together in a very organic way. Since 2018, I've been making loosely gestural ink drawings, and throughout the process of building the exhibition at the gallery, I was making more drawings loosen up in between painting, but also to experiment with new materials I bought online.

I know the pictures might feel disconnected thematically, but I wanted to see images like *The Beard Family* (2023), where three naked people with beards are together as a family unit in proximity to a drawing of a dog that is going through physical therapy, next to rats that are navigating a bunch of kettles.

I see these topics as interrelated, in that these types of conceptual collapses happen when you're in the midst of dissociating. You experience inputs of information from memory—from your immediate environment, and from your imagination—in a way that feels distinctly timeless and non-linear. I wanted to create a cruise ship scenario as a way to hold them all together. It's as if you're skimming and you're stammering through thoughts, similar to how someone unfamiliar with poetry might experience it on a first reading.

RC: As if you're inhabiting multiple realities at once. I relate to your description of a mind that is flitting through ideas and images, and I'm thinking about my experience with EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), which is a form of psychotherapy.

When I underwent EMDR, there was a lot of disjointed imagery floating through my mind. Throughout each session, I developed a toolkit for how to cope with whatever thoughts were going to come up, and as a visual person, my experience was quite picture based. I saw images I hadn't thought about for over two decades, and they appeared outside of any chronological order—a sequence of real life events that could never go together.

RP: That's a fascinating experience. I was also thinking about the pace in which we consume content on the internet, particularly during the pandemic. It was an isolating time for so many people.

The coping mechanism I found myself immersed in was scrolling TikTok. So much of my recent work pulls concepts and motifs from my experience of the platform because it's obvious to me why so many

people use it. I think it's because they're able to find others like themselves through it, but they're also able to fidget with it.

RC: I hadn't quite thought about my EMDR experience in relation to TikTok and Instagram until now, and it's true that there's something similar about moving quickly through images on social media that don't make sense together and the collage work I moved through during my therapy sessions. In both cases, the disparate pictures create a whole experience, and ultimately they allow the potential for one's sense of self to be transformed.

RP: By scrolling TikTok, I've also developed a level of restlessness with absorbing information. My recent work is patterned and detailed in a way that comes from the necessity to meditate during breaks between periods of painting. Painting for me requires exercise and composure, and it's not a situation where I simply need to get paintings out of me. There is so much struggle in the process. Sometimes my body doesn't want to do what it is that I want it to do. Meditating has definitely helped with getting me to pay attention and with increasing my fortitude to create details that don't feel bogged down, and also to listen to the work and break away and pivot more easily when it's asking me to. I want to create detailed paintings, and I also want them to breathe.

RC: I think the paintings are alive and breathing.

Roz Crews is an artist and curator who produces public programs, socially-engaged art projects, and performances providing a stage for other artists, students, and interlocutors to share their opinions and visions. They are currently the Associate Curator of Programs at Williams College Museum of Art where they organize and implement experiences, events, publications, and interpretive strategies for WCMA's audiences.

Their work has developed through curatorial and artistic projects as an artist in residence in universities and nonprofits, Manager of Community Engagement Programs at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA, Program Director and Special Projects Curator at the King School Museum of Contemporary Art in Portland, OR, adjunct instructor in Social Practice, Ideation, and Graphic Design, and public K–5 art teacher in Gainesville, FL.

They have an MFA in Art and Social Practice from Portland State University (2017), and a BA in Anthropology from New College of Florida (2012).

Drawing inspiration from historical events, internet culture, and observations of the everyday, Ralph Pugay captures the curious and absurd facets of life through his brightly colored and playfully composed paintings. Informed by his background as a Filipino-American queer artist, his painted tableaus often depict archetypal characters caught in evocative moments, set within jarring, alien realities. Pugay pushes the boundaries of nonlinear visual storytelling to engage viewers in reflecting on urgent questions about belonging, identity, and morality, all conveyed with a distinctive blend of clarity and humor.

