

A r t A s
S o c i a l A c t i o n

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S o c i a l P r a c t i c e Q u e e n s

Q u e e n s C o l l e g e C U N Y
a n d t h e Q u e e n s M u s e u m
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We want to participate
in this occasion.

Art As Social Action: 10 Years of Social Practice Queens

El arte como accion social: 10 años de Social Practice Queens

Founded in 2010, Social Practice Queens (SPQ) is a unique academic program that links artists with the resources of a university, Queens College (City University of New York), and the long-standing community engagement of the Queens Museum.

Art As Social Action honors this decade-long pedagogical experiment by featuring interdisciplinary projects by nine local and international SPQ alumni. The exhibition's title is both a philosophy and a call for activity. It emphasizes the potential for artists to support positive political change beyond art for art's sake, and creativity as a tool for connection and celebration. Through collaborations with organizers, political groups, and even labor unions, art that is socially engaged allows the artist's mind, skills, and approaches to amplify community efforts and support acts of public service. The works in the exhibition demonstrate a particular focus on issues of care: how do we provide for and celebrate each other in the context of intersecting concerns including climate change, gentrification, and struggles with togetherness.

Exhibiting artists are: Alix Camacho-Vargas, Floor Grootenhuis (with Joel Murphy), Cody Herrmann, Jeff Kasper, Naomi Kuo, Julian Louis Phillips, Erin Turner, Pedro Felipe Vintimilla Burneo.

Presented by: Cristina Ferrigno, Brianna Harlan, Cody Herrmann, Jeff Kasper, and Erin Turner.

Art as Social Action is organized by Social Practice Queens (Chloë Bass and Gregory Sholette, with assistance from Anlisa Outar), with support from Queens Museum's Exhibitions & Programs team.

This exhibition is made possible with support from the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Humanities New York, and the Center for the Humanities at CUNY Graduate Center.

Inaugurado en 2010, Social Practice Queens (SPQ) es un programa académico excepcional que conecta artistas con los recursos de una universidad, el Queens College (Universidad de la Ciudad de Nueva York), y la histórica participación comunitaria del Queens Museum.

El arte como acción social rinde homenaje a este experimento pedagógico que ya cumple una década, incluye proyectos interdisciplinarios de nueve alumnos locales e internacionales de SPQ. El título de la exposición es tanto una filosofía como una llamada a la acción. Pone énfasis en el potencial que tienen los artistas para fomentar el cambio político positivo más allá del arte por el arte, y la creatividad como herramienta de conexión y celebración. A través de colaboraciones con organizadores, grupos políticos e incluso sindicatos, el arte comprometido socialmente permite que la mentalidad, las habilidades y los enfoques de los artistas desarrollen los esfuerzos comunitarios y refuercen los actos de servicio público. Las obras de la exposición muestran un enfoque particular sobre el tema de cuidar: como proveemos por los demás y celebramos uno al otro, en este contexto entrelaza el calentamiento global, la gentrificación y las luchas por la solidaridad.

Los artistas que exponen son: Alix Camacho-Vargas, Floor Grootenhuis (con Joel Murphy), Cody Herrmann, Jeff Kasper, Naomi Kuo, Julian Louis Phillips, Erin Turner, Pedro Felipe Vintimilla Burneo y la coalición Workers Art Coalition. Los programas públicos los presentarán: Cristina Ferrigno, Brianna Harlan, Cody Herrmann, Jeff Kasper y Erin Turner.

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A D e c a d e o f T e a c h i n g A r t A s S o c i a l A c t i o n

Gregory Sholette
Co-Founder and Co-Director, SPCUNY/SPQ
April 2021

In the middle of a now forgotten art event in the Summer of 2010, Tom Finkelppearl, then the Director of the Queens Museum, asked me a question: Did I think the Queens College Art Department might be interested in working on a grant with his museum that would establish a new education-related residency program? Tom and I had known each other for many years, we were friendly associates within the “socially engaged” strata of the New York City art scene. And although I had only just completed my first few semesters of teaching at CUNY, my colleague Maureen Connor and I came back to Tom with our thumbs up. It was a seemingly straightforward answer to a seemingly straightforward question that would substantially reshape my entire teaching experience for the decade ahead.

The grant—from the Rockefeller Foundation—was a success, and with additional collaborative support from Creative Time, we welcomed Tania Bruguera as our first resident artist for this new ini-

tiative. Tania established Immigrant Movement International (IMI), transforming a Corona neighborhood storefront into a combination community learning center and the headquarters for the Cuban artist’s creatively invented pro-immigrant campaign. As Tom details in his entry for this catalog, IMI’s multi-purpose space would soon come to anchor our interdisciplinary art and urban studies seminar with Prerana Reddy and Tarry Hum: *Transforming Corona Plaza*. Meanwhile, back at Queens College, Maureen and I launched a new graduate level concentration in social practice art, the first of its kind in the New York City region. This is not to ignore the fact that many people were already teaching art as social justice in area colleges and universities. However, what officially became *Social Practice Queens* (SPQ) in the summer of 2011, helped to anchor a broader recognition for this area of study. As of now, a decade later, there exist several other similar programs at neighboring New York City colleges and universities.

Our first cohort of MFA graduates—Barrie Cline, Seth Aylmer, Jose Serrano McClain and Sol Aramendi—also served as co-developers of SPQ in so far as they helped Maureen and myself test and explore various possibilities and forms of study and community outreach. Now, two dozen remarkable MFA graduates later, including those who have work in this exhibition, and with a series of successful projects carried out at Queens Museum, in Venice, Italy and San Juan, Puerto Rico, as well as on Governors Island, along with the creation of a couple of undergraduate classes, and with several years of sustained financial support from The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, SPQ has turned ten. For this special occasion the artist Chloë Bass, who came on board as the co-director of SPQ in 2016, curated *Art As Social Action*, a selection of new projects by nine alumni, and hosted by our long-time collaborative partner Queens Museum, now under the erudite direction of Sally Tallant.

Meanwhile, as SPQ turns ten, it is also turning into something different: *Social Practice CUNY*, a new, interdisciplinary cultural learning program that pivots on social justice and community collaboration, while cultivating leadership skills within a diverse group of emerging contemporary artists (the student body of the City University of New York). Thanks to a substantial three-year grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, we are expanding our existing programming to encompass faculty and MFA students from other CUNY campuses (including Brooklyn College, Hunter College, and City College), while providing funding for student and faculty art and research, creating new seminars at the CUNY Graduate Center, and amplifying financial and ongoing support for the SPQ cohort at Queens College. It is with this in mind that I encourage you to do two things. First enjoy and engage with the excellent projects created by SPQ alumni documented in this catalog along with writings and interviews featuring Chloë Bass, Tom Finkelppearl, Maureen Connor and

Prerana Reddy. And second, mark the year 2030 on your calendar, so that we might gather again to visit the outcome of SPQ's ambitious new journey as SPCUNY.

A C u r a t o r i a l N o t e :
M o v e m e n t a s S o c i a l
A c t i o n a n d D o u b l e
D i g i t s f o r S o c i a l
P r a c t i c e Q u e e n s

Chloë Bass
Co-Director, SPCUNY/SPQ
June 2021

In 2017, in my essay for Social Practice Queens' textbook (with which this exhibition shares a name), I posed the following questions as core to my methods of teaching socially engaged art and my understanding of pedagogical practice:

What happens if we take the same care with our relationships as we invest in our practice?

What happens if we take the same care with our practice that we demonstrate in our relationships?

These twinned questions are loose poles that ask us to consider the arenas that encourage us to do our best: do we do better at work, or away from work? Do we do our best when we know we're yoked to others, or when we imagine we're alone?

Now, despite the passage of time and the changes that inevitably arise out of moving one's work from

the classroom (a particular kind of institution) to the museum (a different, but no less particular kind of institution), these questions remain pertinent to me. Social Practice Queens (Gregory Sholette and I) began envisioning the *Art As Social Action* exhibition before the COVID-19 pandemic, and worked with our partners at the Queens Museum through the uncertainty of institutional closure, physical distancing, and prohibitions against gathering. When we came together, in 2021, we opened something that had become unthinkable: an indoor exhibition in a public museum during an uncertain moment, when the vaccine rollout was only beginning. Considering *care*, whether for objects, as a museum does, for ideas, as a school does, or for people, as both museums and schools do, has felt more overwhelming than usual. We have felt very keenly where we're unable to move towards tending, and all that has held us, individually and societally, in our places.

I come to all of my work (artistic, pedagogical, written, and curator-

al) through movement. An unrepentant and unrecovered theater person, I have long maintained that sitting still and thinking is for other people. I learn through the movement of my body, through the movement and flow of human beings through public and private spaces, through the movement of language on a page as I research, edit, and revise. I am informed by the labor that is *movement work*: the political necessity of constantly and consistently pushing against the marginalizing forces of dominant culture, while also embedding ourselves in institutions that may or may not hold us.

An exhibition is an invitation to consider how we move, and what moves us. An exhibition showcasing alumni work from the same academic program is an invitation to see how our former students moved with Social Practice Queens, moved through our program to the larger world, and have moved beyond us to their active artistic lives. Organizing *Art As Social Action*, I imagined it as a journey that begins with the body: Floor Grootenhuis and Joel

Murphy's *inPulse*, which measures exhibition participants' heart and breath rates, or Jeff Kasper's *prototypes for white flags*, which imagine different attitudes towards accessibility. Some projects, like Alix Camacho's *Reports from Walked Landscapes* and Naomi Kuo's *Flushing Art Tours #1 - 3*, take a literal meander. Others, like Erin Turner's *How to fall in love with a river: el río arzobispo* or Cody Ann Herrmann's *Flushing Creek from Home*, opt to walk the walk more metaphorically, as they consider water and fluidity as a both a body and a moving path. Finally, the exhibition expands itself to address group efforts. The diffuse group-produced effort of gentrification, referenced directly in Julian Louis Phillips' video *Notes on (Dis)Placement*, and indirectly in his light sculpture *The Feel of the Police*, is a meditation on the starker aspects of bodies coming together. On the other hand there are the bodies that move together to organize fair labor practices and efforts to combat climate change, as seen in the Workers' Art Coalition's *Union Workers for a Just*

Transition, or the beauty and complexity of group identity in Pedro Felipe Vintimilla Burneo's *Hombres - lines . color . texture* series, which lines the Queens Museum's atrium.

At its best, socially engaged art helps us to break out beyond the boundaries of our own everyday lives: to consider the world around us differently, or to engage with, re-imagine, or even simply notice the people we encounter in new and vibrant ways. The works in *Art As Social Action* ask us to keep moving, and leave us with the promise that to move is to learn. On the morning of my own 10th birthday, my father woke me up with the congratulatory statement, "you're going to be in double digits for the rest of your life!" I was shocked, having never previously encountered, or considered, any condition in my own life as permanent. Like most parents uttering a truism, my father was both right and wrong: while I'm unlikely to live to 100, the movement between the digits of years can be profound; the movement within a single day is already informative.

This anniversary exhibition is not just a marker of time and achievements past, but an invitation towards a new question:

What happens if we take the same care with our present that we imagine we might need in the future?

Thanks for celebrating our double digits.

J e f f

K a s p e r

b. Mineola, NY, 1990

prototypes for white flags
2017-2020

Poly silk flags
Courtesy the artist

prototipos para banderas blancas
2017-2020

Banderas de seda polivinílica
Cortesía del artista

Jeff Kasper's series *prototypes for white flags* reveals how everyday objects can hold powerful, untapped meanings within them. The white flag is an internationally recognized protective sign of truth or ceasefire. In subverting the flag's usual call for surrender, Kasper asks what would happen if the white flag was truly deemed a symbol of truce, of collaboration rather than defeat.

La serie de Jeff Kasper *prototipos para banderas blancas* muestra el sentido poderoso oculto que pueden poseer los objetos cotidianos. Reconocido internacionalmente, la bandera blanca es un símbolo protector de verdad o alto al fuego. Kasper invierte el mensaje habitual de rendición de la bandera y pregunta qué pasaría si la bandera blanca se considerará como un símbolo auténtico de tregua y de colaboración en vez de derrota.



ESTABLISHED 1982

ESTABLISHED 1982

ESTABLISHED 1982

El Pedro Felipe (V i n t i m i l l a)

b. Cuenca, Ecuador, 1978

Hombres - lines . color . texture
2017-2020

Digital photography on silk
(Crepe-de-Chine)
Courtesy the artist

Hombres - líneas . color . textura
2017-2020

Fotografía digital en seda (crepé)
Cortesía del artista

Hombres - lines . color . texture is a series of photographic portraits of men taken during Ecuadorian Parades. Since 2017, El Pedro Felipe has documented Ecuadorian Parades in New York City and in Ecuador, resulting in an archive of approximately five thousand photographs of these festivities and processions. Taken from this collection, *Hombres - lines . color . texture* is a series of photographic portraits of men at these events that synthesize contemplations of gender, identity, and migration, while inviting the viewer to engage at a direct aesthetic level. This series is part of a larger project titled *hombres* that explores diverse male experiences.

El Pedro Felipe lleva desde 2017 documentando desfiles ecuatorianos en Nueva York y en Ecuador y ha logrado reunir unas 5,000 fotografías de estas celebraciones y procesiones. A partir de esta colección, *Hombres - lines . color . texture* es una serie de retratos fotográficos de hombres en estos eventos en los que se sintetizan reflexiones sobre el género, la identidad y la migración y, al mismo tiempo, se invita al espectador a participar directamente a nivel estético. Esta serie es parte de un proyecto más grande titulado *hombres* que explora diversas experiencias masculinas.





One

Amazing

Seminar

Tom Finkelparl
Director of the Queens Museum
(2002–2014)
June 2021

In 2012, Social Practice Queens offered an interdisciplinary seminar called *Transforming Corona Plaza*. Jose Serrano-McClain, an SPQ graduate who was working at the Queens Museum as a community organizer at the time, wrote: “This experiment brought together a group of graduate and undergraduate students in Studio Art and in Urban Studies and successfully merged research work involving the demographics, local politics, and concerned stake-holders of this mostly Latino region of Queens, with interventionist theory and practical design concepts drawn from case studies of socially-engaged visual art.” That’s a long sentence, full of inspiring elements. The class engaged students in a real-life design challenge under the guidance of instructors from Queens College -- Maureen Connor and Gregory Shollette from the Studio Art Department, Professor Tarry Hum from the Urban Studies Department -- plus additional instruction from the Queens Museum Manager of Programs, Prerana Reddy. This was a remarkable educational opportunity that unfolded

on campus and in the community, including a number of class meetings at “Immigrant Movement,” a social art project just down the street from Corona Plaza. How did this all come together?

