

SOFA

social FORMS OF ART JOURNAL

FEATURING IN THIS ISSUE:

Emma Duehr

Michelle Illuminato

Roshani Thakore

Justin Langlois

Jordan Rosenblum

Brianna Ortega

Jobi Manson

Roz Crews

Nola Hanson

Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr.

Mary Olin Geiger

Spencer Byrne-Seres

Daniel Godínez Nivón

Amanda Leigh Evans

Issue 5 - Summer 2020

Pedagogy

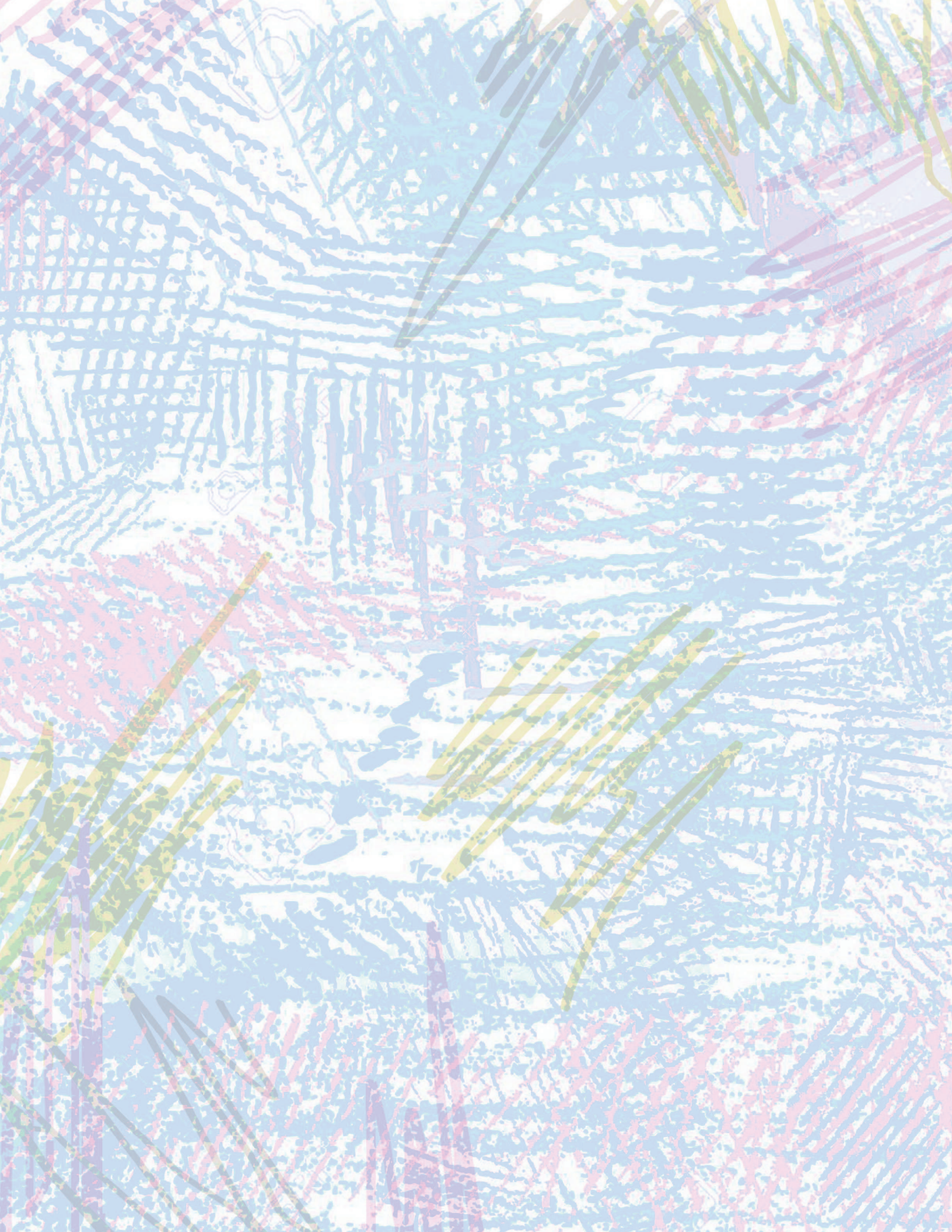


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Noun. The method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept.

-Defined by Oxford Languages

Emma Duehr (b.1995) is a project-based artist, educator, and curator living and working in Portland, OR. Her work is invested in social engagement, storytelling, and material specificity. Her art practice facilitates discussions about domesticity, intimacy, and empowerment through gardening, craft, and mail. Using the web, educational settings, and urban environments, her work has attained international participation across the UK, Africa, Canada, Italy, Spain, and the United States. She is the Founder and Curator at The Portland Conservatory, Artist Mentor at KSMoCA, a part-time faculty member within Portland State University's School of Art and Design, and the Founder and Creator of Talking Tushies. She is a MFA Candidate in the Art and Social Practice Program at Portland State University. View her work at www.emmaduehr.com

Rebecca Copper (b. 1989) often reflects on their lived experiences through projects that range from socially engaged art to modes of individual creation through filmphotography and video. Rebecca is interested in the different ways of knowing, experiential knowledge, and how people are influenced in mediated ways. They are motivated by phenomenology, ontology, and theories around collective consciousness. They are currently an MFA candidate through Portland State University's Contemporary Art Practice, Art and Social Practice Program and recently finished a fellowship with the Columbus Printed Arts Center in Ohio. Rebecca is currently serving as a research assistant for the Art and Social Practice Archive which is housed within PSU's special collections.

Why is pedagogy important? Why is it important to consider how we engage with the practice the act of teaching? Pedagogy lays down the groundwork for ways to access knowledge and think about knowledge; what we know and how we learn it affect the ways in which we move through the world. It affects how we interact with people and the complex structures that we navigate, whether they are social, cultural, political, and so forth. Pedagogy can be weaponized for liberation, or for oppression. It can enlighten and empower, or diminish and silence. Pedagogy is a social practice.

In the fifth issue of the Social Forms of Art Journal, we discuss the variety of ways that pedagogy is used to better our understanding of knowledge, how different forms of knowledge are valued, and how people approach their specific pedagogical approaches. You'll hear from artist and educator, Amanda Evans, founder of The Living School of Art. Daniel Godínez Nivón

discusses their long term project teaching a class through collective dreaming in Mexico City. Portland State University's CORE Program Director, Michelle Illuminato is interviewed by artist Emma Duehr about their personal teaching philosophy. Artist Mary Olin Geiger shares a point of view on ancestral knowledge accessed through tape weaving. These are just a few examples of the expansive ways pedagogy is discussed.

Our hope is that through reading this issue, you may engage with the reality that learning goes beyond the classroom, that knowledge isn't only acquired through a book, that teaching isn't a one way avenue from teacher to pupil. Each individual plays a role in creating a dynamic experience that is collectively experienced. Through how we view knowledge and how we view pedagogy, we can truly begin to engage with how we want to shift that experience.

Rebecca Copper
Emma Duehr
Spencer Byrne-Seres

“Pedagogy affects how we interact with people and the complex structures that we navigate, whether they are social, cultural, and political.”

Spencer Byrne-Seres is an artist and culture worker based in Portland, OR. Spencer is the lead artist for Columbia River Creative Initiatives, an ongoing series of projects based within a minimum security men's prison in Northeast Portland. Spencer also works at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, where he serves as the Exhibitions Director, supporting the design and production of large scale installations, exhibitions, and curates the Food Program for PICA's annual Time Based Art Festival.

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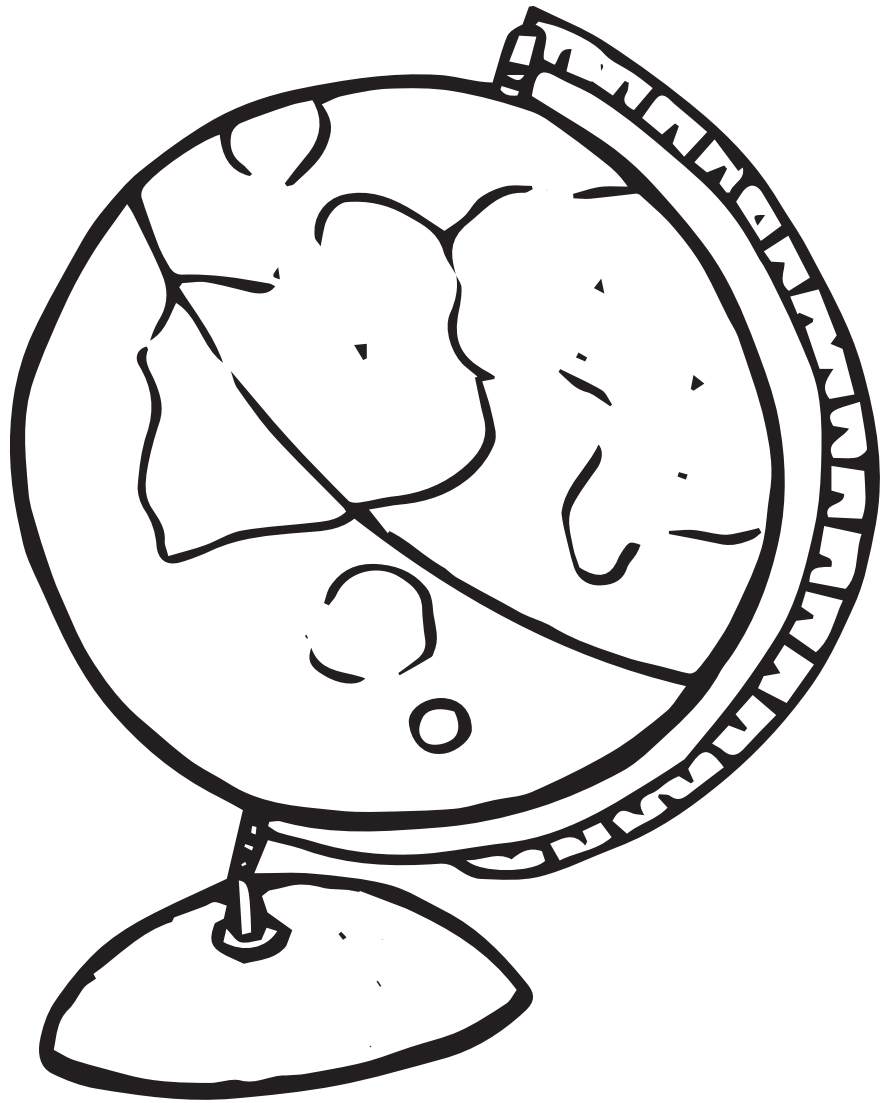
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M. Michelle Illuminato creates events, public exchanges, and artworks to help reveal the complicated and often contradictory relationship between people, their culture and the land they live on. She often works with the collective next question and counts her Key to the City of Aliquippa Pennsylvania as her most treasured public award. Illuminato was honored by Americans for the Arts, Public Art Network for her project The Lost & Found Factory. She has been an artist in residence at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris and at Internationales Waldkunst Zentrum in Darmstadt, Germany. A long-time art educator, she was recently honored with the 2017 Master Teacher Award from the Foundations: Art, Theory, and Education national teaching association. Originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, she now lives and teaches in another city with many bridges, Portland, Oregon.