Ralph Pugay (b. 1983 in Cavite, Philippines; lives and works in Portland, OR) holds a BA and MFA in Contemporary Art Practice from Portland State University, Portland, OR. Pugay has been in residence at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Madison, ME; the Rauschenberg Foundation, Captiva Island, FL; the Joan Mitchell Center, New Orleans, LA; Crow's Shadow Golden Spot Residency Program, Pendleton, OR, and Creative Exchange

Lab, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, OR. Awards include a Ford Family Foundation Rauschenberg Fellowship, the 2015 Betty Bowen Award from the Seattle Art Museum, an Oregon Arts Commission Fellowship, and a Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Award.

Ralph Pugay, *The Longest Journey* (installation detail), 2023. Mixed media drawing installation, 120 × 120 in. Courtesy the artist and Adams & Ollman. Photo: Area Array

Seeing Shimkhin

.... *Anthony Hudson*

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In April 2023, Felix Furby and I co-curated *My Father's Father's Sister: Our Ancestor Shimkhin* at Chachalu Tribal Museum and Cultural Center in Grand Ronde, Oregon. Felix, an Indigenous linguist and dedicated community member, is Grand Ronde and enrolled with the Chinook Indian Nation; I was enrolled at birth with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and have been a Grand Ronde tribal member since my teens. For both of us, Grand Ronde has been home since our ancestors were forcibly relocated there with the establishment of the Grand Ronde Reservation in the 1850s.

Felix and I are queer and Indigenous—we like the term *Indigiqueer*—and we've spent several years looking for ancestral words and stories from our cultures for people like us; names beyond modern, pan-Indian labels like the former or *Two Spirit*. Instead, what our research found wasn't a word, but a queer ancestor in recorded history—waving back at us and waiting to be seen. As curators, we also stumbled into a conundrum: how do you represent an ancestor you've never seen?

While this ancestor was right there in recorded testimony, it took some time to see her for who she was. We were both told about a gender-bending footnote in Grand Ronde history, relayed to ethnolinguists studying our languages and culture in the early 1900s: community members spoke of a powerful Atfalati (or Tualatin) Kalapuya doctor known as Shimkhin (pronounced "Shum-hin," sometimes shortened to Shumkhi or "Shum-khee"), who was also called Jack Nancy, and who rode horses bareback and side-saddle. Shimkhin was also described as a "transvestite," a detail added by Boston academic Melville Jacobs as he translated testimonies (Jacobs also replaced the ungendered Kalapuyan pronoun *kwak* with *he/him* pronouns), and, until now, Shimkhin has been understood by this somewhat antiquated term.

While this ancestor was right there in recorded testimony, it took some time to see her for who she was. We were both told about a gender-bending footnote in Grand Ronde history, relayed to ethnolinguists studying our languages and culture in the early 1900s: community members spoke of a powerful Atfalati (or Tualatin) Kalapuya doctor known as Shimkhin (pronounced "Shum-hin," sometimes shortened to Shumkhi or "Shum-khee"), who was also called Jack Nancy, and who rode horses bareback and side-saddle.

But queer eyes look for queer eyes looking back, and a closer look at history showed that this renowned healer preferred the English name Nancy to Jack, using the latter as her surname. One of her closest recorded relatives, her Chinookan niece Victoria Howard, referred to her great aunt as "my father's father's sister" with *she/her* pronouns. Furthermore, Shimkhin had four *t'əmanəwas*, or spirit powers, including *ski-yup*—the power to become woman—which she gained permanently after dancing over five nights for five years in a row on Spirit Mountain, where t'əmanəwas could be gained.

According to June Olson, author of *Living in the Great Circle,* a tirelessly researched directory of Grand Ronde ancestors on the early Reservation, Shimkhin was born in 1821 and lived in Grand Ronde until her death in 1904. In creating *My Father's Father's Sister* at Chachalu, to help revitalize popular knowledge of this ancestor and queerness's place and precedent in our culture, Felix and I blew up historical writings as giant, wall-sized panels with accompanying commentary, and we included nearly everything we could find.

There were multiple pieces of eyewitness testimony about Shimkhin's healing rituals, her statewide renown, her beloved dogs, husbands, and lovers, and accounts of settlers beating her and putting her in men's clothes—only for her to return home and put on her cedar skirt—but we couldn't find any images. We incorporated photographs of ancestors whose testimony lived on the walls, as well as a section celebrating living queer tribal members, featuring illustrations by Steph Littlebird and a carved cedar comb and children's book by elder Qahir Beejee Peco. But other than our ancestors' words and cedar skirts, jewelry, and

medicine bags from Chachalu's collection, we had nothing to represent Shimkhin herself.