The process could be said to have begun eight years earlier, when artists and organizers led the Queens Museum into a deep social engagement with our local context—a kind of institutional social practice. One project that opened our minds to programming off site in Corona was initiated by a Quito and NYC-based artist named Maria Teresa Ponce. She had been working with a group of Ecuadorian “Mudanza” moving truck drivers who operated out of Corona Plaza, a triangular public space at the corner of 103rd Street and Roosevelt Avenue. Through her art, she was creating a communication system with their families at home, shuttling videos and messages back and forth as she travelled between Ecuador and NYC, where she was studying.

On a summer night in June 2004, in collaboration with a youth leadership program initiated by Jaishri Abichandani and Prerana Reddy at the museum, Ponce produced a multimedia outdoor event which really blew our minds. The project included video projections of Ecuadorian landscapes on the exterior of the Mudanza trucks and touching videos inside the trucks sent to the drivers from their kids back home. The youth leaders and the truck drivers were the guides to the crowds of people exiting Flushing Meadows Park's Ecuadorian Day celebration that night. It was aesthetically compelling, but more importantly, the project connected to the social fabric of the site in a way that few of us had seen in Queens before. Inspired by that night, we continued to program in the plaza for years to come—including Abichandani's "Corona Plaza: Heart of Everywhere" public art initiative, funded by the Ford Foundation.

In 2006 when Abichandani left to finish her graduate studies, the museum hired its first community

organizer, Naila Rosario, who had been a canvassing coordinator and political organizer for the Working Families Party in Queens and a staff member for a local city council member. She brought a set of skills to community engagement and dialogue that are rare at museums, which enriched our approach as we continued our programming in Corona with a series of commissions in the following years. Two memorable projects were Miguel Luciano's deluxe *Piragua* cart (2007, curator Sara Reisman) that he brought to the local streets dispensing free shaved-ice treats and Shawn Leonardo's *Lucha Libre* performance (2008, curator Herb Tam) in which he expertly wrestled an invisible man in a ring set up in the plaza (the invisible man prevailed). Interactive, socially engaged art was becoming a main part of what we did off site, and on-site as well. I am not sure we were calling it social practice, but artists, programmers, and community organizers were creating interactive space, crossing boundaries, spurring dialogue.

During these years, the museum had been seeking new ways to connect with Queens. We had a decades-old relationship with the public school system, and a growing partnership with the Queens Public Library. As a CUNY graduate, I was acutely aware of the importance of Queens College in many Queens communities. We had Queens College grads on our staff, and in our audience. Queens College was a part of the people's university of New York City, and we were hoping to be the people's museum of Queens. During this period there was increased discussion with QC faculty including Greg Sholette, who is one of America's foremost scholars of politically engaged art and a veteran public artist, and Maureen Connor, an artist who was well versed in social practice. Indeed, Maureen had presented a project at the Museum that was a classic example of social practice—a project meant to get the museum staff to communicate better among themselves. I cannot remember exactly whose idea it was, but we began talking about deeper institutional collaboration. After

many months of discussion and negotiation, QC launched the program with QM as a partner.

During these discussions in 2011 another key asset came into play. Along with Creative Time, the Queens Museum had invited the celebrated Cuban Artist Tania Bruguera to create a social project in Corona. The Immigrant Movement International project was born: a storefront project centering on the immigrant experience, an experiment that lasted seven years. Immigrant Movement International became a location for a number of memorable SPQ events, including, as mentioned above, as a site for *Transforming Corona Plaza*. There, in the midst of the community, the students discussed the social fabric of Corona and the physical possibilities of the plaza.

Meanwhile, a local City Council member, Julissa Ferreras, had become a great partner to all of the museum's activities in Corona. She became a cheerleader, funder, advisor, and friend to the museum. She also saw immense potential in Coro-

na Plaza, and through the city's Plaza Program engineered a two-phase transition: first, closing the street that ran through the plaza, and then supporting the renovation of the plaza with over \$2 million in capital funding. Several years later the plaza was renovated and reopened. The official design employed elements from the community process, and it was hailed as a model for the design of inclusive public space. It was a meeting place, graced weekly by a greenmarket and frequent cultural programs during the warm weather months. The plaza has since developed as a hub for food carts and vendors, less often the hub for cultural programming that was originally envisioned—but such is the dynamic nature of public space. On a recent afternoon when I visited, there was a demonstration for immigrant rights in one section of the plaza, COVID-19 testing in the middle, and food vendors around the periphery. I was thrilled to see that the Mudanza trucks were still there. One friend observed that, devastated by COVID-19, the Corona community needed a place

to meet and eat outdoors, and that they made the plaza meet their new needs. The input of the *Transforming Corona Plaza* seminar was still in the space - an open place that was serving the community. I would love to bring the participants from the seminar back together in the plaza to see the long-term outcome.

Social Practice Queens has changed over the years. Maureen Connor retired, and Chloë Bass has adeptly stepped in. The Queens Museum has had a couple of new directors and new staff. The Mellon Foundation provided a transformational grant that will allow for an expansion of the program CUNY-wide. But I still see the potential of the program in that seminar, which has stayed in my mind as a wonderful moment of collaboration. In the discussion of social practice art, one category is the "micro-utopia." By this, critics mean the creation of a space and time where dialogue is open, where people are engaged in a remarkable experience of communication and social interplay, temporary though it may be. This might be a moment

where folks share pad Thai in a gallery installation created by Rirkrit Tiravanija or a community festival at Project Row Houses in Houston. Perhaps nostalgically, I am thinking of the *Transforming Corona Plaza* class in those terms. It was a moment where a lot was on the table, and social art was being put into practice. It was an academic course with an outstanding faculty, but it was also designed as a special moment for students to have input into the daily urban fabric. I hope my memory is not blurred in a haze of nostalgia, but to me that seminar was a social practice moment in itself, a micro-utopia where theory met practice on Roosevelt Avenue.

Floor Grootenhuis
and Joel Murphy

- b. Nairobi, Kenya, 1974
- b. Honolulu, Hawaii, 1968

inPulse
2021

Installation with heart sensors,
chairs, and interactive video projec-
tion, variable duration
Courtesy the artists

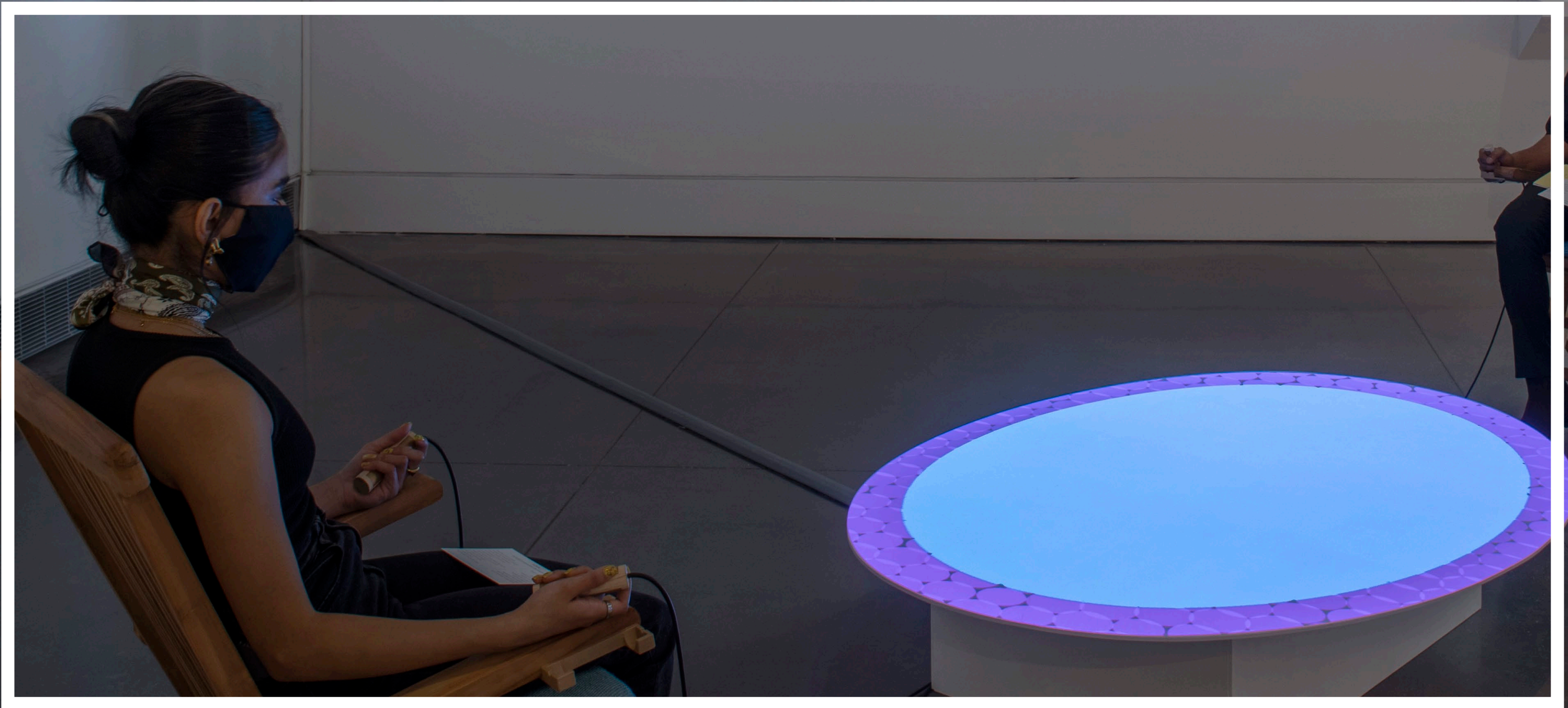
inPulso
2021

Instalación con sensores cardíacos,
sillas y proyección de vídeo interac-
tiva, duración variable
Cortesía de los artistas

Breathing together, and breathing out fully, improves our well-being. *inPulse* invites you to connect consciously to yourself and others through your heart and breath. This project uses sensors to detect connections that occur between two people's heartbeats, and visualizes these connections through video projection. You are invited to activate the work by sitting in the chairs and holding the sensors. As you follow the breathing prompt, your heartbeat will become more in sync with your breath. If another visitor participates with you, your heartbeats will eventually begin to sync to one another.

Respirar juntos y exhalar en profundidad mejora nuestro bienestar. *inPulso* nos invita a conectar de forma consciente con nosotros mismos y con los demás a través de nuestro corazón y nuestra respiración. Este proyecto utiliza sensores para detectar las conexiones entre los latidos del corazón de dos personas diferentes y representa estas conexiones a través de la proyección de un vídeo. Le invitamos a activar la obra: siéntese en una silla y tome los sensores. Conforme siga el indicador de su respiración, sus pulsaciones se sincronizarán con la misma. Si otro visitante participa con usted, sus latidos irán sincronizándose poco a poco.





N a o m i

K u o

b. Houston, Texas, 1991

Flushing Art Tours #1 - 3
2019-2021

Printed paper booklets
Courtesy the artists

Tours de arte en Flushing # 1 - 3
2019-2021

Folleto de papel impreso
Cortesía de la artista

With her project *Flushing Art Tours*, Naomi Kuo investigates how Asian Americans derive a sense of identity through their relationships to place. Pursuing this question through personal knowledge networks, Kuo focuses on Flushing, Queens, in particular, where Asians are the majority. Kuo invites friends and friends of friends, to co-lead 3-person, interactive walks. The walks are documented in booklets that allow others to retrace their steps and follow their wandering insights, and connect with varied perceptions of the same neighborhood.

Con su proyecto *Tours de arte en Flushing*, Naomi Kuo investiga la forma en la que los estadounidenses de ascendencia asiática obtienen un sentido de identidad a través de los vínculos con lugares. Al plantearse esta cuestión a través de redes de experiencia personal, Kuo se centra en particular en Flushing, Queens, donde la comunidad asiática es mayoritaria. La artista invita a los amigos, y a amigos de amigos, a dirigir paseos interactivos de 3 personas. Estos paseos se documentan en folletos que permiten a otros participantes recorrer los mismos itinerarios, compartir las reflexiones que suscita el paseo y conectar con percepciones diversas del mismo barrio.



Tent, Trellis, Spaceship II
2021

Fabric, plastic, paper, wood, tape,
string, recycled materials
Courtesy the artist

Tienda, enrejado, nave espacial II
2021

Tejido, plástico, papel, madera, cinta,
hilo, materiales reciclados
Cortesía de la artista

Tent, Trellis, Spaceship, is sculpture that is rebuilt from repurposed materials in each of its iterations. The work is intended as a nod to the resilience and resourcefulness of the residents of Flushing. It is common to see scrap wood and metal cobbled together to support productive, edible gardens in the small yards and balconies of many Asian American families in the neighborhood. Various outdoor dining structures now occupy similar marginal spaces along the streets, adding to the distinctiveness of that urban environment. Made of trash found in Flushing, Kuo's tent-like form shares this industrious and hopeful spirit, and encourages imagination.

Tienda, enrejado, nave espacial, es una escultura que se vuelve a construir a partir de materiales readaptados en cada repetición. La obra se concibe como un reconocimiento a la resiliencia y a la ingeniosidad de los residentes de Flushing. Es muy común ver restos de madera y metal que conforman huertos improvisados en los pequeños patios y balcones de muchas familias de ascendencia asiática del barrio. Ahora, diversas estructuras de comedores exteriores ocupan espacios marginales similares en las calles, una característica distintiva de este entorno urbano. Hecho de la basura encontrada en Flushing, la estructura en forma de tienda de Kuo comparte este espíritu diligente y optimista y estimula la imaginación.