ALLOW LIFE TO ENTER THE CLASSROOM

Pedagogy and Praxis with Michelle Illuminato

By Emma Duehr

During Spring 2019, I was a student in Michelle Illuminato's Pedagogy + Praxis course at Portland State University. Throughout the duration of the class, we were given time for deep reflection on what we know about learning and how we will choose to implement our knowledge into our pedagogical approach. We created a syllabus, an assignment and its supporting materials, and wrote our first teaching

philosophy. We examined issues related to alternative pedagogy approaches, creating inclusive classrooms, and art school structures, models, and methods.

During the discussion on building a teaching philosophy, Michelle discussed her work *13 Radical Whispers, A few whispers before the revolution*. The philosophy behind her writing was many years in the making and

continues to expand with unceasing life experiences.

She begins by asking, “How do we make that first year meaningful and provide not just a bridge to the future but a true, life-changing experience?” This question is vital to ask in every stage of education; learning occurs when in discourse with the real-life experiences. She suggests activities such as collaboration, physical learning, interaction with the public, play, and personal research though acknowledging that these activities must be taken a step further.

In the writing she states, “We need a quiet revolution that upsets this particular viewpoint, not just for our students, but for our institutions as a whole. We need to start by asking who we are teaching? And what do they really need to learn? We need to rethink, redesign, and not just tinker with our structures to make being present in the experience of learning our first goal. We need to dive off that metaphorical bridge with our students and savor the learning that happens together in deep waters. We need to search for ways to make ourselves and our students live in the presence, and avoid yearning for the future at the expense of the moment.” The writing is intended for educators as “quiet whispers” that one can adapt into their own learning environments.

I had one full term experience as a teaching assistant before taking Illuminato’s class and I am currently teaching my own course. As I reflect on the incredible complexities of being a graduate student and a professor simultaneously, I am grateful for the steps and reflections that helped define my pedagogical discoveries.

I invited Michelle Illuminato to discuss 13 Radical Whispers and how the ideas surface within her classes. Michelle Illuminato is an Assistant Professor and Head of the CORE Program at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. The following interview took place on Friday, May 2nd, 2019 over a virtual meeting. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity and has been reviewed for content and accuracy by Michelle Illuminato.

Emma Duehr: I’d like to start by defining multiple terms that we will be discussing throughout this conversation.

How would you define Pedagogy, teaching, learning, and praxis? How do they compare?

Michelle Illuminato: Pedagogy is the system of thoughts and methods that thinkers and teachers have created and their ways of going about it. Praxis is really about the action. How do you put those thoughts into practice? What do you do with that information? As for learning and teaching, I think learning is really something that we can only do for ourselves. It’s about being receptive to what is there, noticing, and paying attention. I don’t think we can just ‘teach people things’. I see our job as more creative situations where people can learn. Those situations can be super complex or very simple. They can draw on inspirational philosophies or systems of thoughts or they can draw on our everyday experiences.

ED: I have been thinking a lot about the title of your class, Pedagogy + Praxis. I’m really interested in the double sided narrative. You’re guiding us for our own future in teaching. What is the main goal of the class? How do you respond to the double narrative going on in the classroom?

MI: The main goal of the class is to give you space and time to dream big about your own philosophies and classrooms. Later, when you are in the ‘action’ of teaching, it is harder to dream big. You’ll need to refer to a sound set of guidelines that you set out for yourself. We start the class by asking you to collect everything you know about teaching and learning into a bucket of ideas. Throughout the term you draw from this bucket to create your philosophy of teaching and your dream class. So the class starts with you. It provides a structure to help build your teaching ideas and practice on something that is solid and true to you. It also gives you the chance to understand what other people, seminal teachers and idea-formers think about the complexities of teaching and learning, ideas and praxis.

So maybe the real dichotomy is actually between the student and their ideas and the great thinkers and theirs. We read and are inspired by bell hooks, we unpack Freire, and we listen to Sir Ken

Robinson speak about how schools are killing creativity. We discuss best practices, the different ways people learn from Howard Gardner, and explore hands-on activities to make the class more inclusive. All the time, you are adding to your bucket of ideas. Outside the class, many of you are also gaining practical experience by being embedded in classes, as teaching assistants to seasoned faculty in the School of Art + Design.

ED: I think this all really relates to when the class is taught, spring term of the first year in graduate school. I had two terms of school and one Teaching Assistant opportunity prior to the class. I think that’s pretty consistent with everybody. I enjoyed having one term of teaching before I started diving into formalizing my teaching and learning approach. I’m wondering if that is intentional.

MI: It’s interesting because I really didn’t have any control over that, but I do think that the class is perfectly placed and I wouldn’t opt for changing it. Placed in the first year, you all are experiencing teaching and learning about teaching at the same time. It is like a perfect in-between space that allows you access to all the perspectives. I think that is incredibly important. That experience of teaching with someone allows you to see different styles and gives you the chance to listen-in on those quiet conversations between student and teacher. Those are such valuable gems of knowledge. To see how someone presents an assignment, paces a crit or handles a problem. Those are such valuable gems of knowledge. At the same time, the teacher benefits greatly by having the teaching assistant in the classroom. Graduate students are incredibly good at connecting with students. After years of saying something over and over, I almost assume everyone already knows it. I forget a little about what it might be like to be at the beginning of my learning. The really beautiful thing about having a graduate student in the room is that they’re closer to that learning, they help me see the gaps. They are easily able to relate their own experience and mentor younger students. I believe

in the strength of collaboration, and especially the teaming up of a teacher and a graduate student. It benefits all the people in the class community.

ED: I agree. I am now teaching my full first class by myself this term.

MI: Oh, that's so awesome. Sculpture? That sounds challenging, especially with the new constraints of the pandemic.

ED: Yeah! Online Introduction to Sculpture! We began the term understanding the confusion of taking Sculpture online and I asked my students individually what they were looking for in the class, what techniques, and what felt most important for them. I was honest by mentioning the portions of sculpture that are seemingly impossible given the circumstances of COVID-19, so I really wanted to create a class that really fulfilled what they wanted to learn. It's going really great. I had three TA opportunities before teaching my own class, though a whole new door opened up when it became just me and the students. I dove deeper into my teaching approach and my own learning experiences than I had before. The Pedagogy and Praxis class really helped me ground the prelude and outlook to the term. It's very different from being a TA.

MI: It's wonderful because there is something really private about the conversations with you and your students and knowing what they think, which is very important. Being in class with someone who maybe has more experience teaching allows a relationship to build based on looking and observing. Once you can freely make decisions and evaluate how it's working for yourself and respond, that requires a certain amount of freedom as a teacher. You should always feel that sense of freedom with your students. Sometimes the first thing that we really have to recognize is that a good teacher is a constant learner. There has never been one class in my 25 years of teaching that has been the same. Being a responsive teacher and building a class in the process is very important. Institutions work against that when they require very detailed or locked-in syllabi or ask us to share every experience on paper before the class even starts. We resist

by making space within our structures for change, for students to be in the moment, or for us to be responsive to the class needs. Students are often more comfortable with a tight rubric, with knowing exactly what is coming. But there is value in not-knowing. It requires us to be present. One of the biggest things I try to do as a teacher is get students to really notice. As artists we are excellent noticers. Noticing is the first step in knowledge-making. Being present allows students to be active in their own education. We want to leave room in the plan for what we think is important and for students to be able to 'claim' their own education.

ED: In the 13 Radical Whispers, you wrote a section titled "Quit the Long Syllabus." I wrote a very detailed syllabus to prepare for my class, I wanted my students to know what was in store. After getting to know them that first week, I changed a project, timeline, and meeting methods. The syllabus became overwhelming by feeling like changes were bad.

MI: You shouldn't feel bad for being a responsive teacher. Changing things, making them better, acknowledging that you are learning, is a strength. I am sure those changes and your instinct improved learning. As for the syllabus, there are layers. The first being, what the university requires as a legal contract between you and the student. Getting that framework down is important. But including the day-to-day activities or every reading is not. I usually design overarching charts that lay out the term, but I don't share it all with students. It helps me see the big picture to make sure I fit in everything I promised to teach. One of the 13 Whispers, "Surprise your Students" may sound a little odd, but that idea behind it is not. Learning is enhanced when we are in the moment and aware of what we are experiencing. When we are asked to do something unusual, fun, unexpected. Or if we need to get out of our seats and move fast, or slow down and write, or collaborate with another person. I love building these fruitful structures. They are built on things I want to experience, too. Like for the Ideation class, we've boarded a ship on the river to understand more about what is above, below and at the edges of the water. We kicked it off by

singing "Row, row, row your boat" and then played noticing games, looked through binoculars, did drawings, collected water, and had a tour of the bridges as we sailed under them. This allowed us to develop our own understanding and first-hand knowledge. It centered the students in the learning and in the experience. The surprise and fun helped build the excitement for learning and the class community.