Enter the aforementioned Steph Littlebird: like Shimkhin, Steph is Atfalati Kalapuyan, and, like Shimkhin's niece Victoria Howard, Steph is also Chinook. Awarded a 2023 Indigenous Placekeeping Artist Fellowship by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Steph is among our most celebrated artists, renowned for her independent artwork, award-winning children's book illustrations, curatorial work for *This IS Kalapuyan Land* at Five Oaks Museum and the Pittock Mansion—both in West Portland, near Shimkhin's Atfalati homelands—and design work for clients including Disney and *Star Wars*. A Two Spirit person herself, Steph was exactly the artist to make what we needed: a historically and culturally informed reconstruction as big, powerful, and iconic as Shimkhin.

Steph quickly agreed, and we gave her all the information we had on Shimkhin. The digital illustration she produced required no feedback and was sent straight to the printer:

Steph Littlebird, *Shimkhin*, 2023

Steph based her design off images of Kalapuyan women from Shimkhin's era, and even her color palette is an act of placekeeping. The Kalapuyans are the people of the Willamette Valley, reaching from the Atfalati homelands in what is now West Portland and Tigard, to my ancestral Santiam lands around Salem and Yoncalla territory down past Eugene. Steph's electric colors glow with the vibrant yellows, greens, and blues of our gorgeous homelands in summer, bringing this ancestor out of the past, re-materialized from the margins of black-and-white text and into full-bodied color. This was the ancestor with whom we'd been in conversation. This is Shimkhin.

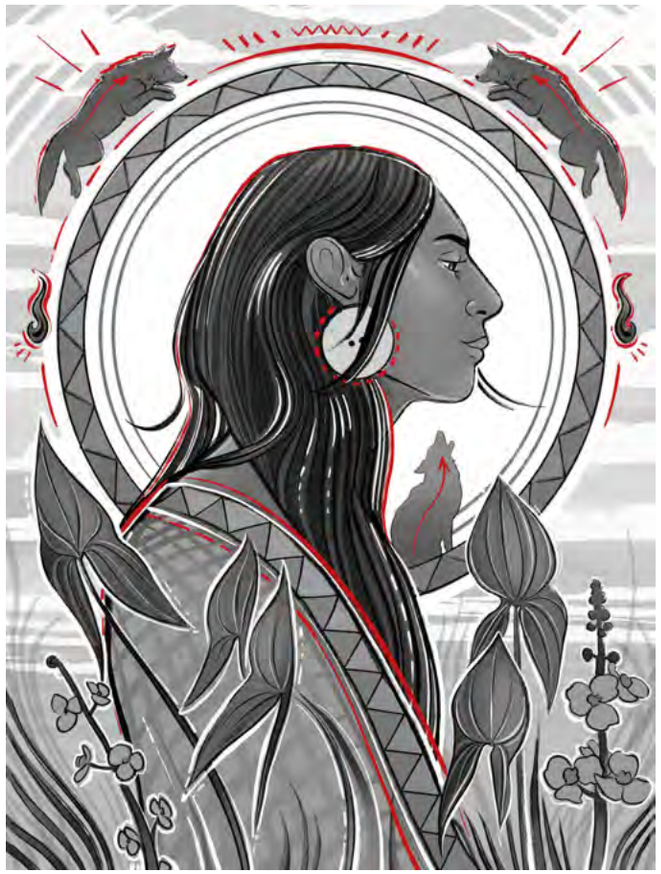
Steph's placekeeping by way of illustration did not end there. Her Shimkhin is surrounded by flowering stalks of *wapato*, or camas, one of our traditional first foods and one of particular cultural importance to the Atfalati people, who were also known as Wapato Lake Indians. Grand Ronde tribal member and historian David Gene Lewis, author of *Tribal Histories of the Willamette Valley*, notes "as many as ten village sites" were made within miles of *antua'lati* or Wapato Lake, now a National Wildlife Refuge.[1]

In bringing back to life not only Shimkhin but also her t'əmanəwas, Steph

incorporated design themes to pay tribute to Shimkhin's four recorded spirit powers. Her coyote power, which we believe offered clairvoyance, is evoked with three coyotes, which also slyly reference Shimkhin's pet dogs—before any healing ritual, she was offered a dinner by those employing her services, and she always gave half of it to her dogs.