J u l i a n

L o u i s

P h i l l i p s

b. Brooklyn, NY, 1988

The Feel of the Police

2018

Concrete, steel, party lights, and
color acetate

Courtesy the artist

La sensación de la policía

2018

Concreto, acero, luces de fiesta y
acetato de color

Cortesía del artista

Feel of the Police mimics the visual sensation that accompanies the sound of police sirens. This sculptural light installation invokes overwhelming anxiety felt by those who are targeted rather than protected by police presence.

La sensación de la policía imita la apariencia visual que acompaña al sonido de las sirenas de policía. Esta instalación escultural iluminada evoca la ansiedad agobiante que sienten aquellos que son víctimas de la presencia policial en vez de sentirse protegidos por la misma.



Notes on (Dis)Placement
2019

Video, sound, 7:17; and publication
Courtesy the artist

Notas sobre el (des)alojo
2019

Vídeo monocal, sonido, 7:17 mins.,
y una publicación
Cortesía del artista

[Direct link to video.](#)

Notes on (Dis)Placement is an ongoing multimedia project in which Phillips explores themes related to home and gentrification through his personal remembrance of his childhood home in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. Phillips' research-based practice includes family interviews, walking practices, videos and zine-making that address the tension and loss felt when returning home to a place that has undergone systematic change.

Notas sobre el (des)alojo es un proyecto multimedia en curso en el que Phillips explora temas relacionados con el alojamiento y la gentrificación a través de sus recuerdos personales del hogar de su infancia en Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. La práctica basada en la investigación de Phillips incluye entrevistas familiares, paseos, vídeos y creación de fanzines que se refiere a los sentimientos de tensión y pérdida al regresar a casa y tomar conciencia de que es un lugar sometido al cambio sistemático.



An interview between
Maureen Connor,
Social Practice
Queens Co-Founder,
and SPQ student
Brianna Harlan

March 2021

Maureen Connor (MC): How do I explain what I do with community members? I sometimes begin with a line that -- this is more general, not just for partners but community members or people who I meet that want to know what my work is about, which is-- "I'd like to tell you about my work, but I might have to wake you up when I finish." That usually gets a laugh and people tend to relax. Then, my next dilemma is how to proceed. Do I follow my impulse to present my work in a way that will be kind of shocking? For example, I've been working on a project for the last four years about abortion and contraception. So, I might say that I plant gardens of herbs and plants that have been used for thousands of years for abortions. I usually get wide eyes and surprised looks. Then I go on to explain that herbal abortion has been a practice for centuries and that it was in fact legal until the mid nineteenth century, as long as it was done before quickening, which is when the mother feels the baby start to move. In fact using these herbs was not considered

abortion as we know it, but rather a process of bringing on the menses. Since this is new information for many people, and by implication addresses the stigma attached to abortion, it usually creates more curiosity about what I'll say next. At the same time, I'm somewhat ambivalent about introducing my work by evoking a bit of shock--to manipulate people into paying attention through surprise or even fear. That's not the response I want. I don't want to provoke the stigma I'm trying to eliminate. I explain that reproductive justice is complicated. It's not just about access to abortion but the representation of a broad range of rights; access to health care, housing, child care and poverty in general. The project is not about increasing abortion rights but learning what it means to address all these problems. I'm experimenting now with other methods of presenting the work, but it seems in many ways one of the contradictions of social practice that often the most reliable way to reach people, isn't necessarily the best way to present social practice proj-

ects. To summarize, I haven't really found the best way. I'm looking, it's an experiment.

Brianna Harlan (BH): Ok. That's also a really good answer that you ended with. It's really difficult for me to explain what I do and so I'm trying to learn from other people and exchange some tips there. Number 2: how have you seen social practice art and Social Practice Queens change in the last ten years?

MC: When Tom Finkelpearl first approached the Queens College art department about partnering with the Queens Museum to create a Social Practice program, social practice was much less well-known and often met with skepticism. Now as we all know it's become more accepted and is part of many institutional programs, exhibitions and public projects. But then, for me it felt like a field, if one could even call it that at the time, that was full of hope and possibility. Subsequently I feel that social practice has become a bit institutionalised and that it now comes with a set

of expectations that go back to the problem in the first question. When you're presenting what your work is about, first you have to get past certain expectations that people will have about what they've seen and understood to be social practice. It's like teaching sculpture, which I did for many many years. When you ask the question 'what is sculpture?' the first thing students say, especially those who really don't have much background in art is "oh it's a statue" or "it's a kind of public monument." That's what defines sculpture at a basic level. So you have to work from there.

I would start by putting a chair on the table and saying, "I consider this a piece of sculpture," and then talk about why, and why not, and get all the pushback until the conversation reaches a point where the differences between objects and their meaning and function begin to be identified. So, what I'm suggesting is to present social practice as a very broad and generous field full of possibilities that are as potentially hopeful and forward

looking as I thought they were a decade ago. I know it's difficult with all the boundaries institutions can create, especially the institution of CUNY. It's a hierarchy and you can't get past it. And all of the contradictions, again, selectivity, it's "open," but it's not that open to everyone, it costs a lot of money, or at least more money than many people can afford. Although it's cheaper than a lot of other places. I mean it's great that the Mellon Grant has brought in scholarships, I think that's a fantastic change and I hope it will help reduce some of those contradictions. But it's not just CUNY, working with any institution, you confront many gatekeepers and hierarchies. One of the things I felt when we started the program was that social practice didn't have all of those hierarchies and sticking points where judgments and exclusions take place. But now more and more it does, and I think that's a difficult place to be. There's been community art and all different kinds of public art and many different forms of social engagement. Everything is kind of so-

cial practice when it comes down to it. Like this is social practice, what we're doing, having this conversation. We learn how to do it from the time we're born. So, that's one of the great things about it, but it's also something to try to hold onto as basic to the field--making direct social connections.

My friend, the artist Susan Jahoda and I started a Pedagogy Group in 2012 that is still ongoing. The discussions we had really helped me understand these contradictions. While I had the context of the social practice program at Queens College to work with, Susan was trying to bring more socially engaged projects into her teaching at the University of Massachusetts. So we were talking a lot about "what is the pedagogy of social practice and how do you develop it?" So again, it was an open field really, full of possibility. Sometimes we worked backwards from what we didn't want it to be. One focus of discussion was the group critique. We talked about how unproductive they often are, yet they have played an essen-

tial role in art pedagogy. We considered how to challenge the psychology and even the humanity of the crit--that tough love often dominates crits and that didn't seem to be the way to go. I know Jeff Kasper, from the Social Practice program has been working on this and he's been coming to the Pedagogy Group recently. He's talked about how we all became artists because we felt that making art was a haven in some way, and an identity. When that need pushes against the kind of tough love approach that's common in a critique, such as making aggressive comments about someone's work, people begin to feel judged and even excluded. We weren't saying there shouldn't be feedback and dialogue but rather wanted to reconsider the terms used and the challenging and often provocative approach that was both anticipated and feared by students. As I just said, social practice is what we do. Everybody knows what it is, so how does it all of a sudden become this hierarchical thing that we as faculty are expert in?

BH: How has your involvement with Social Practice Queens influenced your work?

MC: Well the Pedagogy Group is one way, starting that and being involved in that. In the beginning we met every week, working to develop a shared curriculum, but also our own individual syllabi. So it was really a working group: "... I tried this, then I tried that..." "Did it work?" "No, everybody was silent!" Things like that. Some of the students were very skeptical, because they weren't necessarily self-selected for a Social Practice class either. You know how it works at CUNY, you have to take a seminar and students don't necessarily [want to] take the one you're teaching. But sometimes yours is the only one offered so if they want to graduate they have to. What is the best way to work with a group like that? So that was a really difficult but interesting time. I felt like it had a huge influence on my practice in general and also for me as a teacher. I felt like I needed to be very direct but also to try not to force an ideology onto anyone.

My work has always been involved in issues of feminism and social interaction, but I kind of backed into the field of social practice through projects that I started doing at art institutions, in which I focused on them as places where people work rather than just public spaces where exhibitions take place. I was trying to understand the hierarchies of the institutions I worked in, but also how they served as gatekeepers. And also how their employees were exploited, overworked, underpaid, and that they accepted this because art institutions are prestigious places to be affiliated with. So, that's a big part of the labor around the presentation of art as well as the fact that one person or two people get the credit for a big museum exhibition, you know? How is it that for example, movies and plays are produced with a whole list of people that get credited, but in a museum that doesn't happen? So from that perspective I was already in that mindset, when I started focusing on teaching social practice. I tried to keep those questions about hierarchies in mind.

Social Practice Queens has access to faculty who are very knowledgeable in the fields of social science, humanities and sciences. One of the problems I sometimes find in well intentioned social practice work is a tendency to reinvent the wheel because artists aren't familiar with work from other fields and that practitioners in those fields have been working on similar issues with some success for many years. Also, I think we don't want to take on the role of being therapists. That was one of the things that happened to me when I was doing my research about the art institution as a workplace. I would interview every staff member--anybody that would talk to me about their work. I would ask about the workplace and what it felt like for them. How are the working conditions? Do you have privacy? Can you concentrate? I also asked about social relationships. I would get a lot of information and some of it was disturbing. I felt really unqualified to deal with a lot of it. I didn't feel that I should try to be a therapist. That's one reason why I think the more Social Prac-

tice Queens can work with faculty and students in other departments with other expertise, the better. I think in general that's a problem with social practice, that artists don't have certain interpersonal (or other kinds of) expertise and often don't realize they need it until they are in the middle of a difficult situation. The idea of bringing an artist into a non art group is that they will introduce the kind of framing artists can offer, e.g. not thinking according to a set of rules--often they don't even know those rules. Working with people can be challenging and every situation is different so the more you can learn about human behavior from as many different perspectives as possible the better able you'll be to deal with the unexpected.

I certainly learned a lot from Greg Sholette, who lived through, documented and participated in decades of socially engaged art as it became what we now call social practice. I also learned so much from Tom Finkelpearl who brought information about international public

art and artists, many of whom were not well known in the US. His guidance, his openness to and trust in artists and the work they do, what they could offer to the world, added to the sense of potential inherent in developing a social practice program. Tarry Hum, an Urban Studies professor at Queens College was also an invaluable mentor. Together with Greg and Tom Finkelpearl, we taught a class, Transforming Corona Plaza, that combined a group of undergraduate Urban Studies students with our MFA and BFA students to redesign a public space in the Corona section of Queens. She brought her social science knowledge and experience about how to best approach a low income, multicultural immigrant community, e.g. how to manage interviews with stakeholders, even as she helped us understand what a stakeholder is. I don't mean to say that it was a bureaucratic approach; it was an incredible way to understand how different members of a community could engage with local issues that impacted them. Also, her students were really sophisticated about politics,

social issues, and poverty in a way that art students don't tend to be. So that was a great learning experience for everyone. And Prerana Reddy, who was working at the Queens Museum organizing programs for and with all of the different communities in Corona, I was really kind of in awe of her. Going back to your first question--how do you share what you want to do with a range of people from different backgrounds and get them to participate? It seemed effortless for Prerana.

Since then I have found that outside the context of an institution it's not always so easy to find scholars and activists who are interested in working with artists. Often they tend to be skeptical about bringing an artist into the process. And I understand their fears about how artists, or newcomers of any kind might disrupt the trust they have built with a community. So I feel like artists really need to prepare themselves before they approach someone about working with them as a partner on a social practice project. You need to research the

issues deeply, consider what might be the different perspectives and interests of everyone involved and imagine how you could really contribute something to a particular context or community.

For example with the abortion projects I mentioned which are produced by a collective that I work with called *how to perform an abortion*, we brought together gynecologists and lawyers who specialize in reproductive rights and also herbalists. They came with a lot of their own expertise, but also their own sets of questions about what we're doing. Many doctors still react by saying, this is dangerous, encouraging people to take herbs for abortion is a dangerous thing. So we have to be very clear that we're not recommending it as a method of abortion. We explain that we're presenting the history rather than the methodology, that we're talking about how it used to be an experience that women learned about and performed in private with other women. We explain that there's a lot of ancient knowledge that goes

into performing a successful herbal abortion and much of it has been lost, that we don't really know how to grow the herbs and prepare them to be effective and safe anymore. It's our responsibility to make the public aware of that.

Another example from my experience is working with lawyers, reproductive rights lawyers: They might feel like they have really been in the trenches, and here are some artists who come along, what do they know about how to approach legal issues? Artists may have been part of some protests and various other kinds of activism, but we haven't been in a courtroom arguing and dealing with the crazy specifics of abortion law or understand the backroom deals and manipulation abortion opponents engage in to make aspects of abortion illegal.

So that's the other side that I feel needs to be addressed. Maybe it could be interesting for Social Practice Queens students and faculty to have that conversation with faculty and students in other departments.

They could ask about their hesitations and resistances and fears about working together with artists on a community project.

So . . . anyway, essential tools that I depend on, or questions. Okay, so I have a few questions. First: Who is most served by this project? Does it actually address a problem that needs solving? And what do I need to know about this problem, and what is the best way to learn it? And that goes back to what I was just saying. A certain amount of it is your own research, you have to make yourself really knowledgeable and then from there you can start to reach out.

As I was saying before, when I approach, say, the gynecologist or somebody else that I want to work with, and I want to have a conversation about the project with, I feel like I need to know what they're dealing with rather than just coming in and asking questions from the point of view of, *oh yeah, this is an art project and we wanna do this and what do you think?* And a

lot of people are gonna say, well, I think it's a terrible idea, it could be dangerous! In fact a lot of the abortion herbs, if you take too much, if you take them in combination, in the wrong way, it could be fatal. It's not just a harmless little art project, so it's important to keep that kind of thing in mind. I feel like just understanding our own lack of knowledge as artists and also thinking about, as I said: who is served by this project? Is it me? Am I the most served because I'm getting to do the research and maybe it's being funded? And I try to really think that one through because that's the bottom line.

BH: Definitely, definitely, that was a great answer. Is there an outcome or impact from one of your projects that you still think about often?