ED: In the syllabus for Pedagogy + Praxis course, your first objective is to design an approach to teaching. I've been thinking a lot about the idea of "approach" and the language behind it. Considering all the work that goes into designing this approach based on multiple small experiences. How long would you say it took you to articulate?

MI: That's a really interesting question, because I think it has taken me up until I wrote it. I think some of what I wrote about has been happening within my teaching for a really long time and it took me everyday of being with students to develop them. My thoughts on how to approach teaching also draw on my own experiences as a learner and kid who was laid up in the hospital for long periods of time. Over my career, I've mostly worked at the two ends of the spectrum—with those entering school as a freshman and with graduate students who are moving toward the completion of their education and getting ready to enter the workforce. So thinking about approaches or beginnings comes naturally to me. But your question was about how long it took me to articulate. That took years of trying things out in the classroom, sharing wild ideas with friends, and slowly speaking in public about ideas until I felt I had something to add to the wider conversation. I developed a little courage, a bit of belief that I had something to contribute. Over the years I've tried to share with students that knowledge doesn't just come from books or reading; it comes from our own experiences. We need to slow down, notice and trust that we have something to say. We all need to grab some courage to say what we think out loud. As a teacher my goal is to create structures that help students take risks and develop courage.

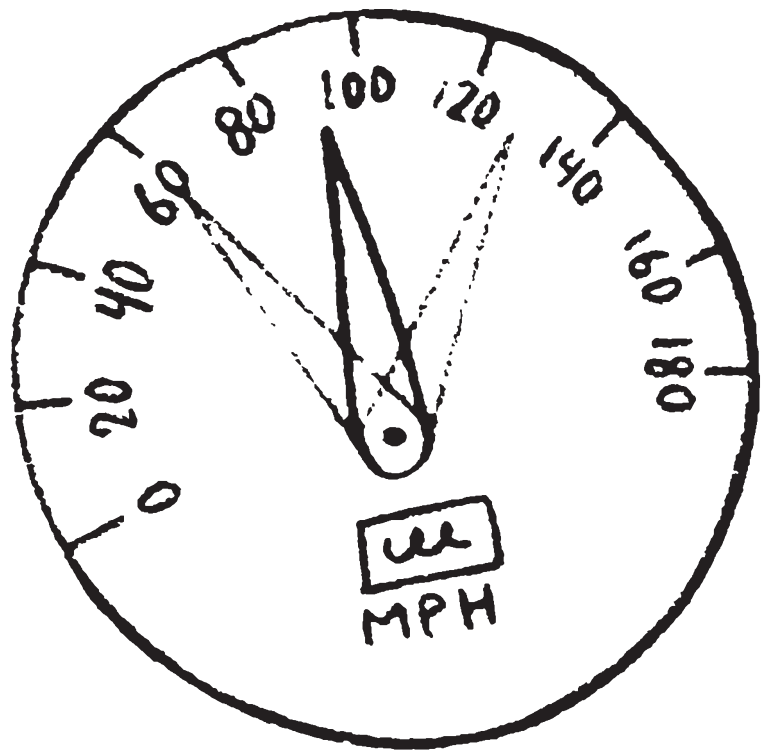
ED: I think that's really important, and especially when you are focused on

first year students, in which 13 Radical Whispers focuses on. Pedagogy + Praxis is in the first year of the graduate program. In both situations, learning is focused on building off of the moment and previous experiences to define one's focus and goals while entering into a new chapter.

MI: Yeah that's interesting. Sometimes new students come into the first year having experienced what Freire calls the banking system, basically just receiving what a teacher 'gives' them. They may have never been asked what they think, what they care about, and even what they really learned within the class context. One way I start my class is with a first day activity called, A Class Is Like An Island. Students quickly create clay sculptures that represent themselves and place them on a large island drawing at the front of the class. We then do speed-getting to know you exercises, work pairs create the one thing you'd bring to the island and make banners and flags for the island. At each stage it is all placed on the map. Then we have a big discussion about the class, who we are, what we want from this experience, and what rules will help us all survive the island. At the end of the term, we gather for another conversation to access what we achieved. Sometimes I have them respond to questions such as: What do you know right now? Where do you want to be in 5 years? They put their responses in an envelope that I sent to them two, three or five years later. It creates a milepost.

ED: Another section of the 13 Radical Whispers is "Let Life Enter the Classroom," I think that story relates to that. All you did was hold onto their writing and timed out when to send it to them. You didn't write anything, you just listened and provided space.

MI: When we talk about surprising students, sometimes I give students assignments that they think they will never be able to complete. Like the time at Alfred University when students were asked to create a series of 28 puppet shows based on local stories and perform them for the public at the Alfred Village Town Hall. When Brett Hunter, Trevor Bennett, myself introduced the project students had no idea how they were going to do this!



**SLOW DOWN. SPEED UP.
CHANGE PACE.**

In the end they were stellar and outrageous! It was important for students to inch their way into this grand project. They interviewed local people, wrote plays based on these stories, created all sorts of puppets from shadow to life-sized puppets, built a studio-theatre the same size as the town hall stage, practiced over and over, worked on the sound, created backdrops, video-taped segments, gave each other feedback and promoted the event. They played to packed houses with huge success!

In the end, it's not just what they learned by making or writing or performing; it was the collaboration and the ability to see the importance and relevance of their work within a wider community outside of a classroom.

ED: I agree, I think it's definitely an interesting time because of COVID-19, I had 5 students drop before the term even started. How are you responding to that now?

MI: We've all said it. We are living in unprecedented times. I am right in there learning and relearning, trying to make the best of this time I have with these particular students. Some of what

I thought was tried and true, may need to shift, to change, to evolve. A good teacher is always learning. I keep thinking of myself as a bridge. A bridge to learning, a bridge to comfort or understanding, or even a bridge to the fall term. The truth of the matter is that it might be harder for students to return in the fall if they drop out now. If they're in class, they are involved in creative activity and have support from people in addition to their family. Students right now have so much on their plates. They cannot have the same capacity. They often are taking care of family or siblings, working outside the home, don't have their own workspace or access to materials or tools that they do when they are at school. All this on top of the grief we all feel in this moment. I found myself shifting my approach to asking "What can I do to help you?" Don't get me wrong, it is not all doom and gloom. Many of my students have expressed gratitude, have had deep moments of learning, and fun... even if it was on the screen.

Unpacking Pedagogy

Roshani Thakore with Justin Langlois

Roshani Thakore

uses art to broaden an understanding of place, uncover histories, elevate voices, and expand a sense of belonging, all with the hope of shifting power. Since 2019 she is the Artist-in-Residence at the Asian Pacific Network of Oregon, a statewide, grassroots organization, uniting Asians and Pacific Islanders to achieve social justice. Prior to this residency, she received funding from the Division Midway Alliance Creative Placemaking Projects Grant with her project 82nd + Beyond: A Living Archive. More information about her work is at www.roshanithakore.com

Justin Langlois is currently the Associate Dean of the Master of Fine Arts program at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. His practice explores collaborative structures, critical pedagogy, and infrastructural frameworks as tools for gathering, learning, and making. He lives and works as an uninvited guest on unceded Coast Salish Territory in Vancouver, Canada.

The artist, educator, and organizer, Justin Langlois visited our cohort in spring of 2019 for an incredibly generative discussion about the role of socially-engaged art and pedagogy within practice. Since then, he and I have continued to have online conversations about classrooms and organizing spaces. I invited him to be a part of an unpacking of pedagogy a year later. This conversation took place online in May 2020.

Justin Langlois: I'm really excited to be able to speak with you today. Thank you for thinking of me, it's been such a pleasure to be able to sustain a conversation with you.

I've been thinking about the term 'pedagogy' as a placeholder for a range of activities that get taken up across our personal, professional, and artistic practices. It means different things in different contexts, and you can approach it at a philosophical or practical level, but I was interested in hearing about your work with APANO (Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon) or at PSU (Portland State University), and whether you feel like the idea of pedagogy is useful, or if you think it needs to be recuperated, or if its utility as a placeholder is helpful?

Roshani Thakore: Thanks so much for your time and for your interest, Justin! Yes, maybe all of the above? There are similarities of how APANO functions and our program functions. I don't have to fight so much at APANO because there's a lot of space that's given for ourselves to be seen in our culture and multiple identities. That's huge. Also, I don't operate under capitalism very well, and the way it expects me to. Both spaces have incredibly collaborative ways of working but when you have the absence of cultural or experiences or backgrounds and voices, it just is limiting. At the core, the leadership at APANO is based on values which you're not going to necessarily get in academia, right? Because that's a place where you're supposed to unpack your values, you're supposed to be challenged to really get to your own sense of what matters. I can understand

that disconnect. But maybe it's not necessary.

JL: Yes, I completely agree with this. Values are embedded into places and you can feel them, you can build affinities through them. And yet, it's not really like part of what happens, officially. They're also not really formally supported within a kind of larger institutional setting, and yet there are many models of how values-based organizing and even learning can occur. I wonder, what's in the way of that happening in a post-secondary institution? Pedagogy sets the limits of what is learned and what gets to count as learning. It shapes conversations, it shapes how we are in an educational setting, it shapes everything about that experience, and yet there are many other ways to do that work together. Even how you started off our conversation today, and in your emails, always asking about how I'm doing, how my family is, these kinds of soft check ins are really important. Those ways of knowing each other are really important and you center them when in other spaces, but in academia, they are kind of peripheral, right? They're things that you're supposed to leave out, and yet you put them back in the center of how you relate to other folks and I wonder if you consciously bring that into your pedagogy?

RT: The lens of knowing each other, and how to know each other?