Shimkhin's water power, as well as the ancestral *antua'lati*, is evoked in a light-to-deep blue well encircling her head like a halo. This circle is flanked by two flames, radiating with yellow light—and speaking to Shimkhin's dead people power, by which, with pitch torches, she was able to drive out lingering spirits who made the living ill. Beyond this traditional touch, fire itself speaks to the power to transform and change, to burn away the past and old growth and make room for the future, not unlike Shimkhin's *skiyup* power: the power to become woman.

Steph included two colorways for our consideration, submitting a second version in grayscale with limited use of red:



Steph Littlebird, *Shimkhin*, 2023

For us, this version spoke to the spirit world that Shimkhin entered as a shaman to do her healing work, but it also spoke to her duality, as a queer transfeminine person. She was joyful, and she was also capable of great medicine; she was renowned and respected, but she was beaten too; she was the renowned doctor Shimkhin, and she was also the impish Nancy Jack.

Rather than privileging one of Steph's designs over the other, we decided to incorporate both images, printing them large enough to reach the ceiling, and placing them on either side of a light-up display, centrally located in the Chachalu change-out gallery. As attendees walked through the exhibit, they circled Shimkhin, with her front-facing color image corresponding to panels displaying historical facts and bits of her day-to-day life, while the red-and-grayscale image faced panel texts that spoke to the doctor's healing powers and rituals. Walking this circle, the viewer could get closer to the historical truth about someone too powerful to be contained in either words or images.

The celebration of Shimkhin has been a profoundly powerful one not only for Felix and myself, but for our Grand Ronde community as a whole. At the exhibit's opening, we saw more queer and trans folk gathered in the

My Father's Father's Sister: Our Ancestor Shimkhin, courtesy Chachalu Museum

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museum than ever before; upon closing, members of Tribal Council and the Cultural Resources Department drummed, sang, and honored us with necklaces for our role in revitalizing an often-ignored aspect of our culture—our genders and sexualities, which do not always align with those of dominant settler culture, and are as specific to our cultures as each of us are.

In December 2024, Felix and I will launch another exhibit at Chachalu, again telling Shimkhin's story, but this time as a jumping-off point to tell stories of future ancestors, of living Indigiqueer people today. Steph Littlebird's work, and her iconic depiction of Shimkhin, will continue to be featured in this next iteration. We couldn't have done it without her—or without Shimkhin. We knew our ancestor was waiting for us to find her in the past. We just had to learn how to bring her back today.

1 https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/wapato_lake_national_refuge

Anthony Hudson is a Grand Ronde/Siletz artist and writer also known as Portland's premier drag clown Carla Rossi. Anthony's performance work, from his award-winning solo show *Looking for Tiger Lily* to *Queer Horror* at the Hollywood Theatre, have earned him national fellowships, international engagements including the US Pavilion's drag clown in residence at the 2024 Venice Biennale, features in *Hyperallergic* and *Art in America*, and sainthood from the Portland Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. A 2023 FSG Writer's Fellowship finalist and 2024 Tin House resident, Anthony's writing has appeared in *American Theatre*, *Bomb Magazine*, and *Arts and International Affairs*. He is currently adapting *Looking for Tiger Lily* into a book.

Reimagining The Historic Bush House Museum

....Matthew Boulay and Tammy Jo Wilson

2092

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It was the middle of the pandemic and we were closed to the public. After a long period of balanced budgets and exciting programming, the Salem Art Association and our historic Bush House Museum found ourselves suddenly broke and with a pared down staff. It was, to say the least, an enormously fraught time.

As our longstanding executive director neared retirement, I was asked to step in on an interim basis. In my first week on the job, I was informed by colleagues that we had received critical feedback about the Bush House Museum. Bush was the founding owner and editor of the *Statesman Journal*, which is Oregon's second oldest newspaper and still publishing today—but he was also a terrible racist and a strong advocate for our state's exclusionary laws, which prohibited Black people from living in Oregon.