MC: Yes, well, I decided I would talk about a project that I did with another collective that Greg Sholette and I founded together with a group of MFA students in 2008 called the Institute for Wishful Thinking. Just to give some backstory, which

I also think is part of SPQ history, even though the formal program didn't begin until 2010: Greg had been invited write a catalog essay and also to make a proposal to do a project for a biennial in Iasi, Romania with the theme of art as gift. He asked if I had any ideas about how we might make it a collective project and bring students* in. So based on Greg's generosity as well as the exhibition's theme I brought my 'art institution as workplace' lens to the challenge. Since I assumed the gift theme would not include any special care or attention to the biennial's production staff, I proposed offering them wishes for what they felt would make their behind the scenes work for the exhibition more pleasant and productive. The concept as well as the process developed alot after that first iteration but basically it's a more indirect and hopefully more productive way of addressing critique: what would you like, what's important to you in this situation, how would you want to change it?

In 2009 the Institute for Wishful Thinking created a project for an academic conference at the University of Warwick in Coventry, UK. Its presentations were based on a new field called Critical Management Studies, a recent addition to the business school curriculum-- post-modernism applied to management practices. MBAs take courses in Critical Management Studies that include readings about psychoanalysis, feminism, essays by Foucault, Marx and Judith Butler and consider the questions such texts raised in relation to capitalist values. One of the things I understood about Critical Management Studies was that its scholars were really good at being critical, but they hardly ever offered real solutions to any of the problems they would present. So I challenged everybody (there were probably about 120 people who were presenting at this conference) to consider the (business, management, capitalist derived, etc.) problem that they were speaking about, and come up with three approaches (or wishes) that would address and perhaps solve the problem.

I didn't get a lot of responses, but I did get some really interesting ones. One of them was about something that at the time I knew very little about--the ship breaking industry. I don't know if you're familiar with...

BH: I did research about it when I was looking up your work, so I know a little bit about it.

MC: Ship breaking refers to the final disposal or 'recycling' of ships containing hazardous materials. Ships that a few decades ago might have been considered obsolete and taken out of service are instead provisionally repaired and sent back out to deliver cargo even though they are barely seaworthy. For example an old luxury cruise-liner would be repurposed to carry freight and end up a battered, polluting wreck by the time it was finally decommissioned. Once ships are identified to be broken, captains drive them right up onto a beach, usually the beaches of South Asia. Then day workers climb onto the ships and use hand tools to take

them apart piece by piece and sell the parts in local markets, often as scrap metal. While international courts have passed laws to reduce the pollution as well as the danger to workers, ship breaking practices are difficult to control because of the poverty and scarcity of steady jobs as well as the need for raw materials in the (often developing) countries in which it occurs.

So Professor George Cairns of RMIT University, Melbourne made a presentation at the conference about shipbreaking and responded to my challenge. One of his 'wishes' was to bring a 'dead ship,' or a ship that was ready to be junked, into the port of every major city worldwide and let them deal with it, see what happens. So we thought about how we might present that idea.

And then later that same year another opportunity came up: a building at the corner of Bleeker and Lafayette Streets in Manhattan, known among activists as the Peace Pentagon, had served as a home for dozens of activist groups and pro-

gressive organizations for over 40 years and was in need of major repairs. There was a call for proposals organized by a group called Friends of 339 (based on their address 339 Lafayette St.) that included the building's owners, the War Resisters League, founded in 1923, (and their nonprofit, the A.J. Muste Institute (1974) who offered safe space to progressive organizations threatened by government harassment) and the rest of the Peace Pentagon's tenants. They worked together with architect Nandini Bagchee and artist Maureen Shea to invite architects and artists to redesign the building according to the prompt: "how can a building mobilize for peace and justice?" Their hope was that the call and its surrounding publicity would bring attention to the building as a symbol of peace activism in New York City and help raise funds to repair and maintain it. <http://peacepentagon-competition.net/introduction.html>

So the Institute for Wishful Thinking made a proposal titled S.O.S. Peace Pentagon to replace the building

with an obsolete ship that, instead of being taken apart in South Asia, would be brought to New York to replace the Peace Pentagon building and be renovated to serve as offices for the progressive organizations that were its tenants. Our proposal also mandated that the renovations of the ship include the teaching of best practices for ship building as well as ship breaking, bringing interested workers from South Asia to learn the trade.

We were very pleasantly surprised when the project was selected as one of the first prize winners in the competition. There were a number of exhibitions around it, and we gave talks and participated in discussions about more progressive urban development. But during that time and for the next few years Friends of 339 tried to raise money to do some of the basic renovations, and they couldn't even get that. The will (and the money) just weren't there.

In the end, the building was sold, evacuated, renovated and rebrand-

ed as KITH, which is now a sneaker store--a large three storey building devoted to selling sneakers. I don't know what state it's in now post-COVID, but it was really a focus for brand names and what I would call faux street culture. To me, it was so ironic as to be hilarious, really, that this is how the Peace Pentagon ended up. And the interesting thing was they didn't tear the building down, they just repaired it in what seemed like the most basic way and used it. Of course there's absolutely no reference to any of the history of the building now. So that's something that I think about, not fondly, but just to keep a perspective on what's possible in this field. I know that probably sounds kind of pessimistic, but I think of it as not letting my expectations get too high.

BH: (laughs) I do think that you did answer some of these...

MC: ...Other questions.

BH: Mhmm. Yeah. you definitely did. So unless you see one that you re-

ally want to add something to, we can wrap the interview here.

MC: I think we can. Yeah, I was gonna answer the one about art spaces, but I've said a lot about that already, social practice and art spaces. And also hurdles to doing social practice -- I just wanna say capitalism. You know, we're all in the trenches on that one, but the danger of getting involved with corporate sponsorship which results in greenwashing or pinkwashing, that's really problematic.

Anyway, this has been lovely, you're a great audience, very expressive, thank you. I noticed that sometimes you were trying not to laugh out loud. That's very rewarding, in terms of feeling like I'm having an impact but also that my critiques are not too harsh. I hope I don't sound too negative and also a little judgmental...too much of the tough love I was critical of earlier.

BH: You sound very thoughtful, which is good and completely nec-

essary in the field that we're in as artists, so I appreciate it.

*Queens College MFA students who participated in the Institute for Wishful Thinking since 2008 include Andrea DeFelice, Sheiko Kirby, Matt Mahler, John Pavlou, Nathania Rubin; Bibi Calderaro and Tommy Mintz joined in 2011.

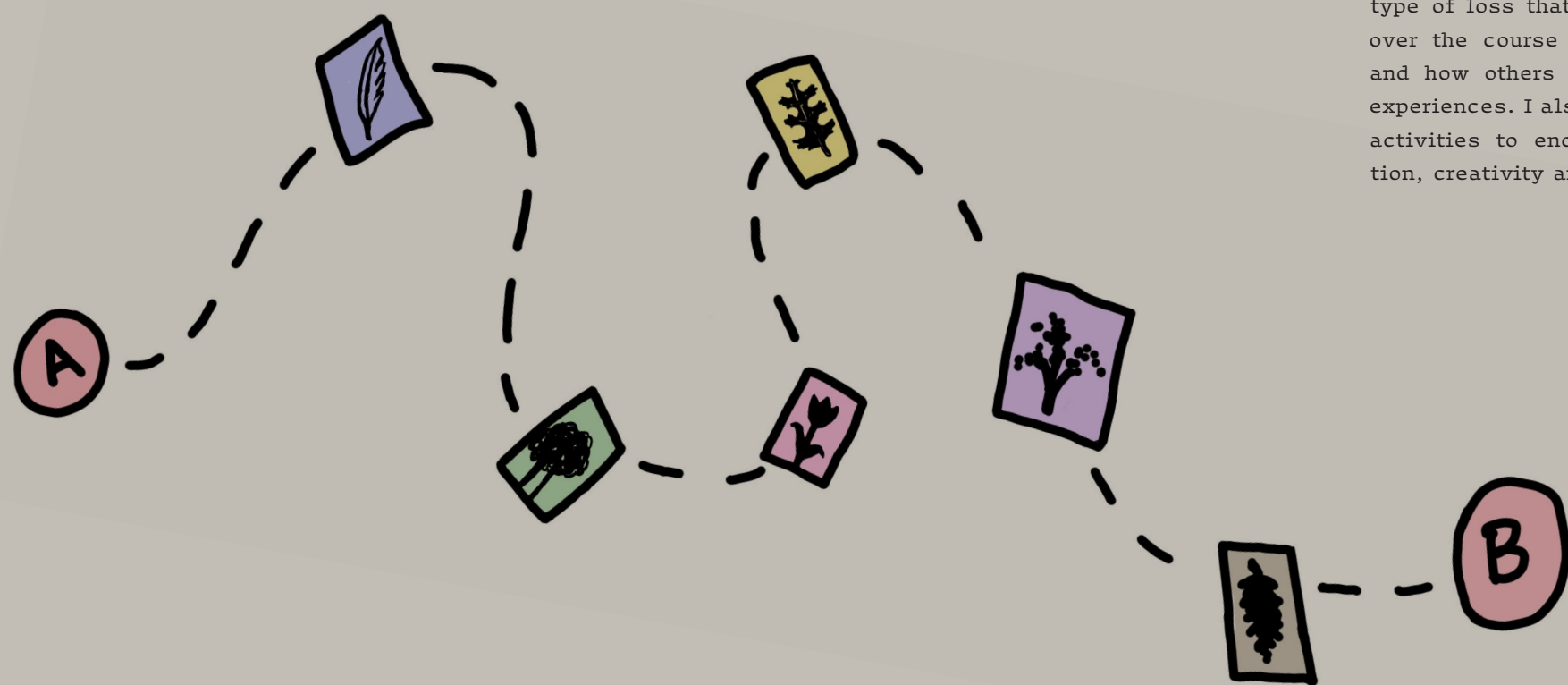
P u b l i c P r o g r a m s : A l l T h i n g s M u s t P a s s

Cristina Ferrigno
April 29, 2021

[Access the zine here.](#)

Exactly 1 year ago, on March 15th of 2020, I submitted a proposal for a public program in conjunction with *Art as Social Action:10 Years of Social Practice Queens* at the Queens Museum. For months we had no idea if, or when the museum would re-open, what the programming would look like with social distancing precautions and if the show would happen at all. So in January 2021, when I received the email that the exhibition was still on, I had to amend my original proposal of a face to face group zine workshop. I wanted to come up with something that was adaptable and relevant for the exhibit and much

more personal and heartfelt. In losing my father this past year amidst societal COVID isolation, I felt I had something to say about grief, translating my deeply personal experiences, pain and inner thought processes outward-- taking something intimate and examining it with a sort of universal or macro perspective. In conceiving of and writing *All Things Must Pass*, I tried to create a public program that could take place on-site at the museum or at home, a solo activity that was independently driven and hopefully provoking more personal and reflective thought.



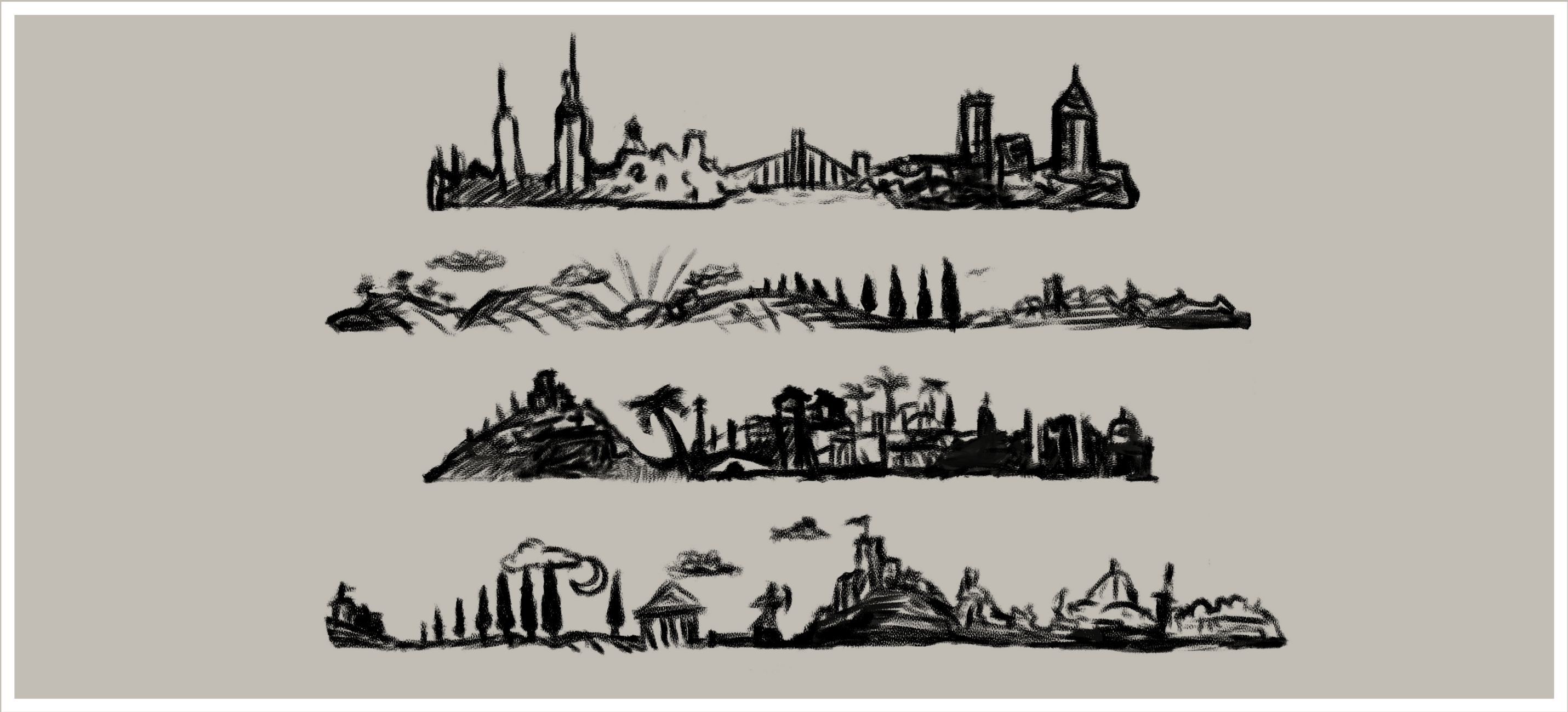
The themes throughout this zine explore healing, processing grief & loss, mindfulness and art as a mental health strategy. In each section I talk a little bit about a particular type of loss that I've experienced over the course of 2020 (and on) and how others may have similar experiences. I also have prompts or activities to encourage introspection, creativity and empathy.