JL: Yeah, and if you think about that as part of your approach to pedagogy, or if you think that actually belongs under the rubric of pedagogy, or if that's just like, something else?

RT: Oh no, that's not something else. In the fall term this year, I co-taught a class with a really brilliant artist who graduated from our program and it felt like a collaboration. We just kept on thinking of how you create the circumstances for the folks to get to know each other in all these different ways. For me that was the intention, but it was up against the concern of, "Oh what am I supposed to make sure they leave with about social



Float School, Justin Langlois and Holly Schmidt.



82nd+Beyond: A Living Archive, Roshani leading a public walk with collaborator Sachi Arakawa.

practice?” But at the end of the term, the biggest and most positive feedback was about feeling like the students were a part of a community. And I forgot to mention that this is an elective class so to be able to be engaged and interested in their fellow classmates for at least six hours a week was quite a feat. That matters to me and just as operating as an artist, relationships are prioritized over everything else.

JL: When you’re prioritizing relationships, but also thinking about how we come to know one another is really about examining the conditions under which we know each other, and considering the materiality of pedagogy. Is that something tactical? Or is there actually a way to spread that across like all kinds of learning? Or maybe more importantly, thinking about the work that you have done and want to continue to do at APANO. How centered is it already there, in the organization?

RT: I think it’s more encouraged at APANO, and it’s also a constant. I think it’s because we’re under the same system, and being in that it’s a constant reminder of like, “No, you don’t need to work yourself to death.” Asking yourself, “What do you really want out of this graduate program? What do you really want to put your energy in?”

Last night we had a virtual event about community resilience hosted by APANO that was a BIPOC-only space. Whenever I’m in conversation with folks, I always always talk about politics. For me, there’s always political education.

As I was collaborating with my coworker in creating this event I didn’t realize how much I needed this space too and needed to hear from the community. Folks were actually just needing to connect with each other in this type of space and the whole thing was a beautiful surprise. When facilitating that kind of space, I try to be extra conscientious of who is taking up space, how to encourage true dialogue, and how to keep on creating circumstances in real-time for folks to be all of themselves and consider the various worldviews.

I’ve been unpacking that and thinking about how everything that we know has been designed. And we do not have to fully accept that design. I’ve been thinking of pushing back, that we know it’s terrible, we know its origins, we can

create our own. We can create our own design and what would that look like?

JL: Earlier, you mentioned that in your final paper, you were shifting away from a discussion about power, and I’m also now hearing you talk about a kind of exertion or cultivation of either a counter-power response to power, a notion that the design could always be otherwise. That is, creating these things on the terms that makes sense for the folks that are together. I’m wondering about intentional decisions responding to existing circumstances, actively imagining that they could be otherwise. I think this is the heart of social practice: being able to take the lens of asking, well, how could this be otherwise and applying it to social circumstances? So, I’m curious about the fluidity of your own practice between the role of an organizer, artist, teacher, learner, human, partner, and whether you see a difference between them? What do you see across your work as an opportunity to build something otherwise?

RT: What you just mentioned, the intention of it, that’s what I’ve been trying to hold on to. I’m a Cultural Work Coordinator at APANO. That means certain things to my employer, right? But I see it as like this is the first time where I am in an organization that’s secure compared to other institutions typically sought out by artists, I’m making art, and I’m seen not through a white supremacist lens. I’m claiming it as my practice and am having conversations with my boss about what that means.

The event that I co-facilitated made me really understand how much it fed and nourished me and my practice, but I wouldn’t call it an artwork. I was able to strengthen my facilitation skills, but it’s also like, when I do a sketch for a drawing or a final print or something, it’s the same thing. I see Orchards of 82nd as my studio and I’m not doing drawings every day, but I am working through the relational and political things that are in so many parts of my life.

JL: That’s so tremendously exciting, to be able to kind of like stop having to set up or respond to barriers or divisions that are set and moving across and through all those spaces and that you can claim, well not claim in a capitalist kind of way, but

claim or build what’s yours on terms that make sense to you. That’s about agency, that’s about you practicing self-determination in the world.

RT: Yes! I’m glad you made that distinction of like claiming not in a capitalist form but just as for self determination and agency because I don’t think if I had that clarity before but then make that that’s the thing that makes sense.

JL: You mentioned a few times today about your own interest and practice of bringing in the ‘political’ into all of the spaces you’re working within, all of the time. There’s of course one level and awareness that these are just the terms of engagement in the world, and so on one hand it’s actually not about politicizing anything. It’s already politicized. White supremacy and patriarchy and heteronormativity and ableism are already baked in. So, how do you bring those values into the work that you do in ways that, you know, kind of provide space for people to enter that on their own terms?

RT: Oh man, I’ve been really thinking hard about this recently. A big part of my practice is the actual participation and engagement and daily life of the tools of democracy, which is agency and autonomy. Through my work, I can create situations where there is more of that so that people can feel more empowered and want to feel more engaged and participate in their daily life of their place, their neighborhood, their community, their state, their nation. That’s the way that I think about it which is through an organizing mentality, but that’s how I think about the political nature of bringing it into people’s lives. I also read an excerpt by Jimmy Boggs recently. He talked about his experience, he was, from a small town in Alabama, very connected to the land and slavery and history. He then moved to Detroit to be a part of the industrial part of America. He talks about how he loved his country so much that he wanted to engage and participate in a way to change it. He knows that it was built by his people in very tragic conditions. But that spirit to be able to envision another, that’s love, right? That doesn’t come from resentment or these other feelings, that comes from a place of maybe love

and hope. It's from that space to want to engage and I totally understand that so many people cannot be in that space and don't have the capacity to do that. I feel like I've been wanting that so much in my life from other people, and now I finally have the tools to, like, at least create works or situations that can at least try to allow that for other people.

JL: Yes, it's like a pedagogy of extension. You know, just the way that you sort of traced how things impact people's lives and then you scaled up to this example of Jimmy Boggs thinking about the impact they want to make on something as large as their country. That's what good work can do is provide folks with an exercise that they can translate into these other parts of their lives, that, that they learn those kinds of practices and engagement and ways to think about the role that they have in democracy as sort of an active agent and not just the receiver of all of those exertions of power and exploitation. This is the idea of love and hope. We can mobilize around disengagement and disempowerment, or we can organize around love and a kind of hope that there's still some road ahead of us. I think the exciting part becomes when you can look at a given set of circumstances and recognize the terms you encounter are the outcome of a lot structural and systemic forces that are mostly set up against folks, but then also see there is a whole bunch of time and space and community yet to be made and loved and I think this is forward looking. This is the thing built on a sense of hope. To think about like a pedagogy of hope, not as a way to necessarily solve all of those structural violences and systemic oppressions, because we won't, but to actually to use them to think about what we owe to the people that are coming after us and to one another to actually like rework that. Admittedly, I want to believe that and yet I am also bumping into my own cynicism and I'm not sure how to reconcile that. I feel like I can get my head wrapped around it, but you know, it's like, all of a sudden, it's seven o'clock at night and I'm burned out and exhausted. How do you navigate that? How do you bring this to the folks you're working with all the time who are probably even more tired and facing a whole lot of different challenges?

RT: I can understand that and at the same time, I'm probably not as busy as you are (laughs)... Okay, have you read Emergent Strategy? By adrienne maree brown?

JL: Actually, I've just been reading her book, *Pleasure Activism*, but *Emerging Strategies* is next on my list.

RT: Oh nice! *Emergent Strategy* spells out the stuff that we're talking about.

Brown talks about being a black woman in America and that being able to embody joy is a radical act. So that is a baseline.

The other thing she talks about is how we're not engaged because really we're trained to be consumers. We're given so much information and told so much information, whether it's through marketing or through traditional school curriculum, and naming that yes, we have a democracy but we really don't know how to participate in it other than we're supposed to go to the voting booth every 4 years. That's not all we need to do. Really just calling that out and valuing how to operate in the world with intention and prioritizing relationships within the community.

Also, I remember a friend Mack McFarland reminded me that we're just finite beings. As artists and organizers, we have this thing that we want to get to the horizon, whether that's success or a better world and really there's only so much you can do. In realizing the finite energy that you have, it's being very intentional about what you can and can't do. In this book, she speaks about in the lens of being in social justice organizations and in the social justice movements and how those spaces can be very debilitating and how boundaries are really set up for individuals. It's always thinking about the bigger vision, but not the individual. It's also not a self-indulgent existence, it's thinking of what you can put into yourself in your immediate community, and just allowing that to scale up.

JL: It's comforting and inspiring to hear that because I think that where we operate, at the levels we can operate, we read about systems and scales of things that are just so enormous and it's hard to scale things. Then you can look at your immediate community, your family, your friends and see a scale that you can understand. There's this much

larger thing that you don't really have control over. You're just sort of a part of them, and to think about the inability to actually scale up infinitely. Maybe it's not a bug, maybe that's a feature of being human. Maybe we actually can't ever or shouldn't try to tackle that stuff on our own.

Earlier this morning, I was on a call about this Float School project that Holly Schmidt and I have been doing, and we've been working on a little publication and we were just doing like a group chat with some of the people that have participated and you know, the one thing that about that project that has always stuck with me is that you can kind of feel like you're really 'in it' with a small group of people and you kind of feel like what you're doing matters to them. When I think about how deeply I feel that it's like, it reminds me of this *Pleasure Activism* book, getting back in tune with what your body actually wants and seeing that as a check-point. And maybe that is an emergent strategy? I have to read that book now.

RT: Yes, you do! (laughs) That's so great that your project can make you feel like you're in it. Listen to that. Hold onto that.

In thinking about scale, I'm curious in your life, what are the different scales that you're working with and living in?