Bush was the founding owner and editor of the *Statesman Journal*, which is Oregon's second oldest newspaper and still publishing today—but he was also a terrible racist and a strong advocate for our state's exclusionary laws, which prohibited Black people from living in Oregon.

I quickly realized that we needed to dramatically change our approach to curating the Historic Bush House. It was an easy decision to say: let's do something entirely different. Determining *what to do* and *how to do it* was much harder. Our institution didn't have money, we didn't have the staff, and we didn't have a model.

We began our journey by listening. We talked to artists, educators, historians, and, most significantly, members of our community. In order to better facilitate this effort, we created a "reimagining committee" that included Indigenous and Black voices.

From these conversations, a difficult truth began to reveal itself. Although the subject had been skirted for decades, many local people of color knew about Bush's deleterious impact on our state, and told us that they didn't feel welcome in our museum.

Old monuments back east were coming down during this time period and, in a way, I saw the Bush House Museum as Oregon's version of that national conversation. In keeping with the cooperative nature of true dialogue, we made a commitment to a multi-vocal approach. Presenting one authoritative interpretation doesn't seem useful—who gets to determine what is right? Instead, it's imperative to engage with a fully encompassing range of people and their collective views.

We also made a commitment to examining our own biases and prejudices. Historical issues of racism and colonialism are complex ones that are simultaneously institutional and personal. We hired a series of very good consultants to lead courses on integral subjects such as implicit bias and how to recognize and neutralize it within the self and one's own environment. In short, it was vital to invite our staff to participate in our journey.

Our adoption of the Fair Art Pledge is an important example of these changes. The pledge is a public promise that museums, galleries, art fairs, and other cultural organizations make to represent diverse voices in their

Opposite page:
Bush House Museum, Exterior, 2023. Courtesy Salem Art Association

collections, exhibitions, programming, and management. Our board voted unanimously to take the pledge. To that end, we are currently engaged in the process of data-tracking the diversity of our shows and collections. In short, the pledge has become a sacred trust that the institution is accountable for advancing in the long term.

One of our first shows reflecting this new effort was *Black Matter*, curated by Tammy Jo Wilson in our A.N. Bush Gallery. The show included local and regional Black creatives, including MOsley WOtta and Jeremy Okai Davis. We also created a partnership with a Portland nonprofit called The Immigrant Story, and displayed their traveling exhibition, showcasing beautiful photographs of recent US immigrants throughout the Bush House Museum. Asahel Bush was a powerful and outspoken racist; he helped institutionalize racism in the state of Oregon in many ways, most overtly through the platform of his newspaper. Featuring the experiences of individuals of color from around the world means many things, but notably it's about celebrating the contributions of all Oregonians.

In 2022, we commissioned painter Jeremy Okai Davis to create a series of portraits for the Bush House Museum. Our ask to Jeremy was simple: use the magic of portraiture to tell the story of early Black pioneers whose contributions to Oregon history have long been neglected and overlooked. When the full series of ten portraits is complete, they will represent a unique and important contribution to art history. As far as we know, a series like this, of early Black Pioneers, doesn't exist anywhere else.

The following year we announced the grand opening of the America Waldo Bogle

Opposite page:
Jeremy Okai Davis, *The Fiddler* (*Louis Southwoth*), 2024. Courtesy Salem Art Association

Above:
Jeremy Okai Davis, *The Blacksmith* (*Ben Johnson, 1834-1901*), 2023. Courtesy Salem Art Association

Gallery inside Bush House Museum. Tammy Jo Wilson, who is now serving as Director of Exhibits and Programming for BHM, chose to name the gallery in America's honor because the stories of Black women are rarely told, particularly against the legacies of powerful men like Asahel Bush.

On January 1, 1863 (the day Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation took effect), America Waldo Bogle married a free Black man from Jamaica named Richard Bogle. Their wedding celebration, which included both Black guests and white guests, drew the angry fire of Asahel Bush, an influential publisher, banker, and political figure whose racist views shaped the state's Black Exclusion Laws—and whose nineteenth-century home now houses the gallery named in her honor.