The activities I include, range from physical to mental to emotional and the types of loss I cover are listed below:

- Loss of a Loved One*
- Loss of Work*
- Loss of Place*
- Loss of Mobility*
- Loss of Senses*
- Loss of Touch*
- Loss of Privacy*
- Loss of Structure*
- Loss of Purpose*
- Loss of Community*

I also dedicated a page and activity to Gratitude, as it is always something to keep in mind while grieving. One recent pop culture quote, from WandaVision, that really spoke to me was, "What is grief, if not love persevering?"





P u b l i c P r o g r a m s : C a l l a n d R e s p o n s e

Brianna Harlan
Ongoing throughout the exhibition

Call and Response collected the thoughts and feedback of visitors to Art As Social Action throughout the exhibition's run. Midway, the original cards were revised, adding four additional emotional responses to artworks that visitors could choose from (in addition to a write-in option). People's responses to socially engaged artworks can be complicated, and space should exist to express those complications. We don't always have the resources to activate viewers of an exhibition, or to hear their thoughts. These cards are a method both to engage and prompt the viewer to be more present in their relationship to the work, and to give the artist a response to their creative call for engagement. The finished cards represent a collection of informative, constructive, and diverse dynamics and reactions at play in response to complex topics that touch us in personal ways.

we engage with art, we hope that it will speak to us in some way. Harlan has created a card for each artwork on view in Art As Social Action, featuring a series of prompts that encourage you to "speak back." Standing in front of each work with its corresponding card, you are invited to take note of and record your reactions. What is your position in

Once completed, drop the card into the submission box at the other end of the gallery.

Llamada y respuesta es una encuesta participativa diseñada por la estudiante de SFQ Brianna Harlan para recopilar información acerca de la respuesta emocional de los visitantes a la exposición. Cuando nos dedicamos al arte, esperamos que nos hable de algún modo. Harlan ha creado una tarjeta para cada obra de arte expuesta en Art As Social Action que anima al visitante a de indicaciones que animan al visitante a "responder". Cuando se encuentra frente a cada obra con su tarjeta correspondiente, puede anotar y registrar sus reacciones. ¿Qué posición adopta respecto al propósito inicial de la obra? Una vez haya completado su tarjeta, la puede introducir en el buzón de propuestas en el otro extremo de la galería.

Pick up a Call & Response survey here.



Alix Camacho-Vargas

b. Bogotá, Colombia, 1985

Informes de Paisajes Caminados, 2021

Mapa de viaje, sitio web y grabaciones de audio, duraciones variables

1. Marque (subraye o rodee con un círculo) sus respuestas emocionales ante la obra:

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Interés | Indignación | Miedo |
| Alegria Sorpresa | Desprecio | Vergüenza |
| Tristeza | Hostilidad | Timidez |
| Enfado | hacia unx mismx | Culpa |

2. Rodee o describa de forma breve el aspecto de la obra que le provoque la reacción más fuerte.

Alegria y con ganas de hacer mi propia descripción

3. ¿Qué papel desempeñaría en la situación que presenta la obra? (p.ej. superviviente, agresorx, espectadorx, testigx, participante, entusiasta, participante involuntarix, etc.)

Participante entusiasta

4. ¿Cómo se siente respecto a su respuesta a la pregunta 3?

Entusiasmada

Julian Louis Phillips

b. Brooklyn, NY, 1988

The Feel of the Police, 2018

Concrete, steel, party lights, and color acetate

1. Mark emotional responses:

- | | | | |
|----------|---------|---------|------------|
| Interest | Anger | Shyness | Love |
| Joy | Disgust | Guilt | Confusion |
| Surprise | Fear | Shock | Excitement |
| Sadness | Shame | Calm | Motivation |

2. Circle or briefly state the moment in the work that strikes you the most.

As a Mexican, being afraid of the police is deeply engrained in me

3. What would your position be in the artist's topic? (i.e. survivor, aggressor, bystander, witness, participant, enthusiast, unwilling participant, etc.)

Survivor

4. Write emotional response to question 3.

Anxious

would you follow up on the topic? Yes/No

An interview between
Prerana Reddy
and SPQ student
Brianna Harlan

March 2021

Brianna Harlan (BH): How do you explain to community members and partners what you do?

Prerana Reddy (PR): That's a trickier question now that I'm not necessarily working fulltime for an institution, nor am I a social practice artist myself. I think that question depends on when you ask it. So right now I engage community in a couple of different ways—one being where I live in the Rockaways, and being part of the board of Rockaway Initiative for Sustainability and Equity (*ed. note: formerly the Rockaway Waterfront Alliance*), which is a creative youth development organization that also engages issues of social and ecological sustainability and how that impacts different coastal communities in unequal ways.

I've always been interested in how folks engage public space, so I've been lucky enough to be a sub-consultant working with the Governors Island to develop a public art plan. This is really exciting because it is both a public park, a city-owned

amenity, but it's also now home to a huge artistic community who are residents on the island. They're also hoping to eventually host a climate solutions research center. So what's the synergistic mix amongst a public park, an artist community, and a research center?

In the most plain but not terribly exciting or illustrative term I'm an arts administrator. So sometimes I describe myself as a doula for artistic projects. My role has been thinking about how to bring community members and creative people together in mutually respectful and generative ways. I both help them come up with a process that feels right for them to develop projects, as well as help them work through some of the challenges in their relationship as it moves forward from idea to implementation, or rather, the public-facing aspects of the project. I'm mediating amongst the institution, public or community, and the creative team or artist, and that's where I find my creativity and meaning.

BH: How have you seen social practice art and Social Practice Queens change in the past 10 years?

PR: I worked at the Queens Museum from 2004 to 2016, and my role was to build out what eventually became the Public Programming and Community Engagement department. Our biggest question was: what is this museum space for? For the Queens community more generally, and more particularly for the community that lives closest to the museum. We were trying to figure out how what happens inside the museum's walls could reflect the cultural and artistic diversity of Queens, and how we could become resource for cultural producers, whether or not they were recognized institutionally elsewhere.

Secondly, we wanted to move beyond our walls. The museum is located in a flagship public park. What does that space around it mean? How can we contribute to park users' cultural experience? And beyond that to understand how this public space affects them, and to help them have

a greater decision-making role in its design, usage, and stewardship.

On a third level, we asked what does it mean to be in between the Flushing and Corona neighborhoods, which are both hubs for very diverse immigrant communities, but also communities that weren't necessarily museum users? What does it mean for the institution to take a role in understanding those communities' cultural needs and to become a welcoming and creative interface between them and what we had as an institution? How could we bring our educators, designers, artists and staff to the community as an asset, without always requiring people coming to the museum to interface with us?

That eventually evolved into us having full-time community organizers on staff, developing public art projects in the community and working on public spaces out there. A lot of the community wanted to create a public plaza in Corona. The museum was very much involved in creating a process of making a public plaza

that was truly democratic, and that could function as one of the centers of cultural life. At first a lot of the artists that we worked with had good intentions as far as wanting to give something back to the community, but didn't necessarily have all of the tools that they needed to do work that really felt embedded in the community or understanding of the community culture. And sometimes, we as an institution were the problem because we were expecting them to produce projects without giving them the resources and time to develop those relationships. It's not all on the artist whether those projects worked or not. It was the whole setup. So we were trying to rethink this whole idea—that we just commission people to do works in the public, but we support them with our community organizers and the relationships we have built ourselves over time. We were also thinking about how what we were learning could be useful to how artists who engage in social practice are being trained, and what they were missing in their training. Traditional MFA programs in social

practice (that were mostly based on the west coast) were still coming out of art schools. They may have had interdisciplinary connections in the community, but they weren't based in public universities. And they weren't coming from the idea that there were all these non-arts skills that were going to be useful, whether that's urban planning or labor studies. The idea is that if you were really going to do social practice that you needed to bring a set of tools and a set of knowledge that was going to be broader than what an arts school could provide.

So Greg Sholette and Maureen Connor reached out to us about developing something out of the Queens College MFA program, and we were interested in partnering. Queens College is a place that's super diverse. Because it's a public institution, folks that have New York state residency would have in-state tuition. They would be part of the CUNY system. We felt like the museum had so many projects going on, both in the community, as well as through our exhibition-making.

That would give students some real opportunities to engage artists and their practice directly, as well the community members that we were working with. They'd have that experience participating in long-term community-based work and understanding that dynamic.

It felt like both institutions were trying to figure something out, and we both had that openness to discovering what that curriculum could be. Actually, when we first started, our community organizer Jose Serrano-McClain became an MFA candidate. So we really had this sense of there being a conduit between the two institutions. I think the first cohort definitely had a lot of artists who were already doing projects in Queens of various sorts. This was already a meaningful place to do work for them.. That was really exciting for us.

At the same time, we had the Immigrant Movement International project that was just about to start up with Cuban artist Tania Bruguera, in collaboration with Creative Time.

That was a project that had its own space outside in the community. That was one area that Social Practice Queens artists had access to interfacing with, especially if their practice had to do with pedagogy or immigrant rights. We also had things like a major retrospective exhibition of Mierle Laderman Uekles' work, where students were able to collaborate with my team, the curator, and the artist to develop programming around her practice that translated the history of her practice into what's going on now in the areas she was concerned about: sanitation, maintenance work, women's work, peace, artists in residence in cities.

The Queens Museum also had a big exhibition with Mel Chin, so that was another opportunity. And we were expanding our building at the same time. We converted some of our older galleries into studios. There was an open call process for people to have studio space on site, but we reserved one studio as a collective workspace for Social Practice Queens so they felt like

they had a space on-site to meet or collaborate.

Those are some of the different ways during my time at the museum that we were trying to think about where the intersections between the two institutions and our work were. We really appreciated the flexibility that came with creating something that didn't have a precedent or that was going to be one size fits all for every MFA certificate candidate. They had their own practices, and some of them fit very well with some things that the museum had going on and some not as directly. So there might be opportunities for developing workshops, or exhibition opportunities for some artists in the program. For others it might be more involved in terms of the sharing of community partners.

What happened right before I left was Chloë Bass coming on board at Queens College. I think that was really an important piece of the pie in terms of what Social Practice Queens became. It meant there was someone that the students really

had that was part of the program bringing in the theory and the practice and what does it mean to do education in social practice. So that was the other piece of the three-legged stool that really brought it together.

BH: I chose the program for myself because I had been doing community organizing and development work as a career and art as a career, but separately. I wanted to combine them. So it's nice for me to hear about that history and the foundational values that were there at the beginning.

PR: What you said reminds me that another thing I liked about SPQ is also that we were interested in bringing in students who already had other careers. They weren't just going straight through from high school to college to grad school. It felt a lot more like we were dealing with grown-ups with life and job experience, and facilitation skills, who had had time to kind of develop themselves as human beings outside of academia.

BH: How has your involvement with Social Practice Queens influenced your work? What do you think is a unique or interesting aspect of Social Practice Queens?

PR: I ended up leaving Queens Museum in 2016, halfway into the lifespan of Social Practice Queens today. A lot of the institutional critique that was coming out, for example with Black Lives Matter, really got me thinking: okay, I may be from an institution that has some progressive values, that has staff who have organizing experience, that came from popular education, that have diverse backgrounds, but there's still a lot more that our institution can do. There's still a lot of challenges institutionally that we have to address. What are the resources we can, and are, bringing to artists to do the work; and are they fair? Sometimes, institutionally, because we feel like we're pushing the envelope in X, Y, Z ways, we still can have blinders on when it comes to other ways we are acting because we feel like we don't have any other option. Or we're just

tired, can't figure it out. But thinking with another institution about our own institutionality and how we function was a good mirror. And it helped having to answer future artists' questions about how do I get this done, or how do I interface with other institutions? How do I get to know curators who may have the right ethics or interest in this sort of practice?

It allowed me to ask those questions of myself and my colleagues in a way that maybe I hadn't before. And so I moved on to working at A Blade of Grass, which is an organization that supports socially engaged artists nationally through an open call, and for many years provided unrestricted funding for artists working throughout the country on these issues. It was still a non-profit organization, so it wasn't like moving into mainstream philanthropy. But I took those same artist-centric questions with me, asking, what's reasonable to ask of an artist because we're giving them money? And what are the power relationships that automatically comes with giving

money? What does it mean to document the work, or to tell the story of what's actually happening in the work? To think about that as really useful educational material for artists developing the field. Understanding the questions that the faculty were asking themselves, the students were asking themselves, the struggles people were having finding resources, or articulating the work, or figuring out outcomes . . . All of those questions were really useful for me, when I took on the role of Director of Programs at ABOG . . . to think, well, what am I asking people on the application? What is the process of the application? What kind of dialogue can we have so that it doesn't feel like a traditional grant application where you just turn it in and you get a yes or a no without really knowing why?

For example, at A Blade of Grass we have this grant application section where people actually had to create a diagram of the relationships in their project. That came about because A) a lot of people could write really nicely and have a way of de-

scribing things in words, but other people excel at being able to show what they're doing visually. So it gave people that opportunity to express their project in a different way. And B) for other people to really think about how the project isn't just what you do or what it's about, it's about who you bring together, and that's what socially engaged art is. So how are you bringing folks together? What decision-making roles are folks having in the project? That's an important thing for us to understand as people who are trying to evaluate projects, and to give as much weight to that as "well that's a really cool concept." To look at the relationships on the ground and how those have been developed. How are they thinking through the relationship throughout the project or at least the phase of the project that they're in now? So I think all of those things were things that I took from my Social Practice Queens experience to the next job.

BH: Okay, so what are some essential tools or questions that you depend on throughout your process?

PR: When I was at A Blade of Grass, one of the things that we provided on top of money was a field researcher who would help the artist tell the story of what was going on from another perspective, and be able to talk to various people in the project with more of a 360-degree view. What is the methodology that doesn't feel like someone from the outside with a clipboard is judging you, but that actually feels like something useful? How do we think about our relationship to power as we help make our practice better and more rigorous. How do you do that rigor in a loving way that reflects the work and labor and the vulnerability and the challenges and the restrictions that people are having to work with. The fact is that in any socially engaged project, no one person is in control of all the variables. Things shift on the ground. Things shift on a political level. What's going on in the world shifts, as we have seen this year in an unprecedented degree. But that's always true. You may be doing a project, and who's involved in

the project from the other partners might change for example.