JL: I think that what I have kind of inadvertently done over the last number of years is accidentally set some harder boundaries between like different scales of things, and I don't know that I'll ever know why I've done that. Part of what's come from that, though, is a certain clarity. I remember the 2017 Creative Time Summit in Toronto, and Carlos Marentes, from Border Agricultural Workers Project, provided this amazing insight in his talk. He was saying, it's like a political thing to make time to cook for your family and to care for them. We have to demand time from our jobs and from all of these other spaces and circumstances that control parts of our lives. We have to make demands that these are not just personal things that we need to take care of, but that they're actually something much larger. I heard that and I felt like it gave me permission to step back from some things intentionally. You know, my partner is working later than I am, and so when I get home first,

“I think one of the most radical things you could do is to just really stand up for a few people and say to them, you know, whatever you need, I’ll back you up.”

I need to cook and take care of our dogs. I see that as something important, something scaled to the size of my family, and realizing that I have to take care of that before I can do anything else worthwhile.

So this question of scale in relation to my practice has also been impacted. I think that the projects that I have taken on over the last number of years have often been in other places, and I think that’s allowed something else to happen that didn’t happen in my earlier projects. You can go somewhere and get very deeply involved for a short period of time, or periods of time, and the process is fairly directional, rather than something more organic. Early on, my work was scaled to my friends, to people I saw everyday, to something that felt like the scale of family. Things could just happen by virtue of being together.

I think my life exists more urgently, and sort of deeply in my home, and I’ve been wondering how my practice and my job can sit alongside that. It’s also a question of time and the scale of time. Doing projects with folks that are part of your life changes the scale of time of that relationship and in turn the work itself. Maybe I just want to be a really good like, partner and, and do right by, you know, the small team of people I’m working with at school and like and maybe like that’s enough like to just do that really well and to really care about it. I think one of the most radical things you could do is to just really stand up for a few people and say to them, you know, whatever you need, I’ll back you up. That feels like sort of the best kind of project, whether it’s a social practice project or a more meaningful way to live, I think, increasingly the lens through which I want to look at what it means to teach or what it means to be engaged in projects or community or life is wondering how you can be there for other people.

RT: Completely! What you’re talking about backing your people up and how important and radical and effective that is, I want to let you know that our cohort has had some strain in figuring out the spring term during the pandemic with all the confusion and uncertainty. What you had mentioned in our intensive last year, asking what the fourth year of school will look like, it made a lot of sense for our situation.

There is a fourth year that will be with each other. We can keep on supporting each other in different avenues and different ways.

JL: Wow, I have to say, on top of just being super grateful that we’ve been able to sustain a conversation over the whole last year, and to be able to do this today, I want to say that it was really recharging for me to just be able to meet with you all last year. It means a lot to know that some things are still kind of reverberating that we talked about last year.

RT: Yes! That’s pedagogy!

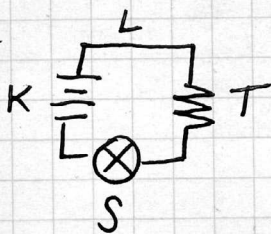
EDUCATIONAL INTERACTION SCHEMATA BY JORDAN ROSENBLUM

KEY \equiv BATTERY \otimes LIGHTBULB — WIRE \bullet SWITCH \equiv RESISTOR

K-KNOWLEDGE L-LEARNING T-TEACHER S-STUDENT

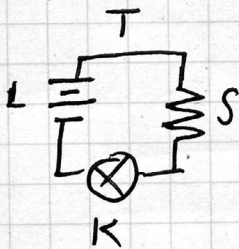
① CORE STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTIONS

TYPICAL MODEL



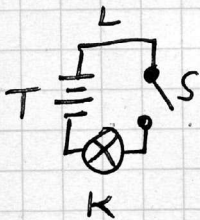
KNOWLEDGE IS "TRANSMITTED" TO STUDENT. TEACHER REGULATES FLOW OF INFORMATIONAL CURRENT

KNOWLEDGE-CENTRIC MODEL



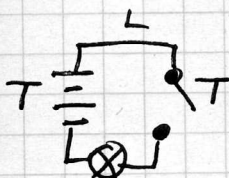
PERPETUATION OF KNOWLEDGE IS PARAMOUNT. OFTEN IDEOLOGICALLY DRIVEN.

MODEL FEATURING DISINTERESTED STUDENT



STUDENT'S SHITTY ATTITUDE TURNS OFF CIRCUIT

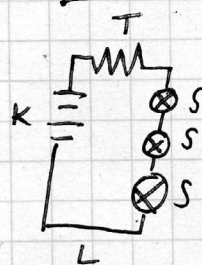
MODEL POWERED BY NARCISSISM



NARCISSISTIC TEACHER; RISK OF SHOCK OR ELECTROCUTION

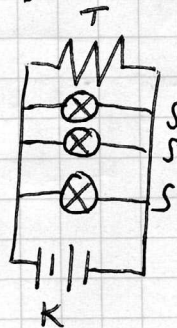
② TEACHING MODELS

TRADITIONAL LESSON PLANS



A SERIES CIRCUIT: LIKE X-MAS TREE LIGHTS: IF ONE BULB FAILS, THE WHOLE SERIES GOES OUT.

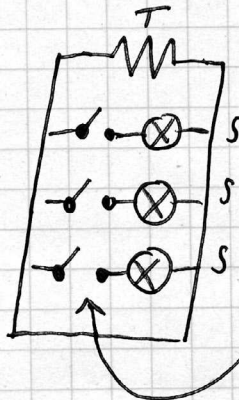
PERSONALIZED + ADAPTIVE LEARNING PLANS



A PARALLEL CIRCUIT: LIKE THOSE FANCY, NEWER X-MAS LIGHTS—EACH ILLUMINATES INDEPENDENTLY, DRAWING ITS OWN POWER.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

OR, FIELD TRIP



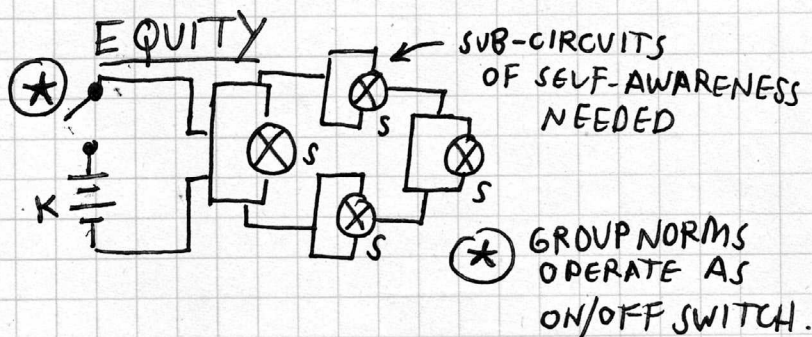
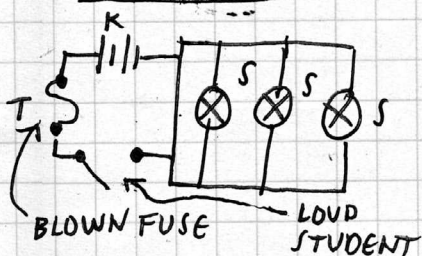
BATTERY (K) IN FORM OF SUBJECT MATTER KNOWLEDGE MAY BE ABSENT, OR SUBSTITUTED FOR BOOZE. SWITCH MAY BE TRIPPED BY SLEEPING IN + MISSING BUS.

As an educator, I think a lot about classroom dynamics. And recently, I went back to school as a student. Playing both roles has deepened my interest in how we come together as groups, and in the shifting energy of our classrooms. I began to explore ways of quickly mapping the structures of learning environments. In these diagrams from my sketchbook we consider classroom systems through a basic electrical circuit used to illuminate light bulbs. The components include wires (which transmits electrical current), batteries (which

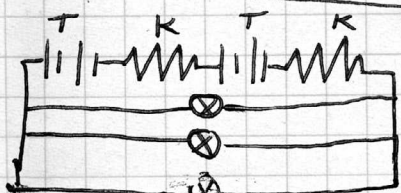
powers elements of the circuit), light bulbs (which lights up when the circuit is sufficiently powered), switches (which turns the system on and off), and resistors (which regulates energy in the circuit). Overlaid are essential components of institutional classrooms including student, teacher, learning, knowledge, and others. I use these to map how specific classroom scenarios function... in which I've played various rolls. The illustrations include four categories: student-teacher interactions, teaching models, classroom dynamics, and school administration.

③ CLASSROOM DYNAMICS

A DOMINANT PERSONALITY

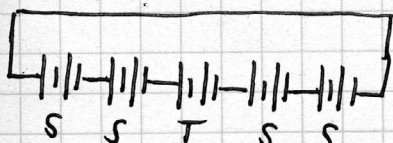


POOR CO-TEACHING



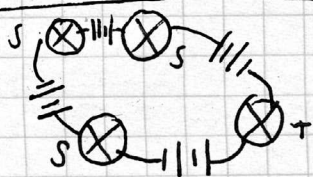
OVER-LOADED CIRCUIT, WITH NO SWITCH OR BREAKER