The opening of the Waldo Bogle Gallery and the commissioning of the portraits is part of the Salem Art Association's "Reimagining Process," which sits at the intersection of art and history and aims to tell a fuller, more honest, and more inclusive story about our state and nation.

Today, we often hear from visitors who say, "This is long overdue, thank you." They see it as an issue of rights and access. A lot of people say, "I finally see myself represented in this space."

These changes have re-anchored Salem Art Association within our community and state. We're proud of the reimagining work we've done so far and plan to continue to welcome new voices, new ideas, and necessary conversations. We will step boldly forward as an institution leading the way in revolutionary thinking around art, culture, and the telling of our history.

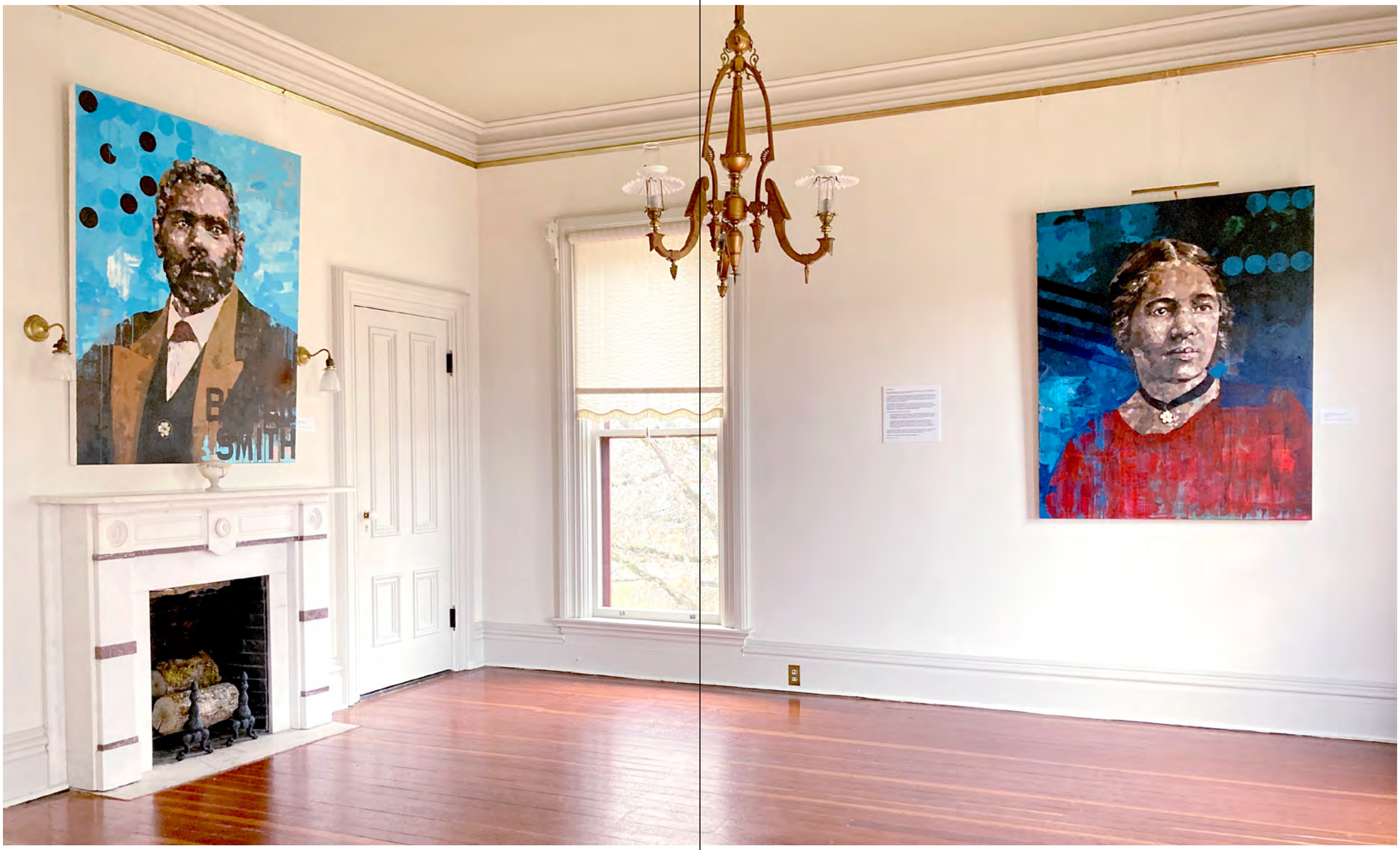
• I Am Alive • • You Are Alive • • • They Are Alive • • • • We Are Living