I understand that that there is no roadmap. There is no timeline. But that doesn't mean there's no rigor. I worked with Stephen Duncombe from the Center for Artistic Activism. That has created a really useful tool. They call it the *AEffect Worksheet*, combining "affect" and "effect" into one. What's useful about it is they're really simple questions: What are my goals? What do I want to accomplish? Who's the audience? What are some of the principles that guide my work that are relevant to the project? What is the actual intervention? What's going to happen here that would only happen here because I, the artist, am part of the collaborative ecosystem, what is it that I'm bringing as part of the intervention? How do I know if it works? This doesn't mean it has to look the way a scientific study would look, but how would I even know if it worked or not? What would I know to look for? What are the signs and the symbols or the change in dynamics that would help

me know that I shifted something? If you don't know what you're looking for, you just believe that this is the right way of doing something. You don't quite know if it's having an effect.

And to know that this isn't the end of it. This is an iterative process. All worldbuilding is an iterative process. We don't reach abolition or utopia at the end of it. It's "what did I learn from that?" and "how can I do it better next time?" That's part of the process. So to think about whatever project I'm engaged with on that cycle and then we start again. I think of every project as this popular education spiral: we have an idea, we're going to do some research, we're going to talk to people, we're going to do something, see what happens, see what we learn out of it, and then start all over again.

That's how I would want to see artists or socially engaged projects function: to think of it as this iterative piece and not just it's all successful or it's not all success-

ful. We're engaging in very complicated dynamics socially. The point is for us to understand how what we do creates impact or transformation in the world, or changes the dynamics of power. It doesn't necessarily solve everything. But can we start to break some things down, and in doing so, what are we learning about the dynamics of power through our work?

BH: Your response is super interesting to me because I just did a workshop with People's Institute for Survival and Beyond talking about power mapping in communities. And I also just wrote into a grant to have a community psychologist travel with me to my next creative community effort for the same reasons that you're outlining. When you're an early career artist, sometimes finding language for what you're trying to do is difficult. So to hear someone who has more experience break down these things—I'm feeling grateful for being the one interviewing you.

PR: Oh, thank you! I didn't know, when we were embarking on creating Social Practice Queens, if it would last or not. You know, it's a small MFA department. I thought, if we ever lose Greg or Maureen, it's going to all fall apart. But somehow it survived. It's grown into something. To see people coming from other places, coming from Kentucky like you, and finding value in that, is awesome even if the program looks different that when I was involved. The important thing is that it's been able to shift in this moment in a way that a lot of other MFA programs haven't. A lot of them are closing down. Key faculty are leaving. And there's a lot of valid criticism about how expensive art school is; what are people getting out of it versus what's been taken from you. There's something that was there in the DNA of it from the beginning of SPQ that took that into account. It's amazing to see that the program has found additional funding from Mellon now, and that you all are doing this exhibition that looks at this history reflexively and critically. And that students are in-

involved in it and learning about what came before them in the program.

BH: Is there an outcome or impact from one of your projects that you still think about often?

PR: I spent the most amount of my working life at the Queens Museum, like 14 years in one place. In a weird way I feel like that was my biggest project: the Museum itself. What I learned about a lot of the projects is that they take on their own lives. So yes, it was important for me to be a part of this process in developing the plaza in Corona, but I learned so much myself about urban planning. I didn't have those skills from the outset. I learned it through doing it and then applied those skills in the community. And now there's a plaza and it has its own life and dynamics. It has evolved as different community organizers brought different things to it and then different community members started doing different activities there. And so it's this living, breathing thing, the same way the museum is. I remember to-

wards the end of my time there, I was struggling because of changes in leadership, changes to the structure of departments. I couldn't stay there forever, and I also wanted to grow and evolve beyond where I could take it. At first I worried that if these things changed or ended, then I failed. Immigrant Movement is no longer Immigrant Movement. It turned into Centro Corona, and it's independent of the Museum now. I could look at it as a failure, as a relationship I couldn't keep going, or I could look at it as if we hadn't done this, then Centro Corona wouldn't exist.

I don't want to take credit for what Centro Corona is doing as an organization right now. But I can say that we brought people together, we changed people's lives, it changed relationships. Relationships happened that wouldn't have happened if we hadn't been part of shepherding this project over years. It's its own thing now. What I learned is that you have to understand the small role in the process that you, individually, can play. The outcomes

were: there was a decade plus of interesting experiments and people brought together that wouldn't have been brought together. That's the outcome, is the transformation that everybody, by being put together in this moment in time through the Museum, experienced.

That said, there's a lot of things that we messed up. There's a lot of things that we'd hoped to do that didn't end up happening, both internally and externally, the relationships that I couldn't make continue.

BH: But who can be successful at everything? That shouldn't be the goal. I like what you said earlier: everything is an iteration. This work is more of a journey to get to where we want to go instead of a pass/fail.

PR: Yes. It's still an institution that is challenging itself with those questions. It's still an institution that will have an exhibition about the history of real estate; or rethink what a studio space in a museum could be; or that will turn

their space into a mutual aid center or food distribution center in a pandemic. Those aren't necessarily my projects, but to me the output is some openness about what the role of a museum can be. What can this container hold? That is an output that I'm proud of even if I wasn't successful at everything.

Honestly, the biggest hurdle to making social practice artwork is funding. Arts institutions and grants really think about projects. We're starting to see some shifts as far as more unrestricted funds and being funded to do life work instead of projects, but I think that's still the problem. I think that's the biggest hurdle for the art world in general, and that's why it makes commercialized objects, primarily. This includes people and artists as commodities. They're not just there to do projects that sound good. This is life work, and we still haven't figured out, as a society, how to think about cultural workers, period. They deserve that type of support. We haven't thought about people who take care of other people and family mem-

bers as work either. I'm not saying it's the only shortcoming we have as a society, but I think that is the biggest problem, our inability to not just see things as project-based or campaign-based, if we're community organizers. Reimagining our systems is a big thing. The same thing that's going to allow us to imagine a world without the prison-industrial complex is going to help us see what it means to be a cultural worker differently. I think these things are interrelated.

Our struggles on the road towards those things is about the struggle of restructuring our society as a whole. That's why we do socially engaged work to begin with, to show those interconnections.

P u b l i c P r o g r a m s :
H o w d o y o u g e t t o
F l u s h i n g C r e e k ?

Cody Herrmann
June 19, 2021

Photographs by Jonathan Baron.

Starting at the Mets–Willets Point subway station, this approximately two-mile walk led by Cody Herrmann in collaboration with Guardians of Flushing Bay, took place in “the Valley of Ashes,” a reference to the history of Flushing Meadows Corona Park, popularized in *The Great Gatsby*. The route traced city-owned property through Willets Point, under the Van Wyck Expressway, to Flushing Creek. Attendees discussed water quality, local history, and envisioned how climate change may impact plans for development along the Flushing, Willets Point, East Elmhurst, Corona, and College Point waterfront in the future.

Guardians of Flushing Bay (GoFB) is a nonprofit coalition of human-powered boaters, park users and local residents advocating for a healthy and equitably accessible Flushing Bay and Creek. Working in collaboration with community leaders, GoFB accomplishes our goals through waterfront programming, hands on stewardship, community visioning, and grassroots advocacy to promote a healthy ecosystem and equitable waterfront land use practices. GoFB is one of the Community Partner’s in Queens Museum’s Year of Uncertainty.

[Access further reading materials here.](#)





C o d y

H e r r m a n n

b. Queens, NY, 1993

Excerpts From ‘A Celebration of the Life and Legacy of The Honorable Claire Shulman, & Excerpts From ‘Governor Cuomo Announces...’ from the series Local History Lesson 2021

Single-channel video, sound, 4:56
Courtesy the artist

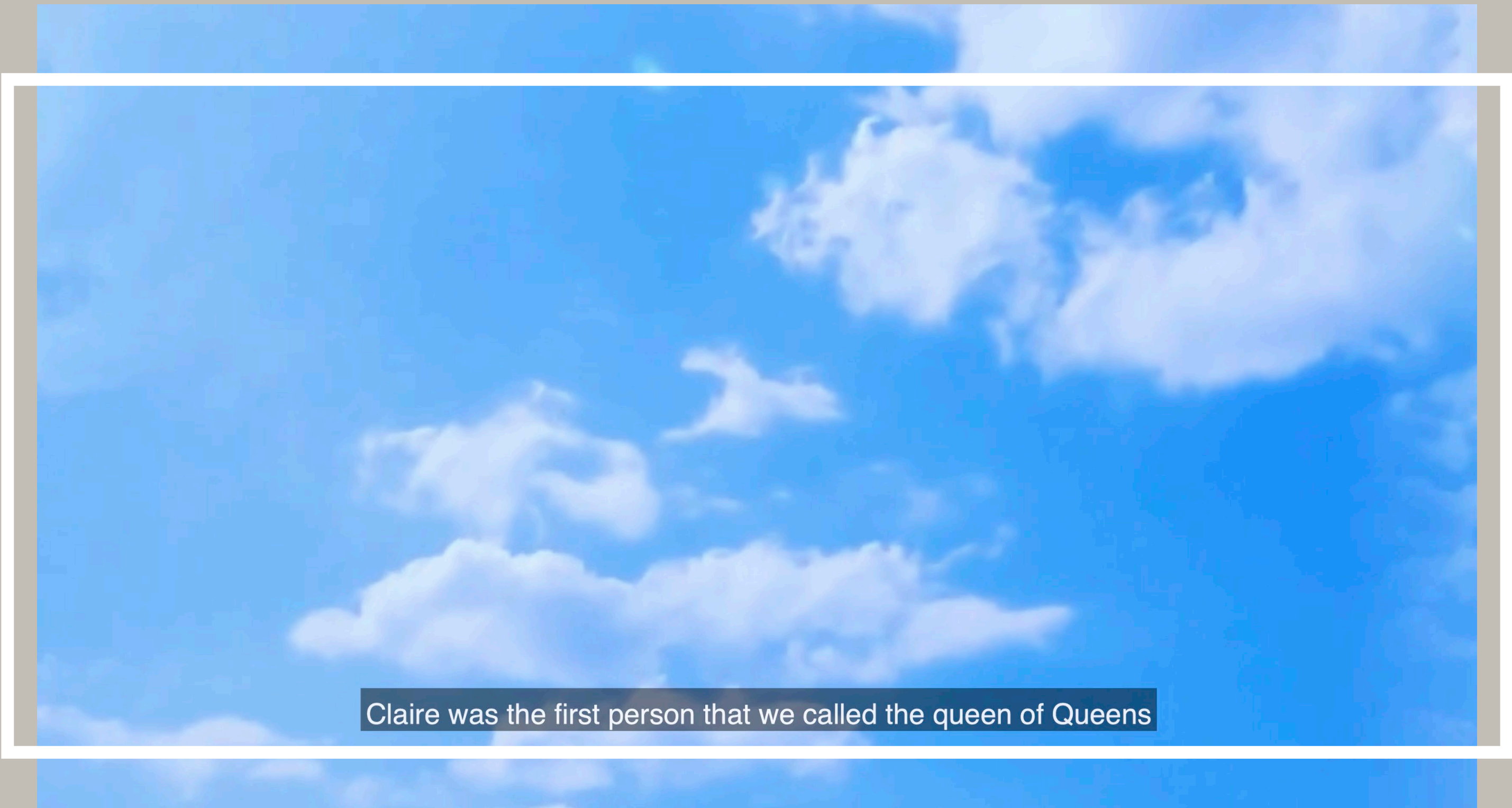
Fragments de “Una celebración de la vida y el legado de la honorable Claire Shulman,” y fragmentos de “El Gobernador Cuomo anuncia...” de la serie Lección de historia local 2021

Vídeo monocanal, sonido, 4:56 mins.
Cortesía de la artista

[Direct Link to video.](#)

The first two works in the video series *Local History Lesson* compile audio clips from recent press and media events to recreate Herrmann’s own daydreams focused on the contemporary history of development in neighborhoods surrounding Flushing Bay and Creek. The videos recall informal summaries of local land use and development plans as told by guests at a Claire Shulman memorial coordinated by the Queens Borough President’s Office, and speakers at Governor Cuomo’s press conferences hosted at Laguardia Airport. Through her edits, Herrmann seeks to reveal underlying hypocrisies in urban planning and environmental management.

Estas dos obras de la serie de vídeos de Cody Herrmann *Lección de historia local* compilan clips de audio de eventos de prensa y medios recientes para recrear las propias ensoñaciones de Herrmann centradas en la historia contemporánea del desarrollo en los vecindarios que rodean Flushing Bay y Creek. Los vídeos recuerdan resúmenes informales del uso de la tierra local y los planes de desarrollo contados por invitados en un memorial de Claire Shulman coordinado por la Oficina del Presidente del condado de Queens, y oradores en las conferencias de prensa del Gobernador Cuomo organizadas en el aeropuerto de Laguardia. A través de estos fragmentos editados, el objetivo de Herrmann es sacar a la luz la hipocresía latente en la planificación urbana y el manejo del medio ambiente.



Claire was the first person that we called the queen of Queens

Flushing Creek from Home
2020

Plush velvet and foam cushion, area rug, wooden bench, bound planning documents

Courtesy the artist

Flushing Creek desde casa
2020

Cojín de terciopelo felpudo y espuma, alfombra, banco de madera, documentos de programación encuadernados
Cortesía de la artista

Flushing Creek from Home provides the opportunity to lounge along the Flushing Bay and Creek coastline without experiencing the polluted sediment, eroding shorelines, and raw sewage that the real creek site contains. While relaxing on a Flushing Bay and Creek-shaped floor pillow, visitors are welcome to browse through planning documents relevant to the area, including: the Flushing Bay and Creek Long Term Control Plans, the Special Flushing Waterfront District Environmental Assessment Statement, and the meeting minutes from the Willets Point Task Force.