EXCESSIVE REFERENTIALITY

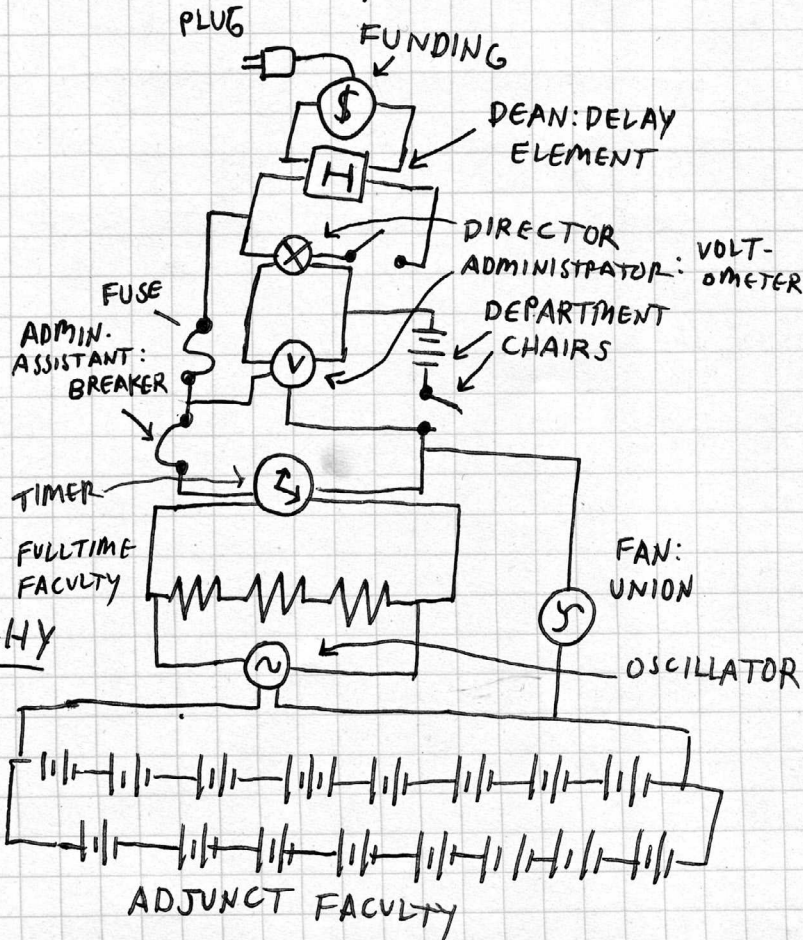


PURE DISPLAY OF POWER, NOTHING TO BE ILLUMINATED

DISMANTLED HIERARCHY



④ SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION



Brianna (Bri) Ortega is an artist, surfer, a candidate in the MFA in Contemporary Art Practices: Art and Social Practice program at Portland State University, and Founder of Sea Together Magazine, a grassroots women's surf community and global movement. Through embedding herself in surf culture, Brianna Ortega uses art as a tool to explore the relationship between identity and place through questioning power in social constructs and physical spaces. Her work is multidisciplinary, spanning across performance, publishing, organizing, video and facilitation. She is interested in experiential education, and concepts like home, localism, and boundaries. You can see her work on briandthesea.com and seatogether.com

Jobi is an artist using the mediums of photography and design, a naturalist, and Founder and Creative Director of Sēfari. She believes in the power of nature to spark creativity, inspire innovation, enhance positivity, and create community. She facilitates experiential workshops for others to encounter water as embodied education for both ourselves and also to become better stewards of our lives. She believes that nature is the key to a creative life. You can find out more on jobimanson.com and iamsefari.com

Water & Nature as Education

Brianna Ortega in conversation with Jobi Manson

Brianna Ortega: Can you tell me a little bit about your past history leading up to your practice with Sēfari. And what on your journey has led you to focusing on nature?

Jobi Manson: I would say that nature has always been my place of refuge, and it was always the space where I could go to be myself and let all my cares drift away. Nature has always been my canvas, for me to explore myself, and for me to express myself, and most importantly for me to find myself. So in that way, it is something I have been in relationship with my whole life very intimately and very wholeheartedly. I grew up on the easter shoreline of Maryland, so my backyard was the Chesapeake Bay, and it was this kind of nautical undertone, where the waterline had started before I was born and has carried with me through life. I grew up on the Bay. I spent so much time as a child walking the beaches in search of the perfect stone, that is the most beautiful and radiant color green and nature was always a place that satiated my limitless curiosity.

BO: So I was curious at what point did you know you wanted to share this with other people and invite other people to this immerse learning experience?

JM: That turning point for me happened after I graduated from the Hoffman Process, that was the first time I had ever been introduced into very tactical practices of exploring the way my mind worked. What motivated my creation of Sēfari was to help people reconnect to the physical sensation of being alive so they could perhaps make different choices that were more balanced, that were more harmonized with the world we share with a lot of people and other organisms and creators. It was an effort to help reestablish sensory connection in our bodies and create a practice that allows people to be with their entire emotional spectrum so that they may inhabit their lives very differently and

what that would create a foundation for in terms of possibility. Does that make sense?

BO: Yeah that makes sense. Creating a space for people then they can go back out into the world and have a new awareness of how they fit into collective society.

JM: Yeah to help people gain a sense of self and not just self of sense from a physiological standpoint not only just a mindfulness, but also more holistic embodiment of one's life, one's embodiment, and one's relationship to the natural world. If you can't feel that relationship, then you are disconnected from it. If you are disconnected from anything, it is impossible to feel, and when it's impossible to feel it is much more challenging to consider the realm of others' experience beyond our own. It's essentially a technique that is created, crafted, and designed to help people move beyond social paralysis.

It is to bring people back to themselves and bring people back to nature. That is the simple of it. And where did it begin? It began with awareness and understanding how important that is as a tool to navigate life.

BO: How does slowing down in noticing become part of your practice in all of this?

JM: I have this thought that came to me about two weeks ago around slowness, and in my work I love to explore language and how language shapes our understanding of reality and then I think about how different aspects of life speak different languages and to me the language of nature is in its most pure form is pure vibration, pure movement. So in order to experience communication from nature we have to slow down to nature's pace. Nature moves very differently in time than we do, There is a very different relationship to time in nature, time moves in cycles of repetition and evolution and slowness to me feels like the hidden discipline of grace and how majesty and of

reception and of listening. To me slowness required in order to perceive the really dynamic spectrum that nature speaks to us through, with, and in.

BO: It's interesting how so much of what we can learn can only happen through slowing down.

JM: I can remember how I struggled as a little kid. Math was so hard for me to learn it was so hard for many reasons. Part of that was because at that time I had so much difficulty focusing and I wasn't able to establish for myself a foundation understanding for myself the language of numbers, and so what happens when you miss core elements of the learning process it makes it very difficult for you to build on those things. For me slowing down in anything that I am doing, but very specifically if I am trying to listen to the natural world, is a way for me to both deconstruct and focus on one thing at a time rather than be overwhelmed by many different things happening simultaneously. This is the nature of nature. When we slow down, we are able to decontract the intricate process that is happening all around us. When we can hold our attention in that way, we are led to places unexpected and unknown. Slowness is a gateway to original discovery and a necessary byproduct of cultivating a relationship with nature. Whether we choose to, there are so many different mediums to reference here to talk about means to witness the processes of nature. The most obvious is to become a gardener or be a farmer, you are very much tied to the cycle of transformation and how different stages have very particular process associated with them. Well, our lives are no different. We are nature.

We—physiologically, emotionally, spiritually, physically—are always undergoing these transformations and these cycles and we return to everything with fresh eyes. Over and over again. That is the process of integration and of holistic maturation, but so many of us are disconnected. Even if you just think about living out here in Los Angeles, California. California doesn't have the same kind of seasonality that other places and landscapes possess and we are always in this state of the harvest. The summertime, the sunshine--there is a certain climate that that breeds and

it can be hedonistic if it is not kept in check. It's not possible to always be in creative conceptualization and dreamtime, and I am talking more about the cultural and social implications of cycles. Different places have different nature and how does that nature shape the conversation of the cultural and social functions and the way that that space moves. Different places are known for different things. Los Angeles is known as this story time and this infinite dreamland, but what does that mean when you live here and you are building relationships with people it's actually really interesting. People can seem over idealistic, or naive, or have a childish sense of living. You look around and think there is an insane amount of wealth here, going beyond someone's wildest dreams. I think that speaks to the landscape of inherited nature. I don't think those things are not connected.

BO: I like how you are bringing that back to more of a climate scale on earth. I like the question, "How do some climates affect how we learn or get inspired?" because I have lived in many places with opposing climates.

JM: For me, I like to think about our emotional world or our inner landscape as very similar and connected to the weather. It is always changing, weather operates in certain climates, in certain cycles, in certain processes over particular landscapes. The landscape of our inner world is constructed of our narrative of our history. Our feelings are the weather that moves across that landscape when we are aware of the landscapes. We can better understand the cycles of emotional change, of emotional change, of weather change that are going to be present in particular territories.

It's all connected right? We all have these, I think anybody who is an artist has an intimate relationship with nature. Nature provided the emotional support. Whatever structural safety was lacking nature filled that naturing role. So especially for artists, nature is quintessential in our lives because it taught us how to perceive our world and create our world through our senses. What we were seeing, what we were feeling, what we were tasting, what we were hearing, what we were touched by. Nature is the most profound artistic

teacher there could be. It is like we are in this classroom of life being nurtured by the great mother herself. I think as we slow down and learn to watch and more important to listen and interpret those things that's where our creative expression comes from, it is the synthesis of that process.

BO: Yeah so I want to loop back into speaking into your social practice with Sēfari inviting people to connect with nature in different ways to essentially learn about themselves through nature and things outside of themselves.

JM: It is meant to be both an inward and an outward exploration it is essential bringing them into the intersection of their perceptions, of their sensitivities, and of their relationship to those things, and then using all of that as a catalyst to learn how to trust themselves beyond their fears and learned how to let go of perceived control. Learn how to really merge with the flow of life. Obviously water is the perfect medium and metaphor to catalyze that sort of bond. I am interested in helping people move from their mind to into their heart space and into the vibrational connection we have with life around us because until we are anchored in that space we move very haphazardly. We move out of fear versus stillness.

BO: So comparing your practice to other forms of education in a classroom, how do you feel learning from nature and learning from water specifically is equally as valid as learning from humans?

JM: I think all human beings the way we learn or learn, teaching, and education is shared in the Western world is a very limited practice of interaction, with knowledge. I think that human beings learn most deeply through experience and through the creation of their own emotional imprint and or memory. The best way that I know how to learn for myself and the most impactful way is that I learn with longevity instead of an instantaneous burst of absorption that could potentially leave me. I am interested in helping someone create new memories, new acrutruaur, and new neurological thought patterns, I am interested in helping someone re-circuit the way their mind functions and to do that I need to do a few things.