Matthew Boulay (b. 1970, Arizona) lives and works in Salem, Oregon. Boulay's work is typified by his exploration of issues such as collective memory and the experience of war, and his use of materials that are tactile and complicated. He works in multiple media, including painting and large-scale installations, and frequently engages in inter-textuality with other works from the visual arts, literature, and history. Boulay has studied in Baltimore, New York City, and Madrid, and his work is greatly informed by his experiences as a marine in Iraq. He holds a PhD from Columbia University's Teachers College, leads the Campaign for a New G.I. Bill, and is the founder of the non-profit National Summer Learning Association.

Tammy Jo Wilson is a Black female artist and curator residing just south of Portland, Oregon in historic Oregon City. She received her BFA from the Pacific Northwest College of Art and her MFA from San Jose State University. She has exhibited her work nationally, and was awarded the Leland Ironworks Gold Spot Artist Residency in 2017. That same year, Wilson and her husband, artist Owen Premore, cofounded the arts organization Art in Oregon (AiO). This statewide 501(c)(3) nonprofit works to foster culturally rich, regional communities through partnerships, advocacy, and investment in artists, businesses, educational spaces, and community spaces. AiO believes in building and sustaining art patronage through pride in Oregon artists and art ownership. Additionally, Wilson works in the Art Department at Lewis & Clark College as the Visual Arts & Technology Program Manager.

Opposite page:
Bush House Museum, Interior, Second floor, 2023. Courtesy Salem Art Association

Left:
Bush House Museum, Interior, Second floor, 2023. Courtesy Salem Art Association



America Waldo Bogle Gallery, Second Floor, Bush House Museum, 2024. Courtesy Salem Art Association

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THE Ford Family FOUNDATION
VISUAL ARTS PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON | Center for Art Research

WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY | Pacific Northwest College of Art

JORDAN SCHNITZER MUSEUM OF ART AT PSU

COOLEY

Covers and section openers:
Jaleesa Johnston, *Bone and Flesh*, 2017. Collage on wood panel, 4 × 4 in.
Courtesy the artist

Ron Jude, *Lava Formation From 12 Hz*, 2019. Archival pigment print on fiber paper, 56 × 42 in

Ralph Pugay, *Funeral at the Ski Resort*, 2022. Acrylic and Flashe on canvas, 30 × 24 in. Courtesy the artist and Adams & Ollman, Photo: Area Array

In 1957, Kenneth Ford and Hallie Ford established a then-modest foundation to give back to the timber communities of southwest Oregon. It grew in size, scope, and geography to become The Ford Family Foundation in 1996. With its headquarters office in Roseburg, Oregon, and its scholarship office in Eugene, Oregon, The Ford Family Foundation now manages large, internal initiatives and makes grants to public charities predominantly benefiting communities in rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif.

The Visual Arts Program honors Hallie Ford's lifelong interest in the arts by helping Oregon's most promising, established visual artists actively pursue their work. It also seeks to enrich Oregon's visual arts ecology by growing centers of excellence. The program, at times in collaboration with state and national partners, supports creative-work time and space, provides resources to artists at crossroads in their practice, engages arts writers and curators in critical conversations, and makes investments in Oregon visual arts institutions.

Critical Conversations is a collaborative program developed by the University of Oregon and The Ford Family Foundation, with partners Pacific Northwest College of Art at Willamette University, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at Portland State University and The Cooley Gallery, Reed College. These partners create a year-round calendar of visiting critics and curators for studio visits, public lectures and other forms of engagement, as well as overseeing commissioned arts writing for this publication and the Oregon Visual Arts Ecology project, an online partnership with the Oregon Arts Commission.