Flushing Creek desde casa ofrece la oportunidad de relajarse en la costa de Flushing Bay y Creek sin entrar en contacto con los sedimentos contaminados, las orillas en erosión y las aguas residuales presentes en el entorno real. Mientras se relajan en un cojín con forma de Flushing Bay y Creek, los visitantes pueden consultar los documentos de programación relativos a la zona, incluyen: los planes de control a largo plazo de Flushing Bay y Creek, el informe especial de evaluación medioambiental del distrito de Flushing Waterfront y las actas de las reuniones del grupo de acción Willets Point Task Force.



A l i x C a m a c h o -
V a r g a s

b. Bogotá, Colombia, 1985

Reports from Walked Landscapes
2021

Travel map, website, and audio recordings, durations variable
Courtesy the artist

Informes de paisajes paseados
2021

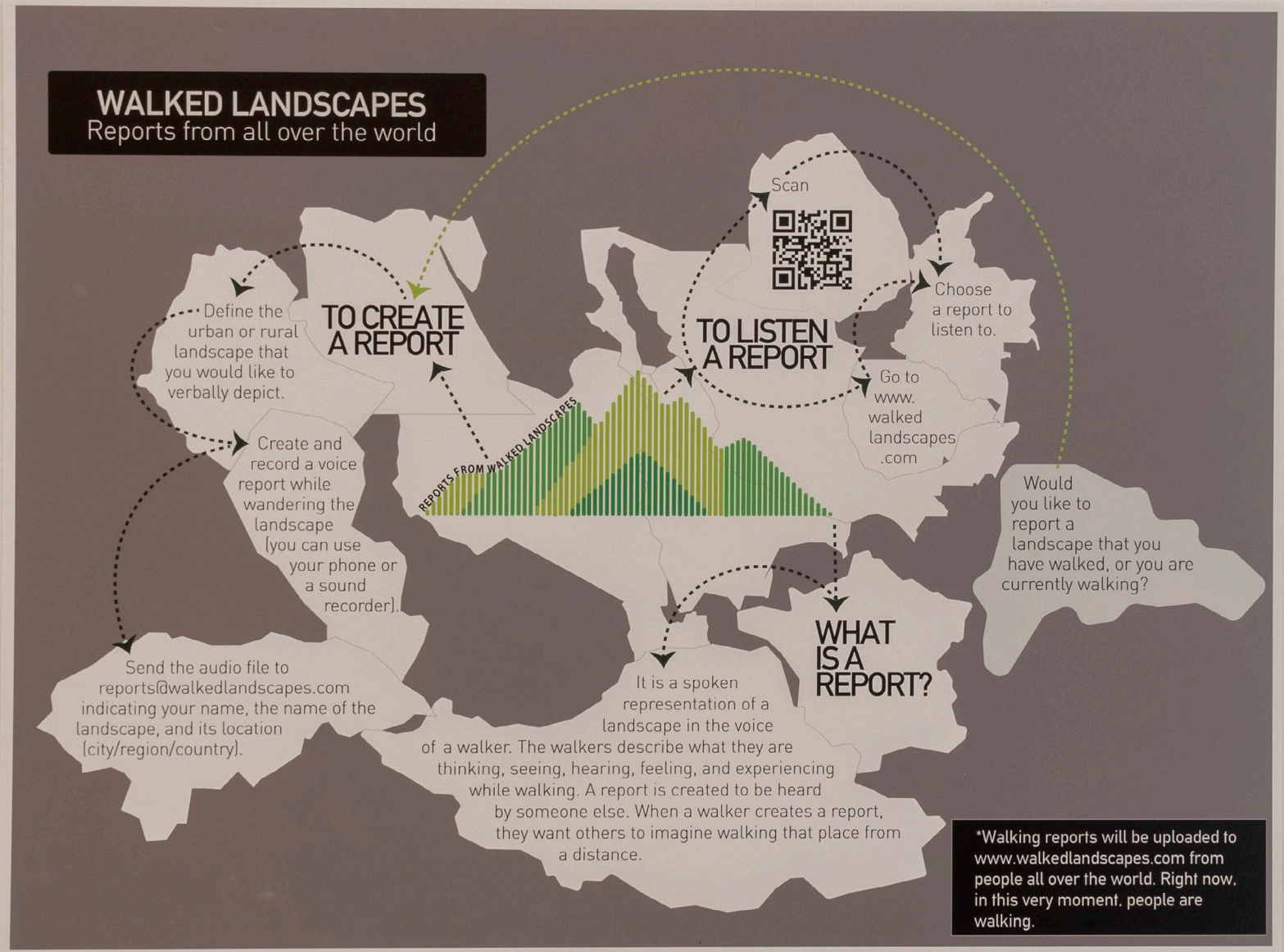
Mapa de viaje, página web y grabaciones de audio, duraciones variables
Cortesía de la artista

[Direct link to the website.](#)

Reports From Walked Landscapes is an ongoing participatory audio recording and listening project. Using the travel map on the wall, participants are invited to produce a recording that verbally describes what they are thinking, seeing, hearing, living, and feeling while wandering an urban or rural landscape in different locations in the world. These audio recordings are made available to the public on www.walkedlandscapes.com, where listeners can experience far away places they've never traveled to or their own cities in the virtual, yet intimate, company of a stranger-guide. Camacho-Vargas invites you to make a recording of your own, documenting a favorite corner of Flushing Meadows Corona Park, or another place you have wandered, or are wandering now.

Informes de paisajes paseados es un proyecto participativo en curso de grabación y escucha de audio. Mediante el mapa de viaje de la pared, se invita a los participantes a grabar la descripción verbal de lo que están pensando, viendo, oyendo, viviendo y sintiendo al pasear por un paisaje urbano o rural en diferentes lugares del mundo. Estas grabaciones de audio se ponen a disposición del público en www.walkedlandscapes.com, donde quienes escuchan pueden transportarse a lugares lejanos a los que nunca han viajado o a sus propias ciudades en compañía de una guía virtual por un desconocido y, a la vez, cercano. Camacho-Vargas les invita a aportar su propia grabación en la que documente su rincón favorito del parque Flushing Meadows Corona Park y otros lugares que haya recorrido, o que esté recorriendo en estos momentos.

WALKED LANDSCAPES
Reports from all over the world



Alix Camacho-Vargas
S. Bogotá, Colombia, 1985

Reports from Walked Landscapes, 2021
Travel map, website, and audio recordings,
durations variable

Courtesy the artist.

Reports from Walked Landscapes is an engaging participatory audio recording and listening project. Using the travel map on the wall, participants are invited to produce a recording that verbally describes what they are thinking, seeing, hearing, feeling, and feeling while wandering an urban or rural landscape in different locations in the world. These audio recordings are made available to the public on www.walkedlandscapes.com, where listeners can experience far away places they've never traveled to or their own cities in the virtual, yet intimate, company of a stranger's guide. Camacho-Vargas invites you to make a recording of your own, documenting a favorite corner of Flushing Meadows Corona Park, or another place you have wandered, or are wandering now.

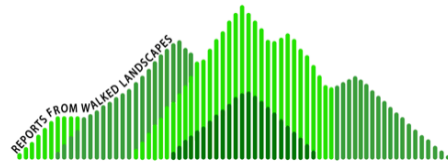
Alix Camacho-Vargas
S. Bogotá, Colombia, 1985

de paisajes pasados, 2021
Viaje, página web y grabaciones de
razones variables

Courtesy the artist.

de paisajes pasados es un proyecto que en curso de grabación y escucha. Mediante el mapa de viaje de la obra, los participantes a grabar lo que ven, oyen y sienten al pasear por paisajes urbanos o rurales en diferentes partes del mundo. Estas grabaciones de sonidos a disposición del público en www.walkedlandscapes.com, donde quienes pueden transportarse a lugares que nunca han visitado o a sus ciudades en compañía de una guía de un desconocido y, a la vez, cercano. Vargas les invita a aportar su propia grabación, documentando un rincón favorito del parque Flushing Meadows Corona o cualquier otro lugar que haya recorrido, o que esté recorriendo en estos momentos.


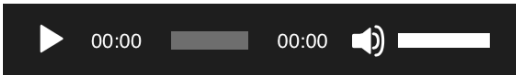
walkedlandscapes.com




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REPORTS FROM WALKED LANDSCAPES


Newest Report to listen (#004)



REPORT #001
Walker / Caminante: Erin Turner
Language / Idioma: English / Inglés
Landscape / Paisaje: Bears Ears National Monument
Location / Ubicación: Utah, United States.



REPORT #002
Walker / Caminante: Alex de las Heras
Language / Idioma: Spanish / Español
Landscape / Paisaje: El Canto del Peso
Location / Ubicación: Municipio de Galapagar, Comunidad de Madrid, España.



REPORT #003
Walker / Caminante: Juan David Reina-Rozo
Language / Idioma: English / Spanish
Landscape / Paisaje: Walking with frogs at sunset / Caminando con las ranas al atardecer
Location / Ubicación: Vereda Guina, Machetá, Cundinamarca, Colombia.

E r i n

T u r n e r

b. Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1985

*How to fall in love with a river:
el río arzobispo
2019-2021*

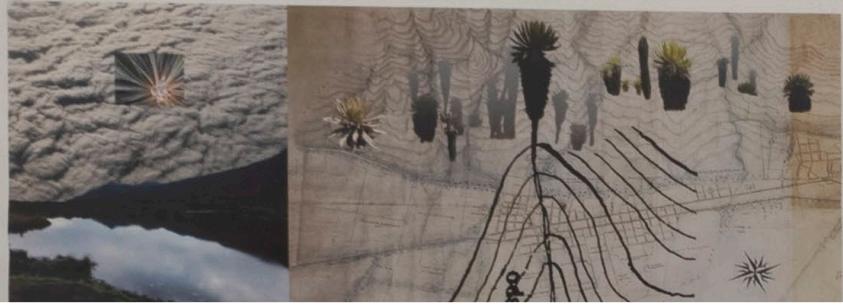
Photomontage with digitally reproduced maps and original photographs
Courtesy the artist

*Cómo enamorarse de un río:
el río arzobispo
2019-2021*

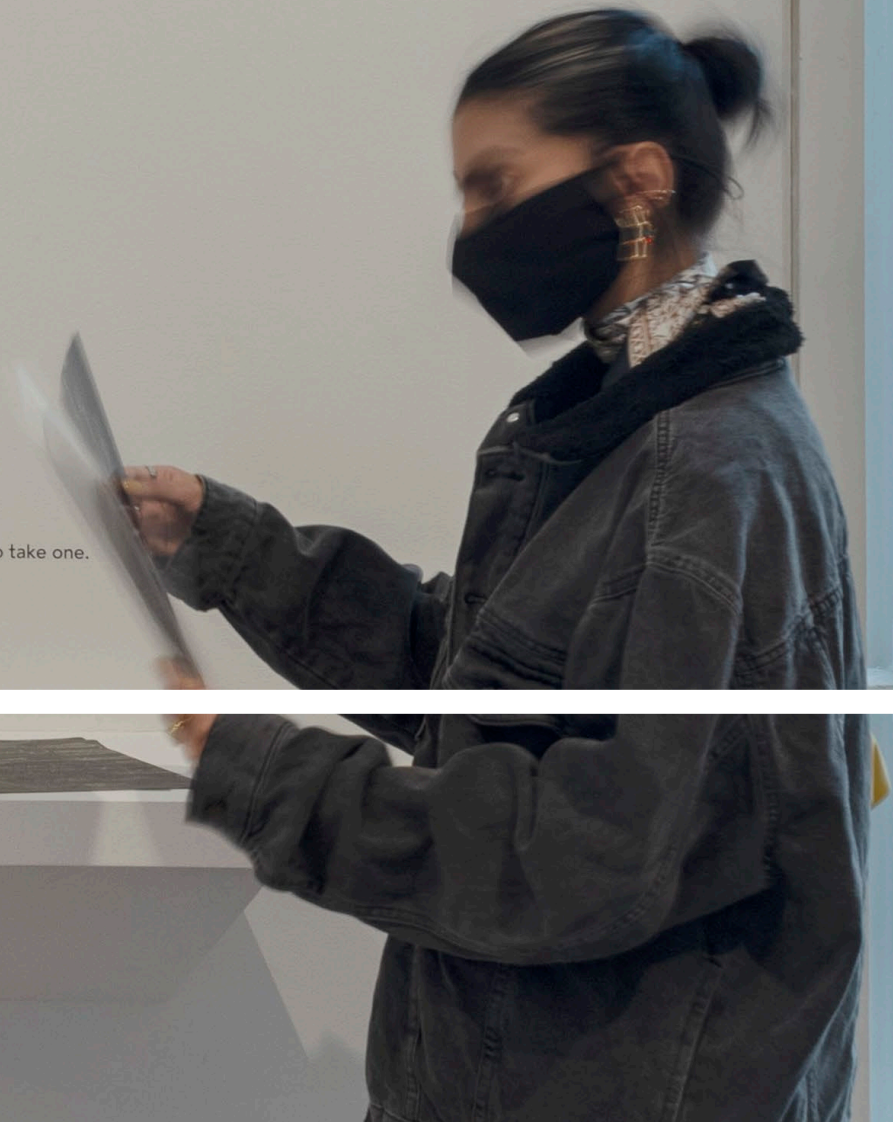
Fotomontaje con mapas reproducidos digitalmente y fotografías originales
Cortesía de la artista