In my practice, I have to create a container or I have to be in a structure where someone can feel completely safe. Until the mind is relaxed, the body is ready to respond. The body is in a sort of fight or flight mode. It is really important to create an environment where somebody is really relaxed, that is number one. Number two is that when somebody is learning new material for the first time, the more deeply their senses are immersed in that process, the more deeply their mind is going to create a deeper imprint of the memory. So sent, our senses are very interwoven inside of our brains with our memories and our memories is how we perceive time and space, meaning our relationship to whatever we are doing in that moment. So to me, the most powerful learning experiences are the ones that are most activated with our senses. So where does that happen? In nature. But where does that really happen? In water. So our senses inside of our brain were formed and created in a water environment inside of our mother's womb. So our senses relax in water because they are safe, the return to a memory or an energetic imprint of safety in a way that no other environment can procure for us. So sensory learning is really powerful in water.

BO: Thanks for explaining that and how it all ties together. I think a lot of people don't think about the scientific, or even biological, attributes of how they are navigating work. It is cool to hear that side of it.

JM: I am very interested in the longevity of learning and the anchoring of knowledge in my physical body so I can recall that information through a process of repetition. But also I want to be in the world of knowledge, not separate from it. Especially when I am in some sort of creative expression process. I want to be in those worlds, not an outsider.

BO: How would you consider using water as a form of education in traditional academia?

JM: I think there are so many ways of creating processes of using water to open the mind and body so that one may enter the space of intuitive creativity or instinctual creativity to me that is operating from a place of sensory

awareness. That can be done, that is what I am learning right now among this time of Covid-19. So much of what I have been prophesying over the past 5 years since I have started this is "we need to be in nature" and yes that is true. That is an end goal for me, to live in harmony with that and to help others embody those shifts as well but also more practically we can have different ways to incorporate the element water from a sensory perceptive without being fully immersed in it. Whether that is having some sort of practice, like a tea practice, we are in some way interacting with the element. Say we have water as a relational teacher in the room with us while we are creating. And I don't know what that looks like, maybe that is a great tea practice, engaging with water, consuming and seeing how it moves within us. Maybe that's painting to water color before going into a creative exercise. There are infinite ways of thinking about having a really creative relationship to water and how that opens spaces within us. I am very interested in implementing practices of water as a means to deepen, soften, and dynamically affect our creative process.

BO: Yeah, thank you.

JM: The most important thing to remember is that water as a medium is responsible for creating all life on the planet. As a chemical component or as a vessel for life to evolve everything originated and began in that space. So what could that have to teach us about water's infinite creative potential. To know water is to know ourselves, our bodies, our water, our brains are 90% water. If we are not looking at water as a means to expand our creative perceptions, what the hell are we doing? Like to me that seems so obvious, but it is not obvious. It's complicated. It's complex. It is infinitely dynamic. It's a countitive space of relativity. Water is so dynamic, and it is beyond our perceptions. But, in that way I think we can learn from it in ways we haven't even begun to explore. That is what I am interested in.

BO: Yeah.

JM: I think that that act of valuing one's own experiential cultivations of knowledge versus learning from what others have learned. I think both are valuable,

there are certain teachers, there are certain mentors, certain concepts that are fundamental that are pointing us in our path of individuation and integration creativity. All of those are foundationally important, but allowing oneself the space and value of one's own learning process is more important. To understand how I perceive anything, whether it is a piece of information or whether it is slowing down to listen to the trees... I will remember it differently if I have my own original experience, not an purposed experience from someone else's perceptions.

no one (except one adult) said, “I’ve learned to draw better:” what really matters in a drawing class

By Roz Crews

When the crisis caused by Covid-19 erupted, my work as an adjunct professor was ending, and my freelance projects suddenly dried up. Before quarantine, I worked in an elementary school as part of the artist-run King School Museum of Contemporary Art (KSMoCA), where for almost two years, I taught an experiential class about curation for fourth and fifth graders. At KSMoCA we work intergenerationally in a K-5 public school with kids, college students, teachers, and administrators, seeking innovative ways to integrate contemporary art into the daily lives of elementary students. A friend suggested that I try teaching online classes for kids since everyone would be out of school. In an attempt to quickly scrounge together an income, I decided to pursue the dream I had set aside years before: to teach a “drawing class.” An online group formed under the guise of drawing, focused on imagination and problem solving—skills that will surely be necessary in the aftermath of the global pandemic. Because I missed my undergraduate students so much and I was seeking ways to stay connected to friends and family across the world, I decided to open the class for people of all ages. To bring together a diverse and dispersed group of people in a time when the phrase “social distancing” was becoming normal felt like the most immediately helpful thing I could do.

Considering the circumstances and my proclivity towards depression, especially in times of uncertainty, I knew that I would have to find a way to make the “class” very enjoyable for myself. For that, casualness and experimentation are key. To help prevent the wrong kind of expectations, I decided to call it Drawing Time—just a time to draw. I advertised the meeting times on social media, and I sent it to my email list, asking for an optional \$1-\$20 per session.

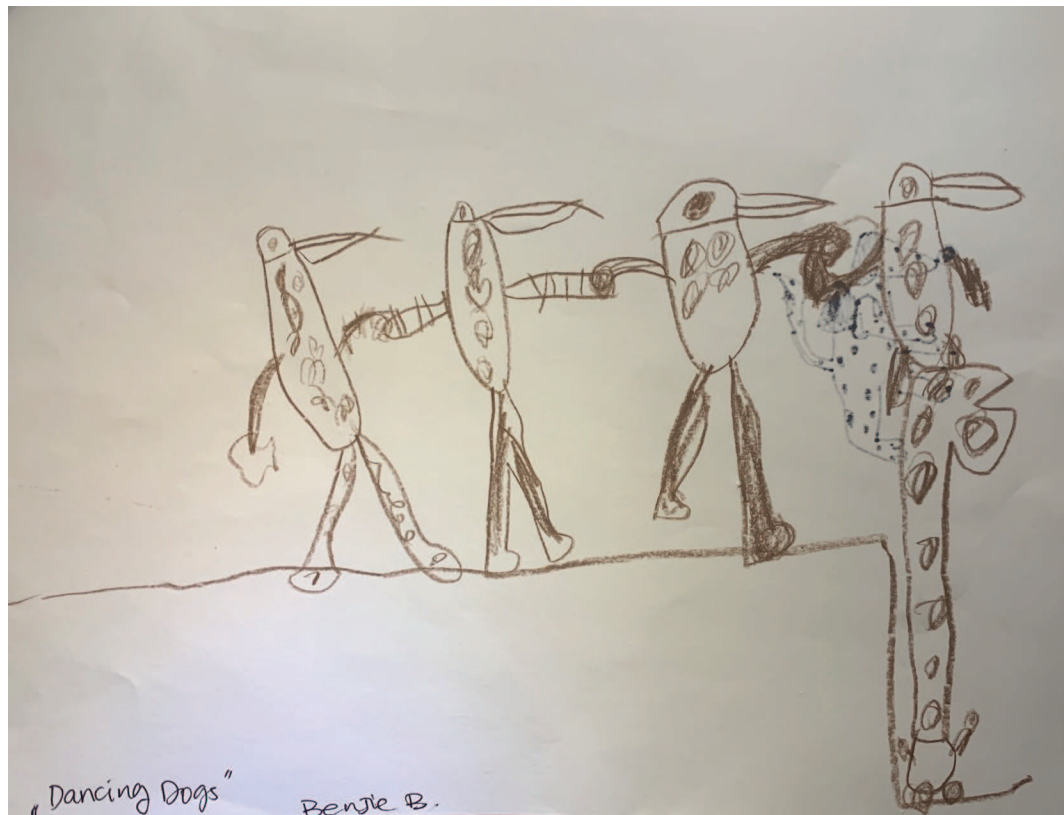
It was really important to me that anyone could participate, so I let people know directly that if cash were tight, please don’t pay! Just come and participate. Next thing I knew, the Zoom window was filled with mothers and their children, design professionals from India and Panama, college students from past classes and projects, and artists seeking companionship. The ages of participants ranged from 3 to 75.

People in the drawing class have expressed pure delight in learning and drawing alongside such an age-diverse group. It’s a novel experience because so often in the United States, we’re segregated by age—in school and beyond. Typically, we think of “peers” as being people with similar ages, but I’ve been really inspired by the way the group has adopted each other as peers despite their differences in age. About a year ago, I met Alan DeLaTorre, a coordinator at the Senior Adult Learning Center at PSU, which works with the university to allow senior auditors to enroll in almost any one of Portland State’s nearly 5,000 classes. I was really impressed with Alan’s commitment to raising awareness about the benefits of pedagogies that embrace learners of all ages, so I reached out to see if he could offer any insights for this essay. He now works as the Age-Friendly Cities program manager in the City of Portland Oregon Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, and in response to a question about the value of intergenerational education, he explained the important positive impact of people learning from the unique experiences of different generations and the way that experience can help combat generational conflict. He referenced a variety of outcomes including: improved well-being, self-esteem and health; development of stronger links to the community; improved interpersonal skills and communication abilities;

Roz Crews is an artist who makes work about education, friendship, and community-formation. She teaches research and social practice classes at Portland State University, and during Covid-19 quarantine, she’s teaching an intergenerational drawing class on Zoom. She’s a program manager at the King School Museum of Contemporary Art, a museum inside a functioning K-5 public school, where she curates a public lecture series, edits publications, and organizes exhibitions with the Student Curatorial Committee made up of 4th and 5th graders.

Prompt: Four dogs going to a wedding.

Benjie B., 6 yo. Dancing Dogs. Dogs in line holding hands, one dog is riding on top of a giraffe, dogs have fancy clothes to go to the wedding. I wanted to go to the zoo and I have a dog.



and increased knowledge and understanding of life-long career environments. Despite all these benefits, he also acknowledged that systems of age segregation and perceived or real generational conflict can be major challenges to this type of education.