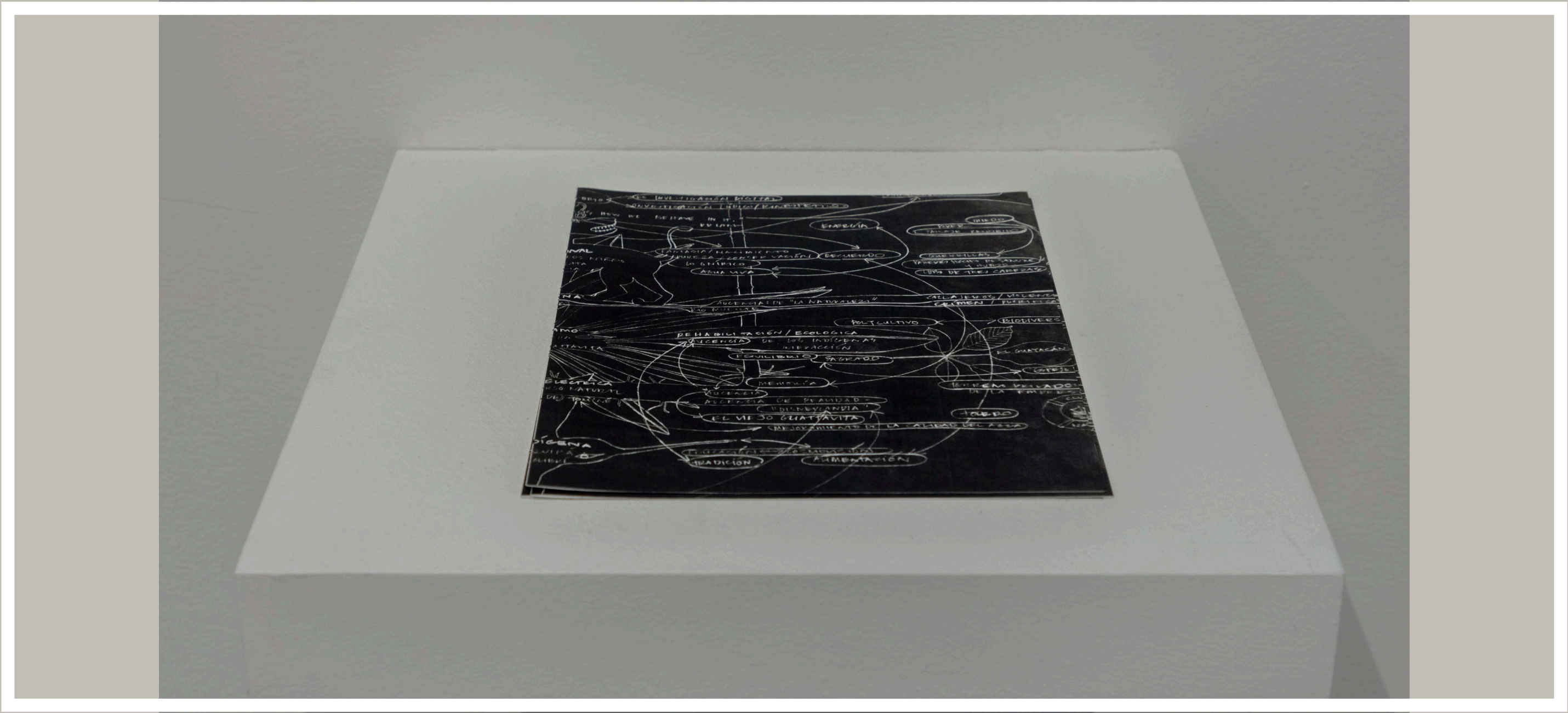
How to fall in love with a river: el río arzobispo considers themes of power and intimacy as associated with the waterfront. This walking project was initiated during participation in the Medellín, Colombia-based residency TIERRA: espacio para habitar. Turner walked the entire length of the River Arzobispo in Bogotá, from its birthplace in the high altitude plateau of the Páramo de Cruz Verde to where it meets the putrid, dead and black waters of River Bogotá. This project presents the artist's view of the river through four distinct perspectives: historic, playful, sociopolitical, and environmental.

Cómo enamorarse de un río: el río arzobispo considera varios temas de poder y intimidad asociados con la zona cerca del mar. Este proyecto de paseos fue iniciado durante la participación en la residencia que tomó lugar en Medellín, Colombia, llamada TIERRA: espacio para habitar. Turner recorrió toda la longitud del Río Arzobispo, en Bogotá, desde el punto en el que nace el río en la meseta de gran altitud del Páramo de Cruz Verde hasta que se une a las aguas pútridas, negras y muertas del Río Bogotá. Este proyecto presenta la visión del río que tiene la artista a través de cuatro perspectivas distintas: histórica, lúdica, sociopolítica y medioambiental.



Please feel free to take one.





Workers Art Coalition

est. New York City, 2014

*Union Workers for a Just Transition,
2021*

Acrylic on canvas, protest signage
Courtesy the artists

*Trabajadores sindicales por una transición justa
2021*

Acrílico sobre lienzo, carteles de
protesta
Cortesía de los artistas

The Workers Art Coalition seeks to hold the United States government accountable for the Biden administration’s promise of a massive federal investment in good green jobs, work that will require the labor movement at the helm. This protest banner project gives expression to the notion of a “just transition” to a low-carbon future where neither workers from extractive industries nor communities of color are left behind. This message counters the false “jobs vs. environment” narrative that has long been presented in bipartisan political debates.

Banner design and fabrication: Rebecca Carlton, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT).

La coalición Workers Art Coalition tiene como objetivo que el gobierno de Estados Unidos se responsabilice de la promesa de la administración Biden de una gran inversión federal en puestos de trabajo decentes y ecológicos, una labor que requerirá que los sindicatos se pongan al mando. Este proyecto de pancartas de protesta expresa la noción de una “transición justa” a un futuro con emisiones de carbono bajas en el que no se excluya ni a los trabajadores de industrias extractivas ni a las comunidades racializadas. Este mensaje contradice la narrativa errónea de “trabajo contra el medioambiente” que por mucho tiempo ha estado presente en los debates políticos bipartidistas.

Diseño y fabricación de las pancartas: Rebecca Carlton, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT).





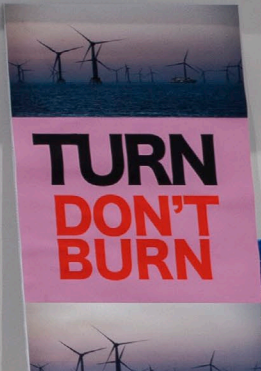
Don't burn our future.



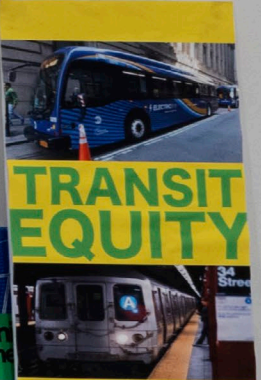
COMMUNITY BENEFIT AGREEMENTS

GOOD JOBS = Family sustaining wages and benefits.

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A r t , A c t i v i s m ,
a n d t h e P u b l i c
H u m a n i t i e s :
S e e d i n g C o u n t e r
H e g e m o n i e s @ C U N Y

Kendra Sullivan
Associate Director, Center for the
Humanities, CUNY Graduate Center
May 2021

The City University of New York is enmeshed within the city itself, its mirror and its future: nearly 80 percent of CUNY students are graduates of New York City public schools and the same percentage of graduates stay in NYC. Like most public institutions, it is rife with real frictions, reproducing strains of elitism, inequality, and state violence; but as importantly, it is also an institution harboring real possibilities, alterities, and solidarities. In Tom Finkelppearl's essay in this catalog, he refers to the "micro-utopias" made possible by and through socially engaged art, and similarly, other worlds and ways of worlding are graspable in CUNY classrooms, on CUNY campuses, and in encounters with CUNY faculty and students.

With 25 campuses across the city, CUNY is a vastly heterogeneous suite of (sometimes contradictory and sometimes complimentary) ecosystems. It is the largest urban, public university in the country, and has long fed into and fueled the lives, ideas, and activist

strategies of its faculty and students. From poet Audre Lorde—who taught at Hunter College, her alma mater, as well as John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Lehman College—to the founder of #PRSyllabus, anthropologist Yarimar Bonilla—who teaches at the CUNY Graduate Center and Hunter College, where she acts as director of El Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños—CUNY faculty have actively dismantled oppressive ideas and systems from within and beyond the perceived reach of the university. They have done so by seeding powerful counter hegemones that support collective uplift through pedagogy, public syllabi, participatory action research, and arts-based research that bridges the dichotomy between activism and scholarship.

CUNY faculty are transforming the university in concert with student-led efforts. From the protests that led to Open Admissions and SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge) in 1969-1970, to the formation of RAFA (Rank and File Action), the Kingsborough Com-

munity College's Urban Farm, and Free CUNY! in more recent years, CUNY students have acted as instigators and stewards of progressive change.

For education theorists, from bell hooks to Paulo Freire, democratic civic engagement is one defining function of public universities. Having identified engagement, access, and uplift as key to its institutional character, the CUNY system is ideally situated (geographically, economically, demographically, and ideologically) to revitalize democratic knowledge practices on and off campus. Systemic changes being advanced by organizers at CUNY right now include efforts to reinstate open admissions and secure budgetary justice, to re-Indigenize the university's physical and ideological relationship to land and knowledge, to resource Ethnic and Gender Studies, and to transform pedagogical practices at senior, community, and advanced degree-granting campuses.

Social Practice Queens, and its newer configuration Social Prac-

tice CUNY, nourishes such efforts, placing art praxis in the heart of public higher education, seeding a culture of care, collaboration, and creativity as an integral aspect of democratic knowledge making. Integrating an understanding of how art can be used toward struggles for social justice, toward practical and intellectual challenges of contemporary societies, with a means of supporting students and artists in that process, Social Practice CUNY is part of a rich landscape of CUNY initiatives that mobilize the practices, relationships, tools, and resources the humanities uniquely offer toward imagining and materializing better worlds.

The ethos of SPQ/SPCUNY has been important to me as director of the Mellon Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research at Center for the Humanities at the CUNY Graduate Center. The Seminar aims to build out institutional capacity at CUNY for publicly engaged work across disciplines, departments, campuses, and neighborhoods. Every two years, a new

cohort of approximately 20 faculty, students, and community partners come together through the Seminar to plan and implement artistic, activist, and scholarly collaborations in the humanities and social sciences that result in research, teaching, and activities that serve the greater public good.

SPQ faculty members—Gregory Shollette and Chloë Bass—have been involved in the Seminar since its inception. To say that we in the humanities and humanistic social sciences have learned from the methods and approaches modeled by our colleagues in the visual and performing arts would be an understatement: the creative arts have in many instances been the spring that feeds our current engagements across the city, bringing people together in spaces of solidarity and collaboration wherein expertise and authority are shared; process is privileged over product; impact is measured by the metrics of those most intimately linked to the issues addressed; and community uplift, control, and autonomy are key goals.

It is a powerful time to be working in tandem with SPQ/SPCUNY and other like-minded configurations across CUNY, including but not limited to The Futures Initiative, PublicsLab, and Transformative Learning in the Humanities, as well as student groups and associations, urban farms, and transdisciplinary thinkspaces. These initiatives cultivate creative and democratic practices that seek out and support community input in public education. Might artist-leaders, student-organizers, teacher-learners, poet-policymakers, and activist-scholars helm the next particular chapter in CUNY's history? Ten years on, SPQ has proven to be a viable starter kit igniting a cooperative, networked CUNY; an engaged CUNY that interrupts, examines, and adjusts its institutional architecture in ways that allow bidirectional knowledge practices to flow within and beyond the university itself, while capaciously providing for better, more imaginative, more creative futures and cultures in higher education and in New York City.

S o c i a l P r a c t i c e : A L e s s o n o n C a r e a n d C o m p a s s i o n

Anlisa Outar
SPQ CUNY Cultural Corps Intern
June 2021

Real New Yorkers know the real New York. It's not just skyscrapers, luxury apartments, or business districts. The real New York is one where half of its residents are rent-burdened, one where environmental racism perpetually affects residents, and one where homelessness continues to be ignored instead of addressed. At CUNY, we see the real New York and address these characteristics of our city through education and action. Social Practice Queens, now developing into Social Practice CUNY, has helped solidify art as a form of action in that list of CUNY's efforts. As a CUNY Cultural Corps Intern who worked with SPQ for the 2020 - 2021 academic year, I spoke with current students, alumni, and faculty about their practices and what it means for art to be action. Through talking with everyone, I learned that their drive to form dialog around social issues came from their lived experiences and interactions.

As an Urban Studies and Political Science double major who has been taught to look at maps, data, and

court cases to identify and discuss society, this more personal, organic method of becoming acquainted with social issues and effecting change was new to me. I learned firsthand the richness of dialogue that results from direct interpersonal contact through interviews with SPQ's current students, including recent graduate Brianna Harlan. The compassion and care that students like Brianna, Christy Bencosme, A. Pollicino, Connor Henderson, and others demonstrate when discussing their areas of interest are unmatched. Each of them inspired me as I felt their passion through the screen as they discussed issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. They inspire me to find humanity in the maps, data, and court cases of mundane academia.

Demonstrating the same care and compassion are the alumni in the exhibition *Art as Social Action*. Perhaps the boldest display of these artists' care and compassion is Pedro Felipe Vintimilla Burneo's *Hombres - lines . color . texture*. When we talked about these 64 por-

traits, Pedro raved about each with an intensity that you only catch a glimpse of as a mere viewer. I highlight the care and compassion of these artists because it stands to be a universal language that easily communicates the same issues we study and work on in Urban Studies and Political Science: from displacement and gentrification to climate change to labor rights, to gender equality. Social practice and socially engaged art, with their means of direct connection, have an advantage over academia in this respect.

As seen in *Art as Social Action*, SPQ has trained a group of artists to use their work to bring awareness to social ills in our city, country, and world. Returning to the true New York, pieces like Julian Louis Phillips's *Notes on (Dis)placement* and Naomi Kuo's *Flushing Art Tours* display how people interact with our built environment in NYC either by being displaced from it or investigating it more deeply. Other works, like *prototypes for white flags* by Jeff Kasper, and *How to fall in love*

with a river by Erin Turner, focus on personal issues of togetherness, a topic especially pertinent at the moment due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the current political atmosphere. In Jeff Kasper's proposal for *prototypes for white flags*, Kasper explained that his work creates new meanings for white flags. Instead of symbols of surrender, Kasper proposed white flags as a sign of mutual aid and collaboration. The text added to these white flags emphasizes the new meaning of the flags, and is meant to demonstrate that political engagement, at its core, can be about relationship building (citing Kasper). Again, those universal languages of care and compassion can be present even in everyday, simple objects.

In a city constantly changing and saturated with social ills, demonstrating care and compassion and reaching people through easily digestible and accessible formats like those presented in the artworks for *Art as Social Action* is necessary. Equipping people to do this is equally important, through all the educational means we can build together.

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