In the early weeks of Drawing Time, I found it really challenging to make an hour long class interesting for people with widely different backgrounds, experiences, vocabularies, interests, and desires. I realized quickly that I wouldn't be able to make the class everything that everyone wanted it to be, so I had to narrow in on what I wanted it to be and define that clearly for external audiences. I decided on a format that privileges the younger drawers with the majority of the class spent on short, strange prompts designed to get people thinking and drawing in ways outside of their norm. Because the participants change daily, I try to always remind people that anyone under the age of 14 takes priority in the class, and when we're sharing about our work, the younger folks always get to go first. I think it brings awareness to the adults that kids have equal amounts if not more to offer in this setting. I found my adult friends positively responding to the first few "lectures" I gave as introductions to the content that would be explored via prompts

in each class. Some early examples of these lectures included: a brief overview of my favorite cartoon characters; an explanation of how various games and toys like Polly Pockets, Minecraft, Animal Crossing, and doll houses have influenced my drawing style; drawings of and in kitchens with examples by Annie Pootoogook and David Hockney; portraiture but through the lens of pareidolia featuring a discussion of paintings by artists like Laylah Ali and Heidi Howard; and abstract emotions with a focused analysis of Disney Pixar's movie *Inside Out*. I love preparing and researching these talks, but I try to keep them short so I don't bore everyone.

I sent a questionnaire to a variety of regulars, some of whom I've known for a long time, like my mom (age 60), and others who I met through the group, like Raizel (age 6). Everyone that I surveyed agreed, learning together with adults and kids is "cool." Raizel said, "It's cool! Cuz in normal schools you have to be in a certain grade to be in the class. [Learning alongside adults] makes me feel more grown up." Her mom, Amy Beedon, who typically works on her computer while Raizel's in class, noted that she sees her daughter acting independently and sharing confidently with the group. Maggie Heath, an adult multi-disciplinary artist and arts administrator said:



Prompt: Long sleeves ruining a cake by dragging through the icing.

Benjie B., 6 yo. The cake cutter. Cake is cut in half by a sleeve. Cake has sock hands, to protect itself from fire from candles, cake also has eyes. I were thinking my birthday would come during quarantine.

Working with the younger students is totally beneficial. I feel like I am able to give myself permission to get weird. Maybe it is a “you don’t need to try as hard” to be perfect or smart or be better than others, because you are not in competition...and in turn it allows me to activate my creative potential more genuinely. I’m amazed by the creativity that young kids have, and being around them lets me get back to my own. Maybe for adults, being in a class as a peer with a child allows us to go back to childhood and be less serious. And maybe for children it makes them try to take themselves more seriously, or to try in a different way when there are different skills or thought processes that are not child-like, but are being explained in ways by adults that are accessible to all levels.

Most of the adults shared sentiment similar to Maggie’s, emphasizing the way working alongside kids has challenged their typical process or experience of “negative self-talk” during artmaking. I think the class paves the way for people to break down their own barriers in a creative process they’re developing for themselves. When I asked people to remark on what they’ve learned from the class, no one (except one adult) said, “I’ve learned to draw

better.” Instead, people discussed the ways they’ve become more open-minded, found community, discovered artists who were left out of their art history lessons, loosened up their idea of what constitutes a drawing, discovered new approaches to quickly expressing thoughts through drawing, realized the way drawing can express emotions, and observed ways that art and critical theory can enter into discourse designed for kids and adults by refusing academic jargon and “art-talk.”

By rejecting typical norms of an art class, like offering critical feedback and teaching specific technical skills associated with drawing, I’m hoping to make space for people to develop their own style and process. In an anecdote from Lynne Werbel, she describes the way the class has helped her heal from past art education trauma:

I used to love drawing, until I was a Freshman in college, and took a drawing class. I was the only non-art major in the class, and the teacher would point to my work and say, “This is what we’re trying to avoid!” Needless to say, I dropped the class, and stopped drawing. Your class has allowed me to start enjoying making art again! Thank you!!

Hearing people’s reflections on the class and the way it has offered them

a space to build confidence as an artist has made me very reflective about my own pedagogical practice. I'm asking myself, "What is the point of art education? How can I support people to become the artists they want to be? How can I acknowledge and respond to the various goals each artist has for their work in the course? And how can I inspire people to be more inquisitive, more willing to speak up, and more able to articulate their ideas through art?"

The work has also led me to a really critical realization which is that I want to encourage artists in my classes to refuse my assignments. Rather than encouraging people to strive towards mastery, or teaching that there is a hierarchy of techniques and approaches, my objective is to teach people how to think for themselves and design their own goals. In order to do that successfully, I have to support, embrace, and motivate people to break the rules. Maggie Heath reflects on this aspect of the class:

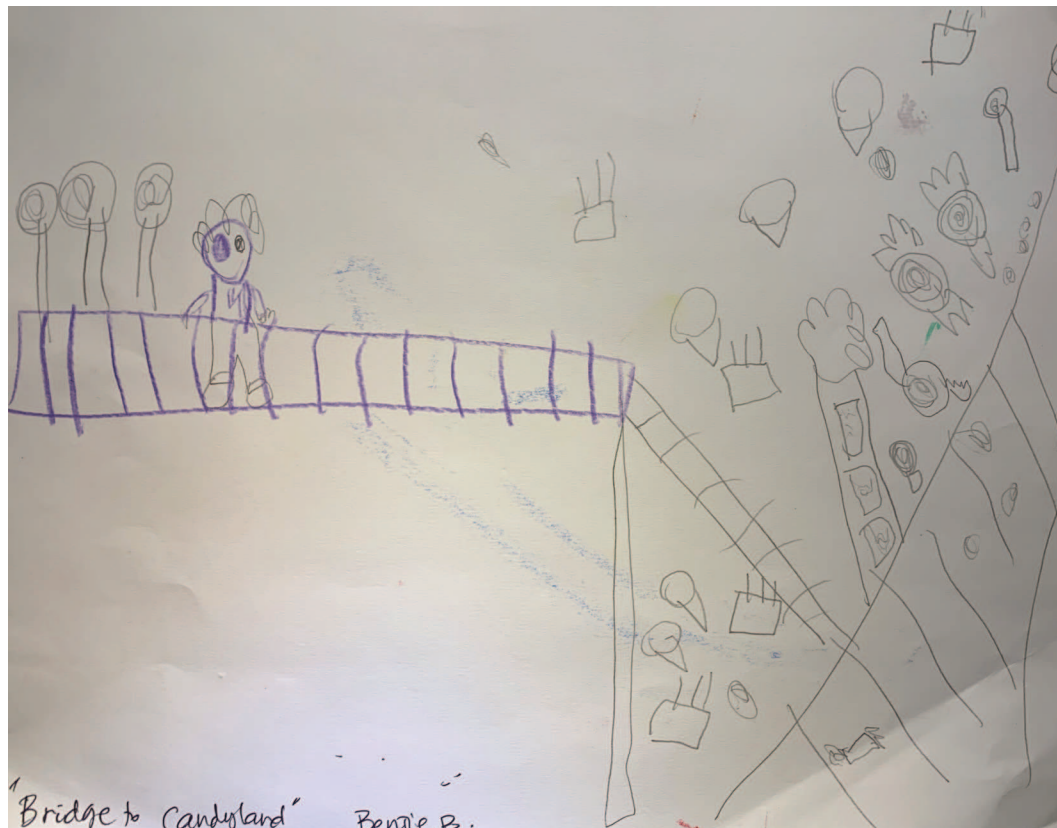
I had an art teacher as a child that told me not to worry—not everyone can be an artist. Sometimes I think about Mrs. Harla and I think about how much she missed the point of teaching art to young students. She had a rigid structure of what art was and if you didn't fit into it, you didn't flourish and you certainly wouldn't be nurtured into flourishing. I thought of her when you said something like "So our next drawing is going to be 3 minutes and you are going to draw xyz. But you also don't have to. You can break the rules. You can do the opposite. You can do x and z. Or you can also do nothing. It is up to you." To give permission for rule breaking allows the students—both children and adults—to remember that deviating from the rules does not have to be considered deviant behavior. It is simply a different way to interpret what is in front of you. And it also implies choice for the student, which I think is huge.

In *Drawing Time*, I offer very specific prompts each day. Things like, "Draw three baby animals that you hand delivered" (based on a dream I had where my dog had puppies but one was a gray roach and the other was a tiny version of the pink Courage the Cowardly Dog)

or "Draw many of your favorite animals cascading out of a basket" (borrowed from a scene I saw of a little girl in my neighborhood who was carrying a basket shaped like a rabbit filled with four tiny brown puppies). Both of these prompts came from a session that was simply about "Spring Scenes" inspired by my deep desire to feel positivity in a sea of quarantine dread. Most people drew the baby animals and the basket filled to the brim, but Moe (age 8) drew colorful spiral geodes. After each prompt, we usually hear from a few people about their drawings. This time Moe spoke a lot, and he described each new geode in relation to the prompt. For example, he said something to the effect of, "In this drawing, the reason you can't see the basket handle is because you're looking at the bottom of the basket and the animals are on the other side." He had really great explanations of each drawing (which mostly all looked the same) that deeply related to the prompts. At that moment, I realized the class is for learning to talk about and describe your process and your practice. This is something I really value in art—hearing artists talk about their work—so I was excited to see it coming through in the class. Another attendee, Benjie (age 6), has a similar talent for explaining his drawings, and it was really exciting to watch the details grow in his work while his explanations became more and more elaborate each class. Moe and Benjie are exactly the kind of students I'm interested in teaching because they're able to listen, refuse, imagine, produce, and offer new possibilities all at the same time.

Now that I've had the experience of organizing and developing my dream class with no syllabus, no burdensome grades, and no exorbitant tuition, I can't really see how I'll go back to the university and fit into such rigid structures prescribed for "learning." I know that I'll continue trying new ways to teach online because I've really enjoyed having people together in a shared space despite being hundreds and thousands of miles apart. I'm sure that I'll use this experience to stay closer to my own flexibility and responsiveness. With so much freedom to experiment and explore various approaches and formats within a tight framework (1 hour, twice a week, rotating cast of classmates), I've grown more resilient

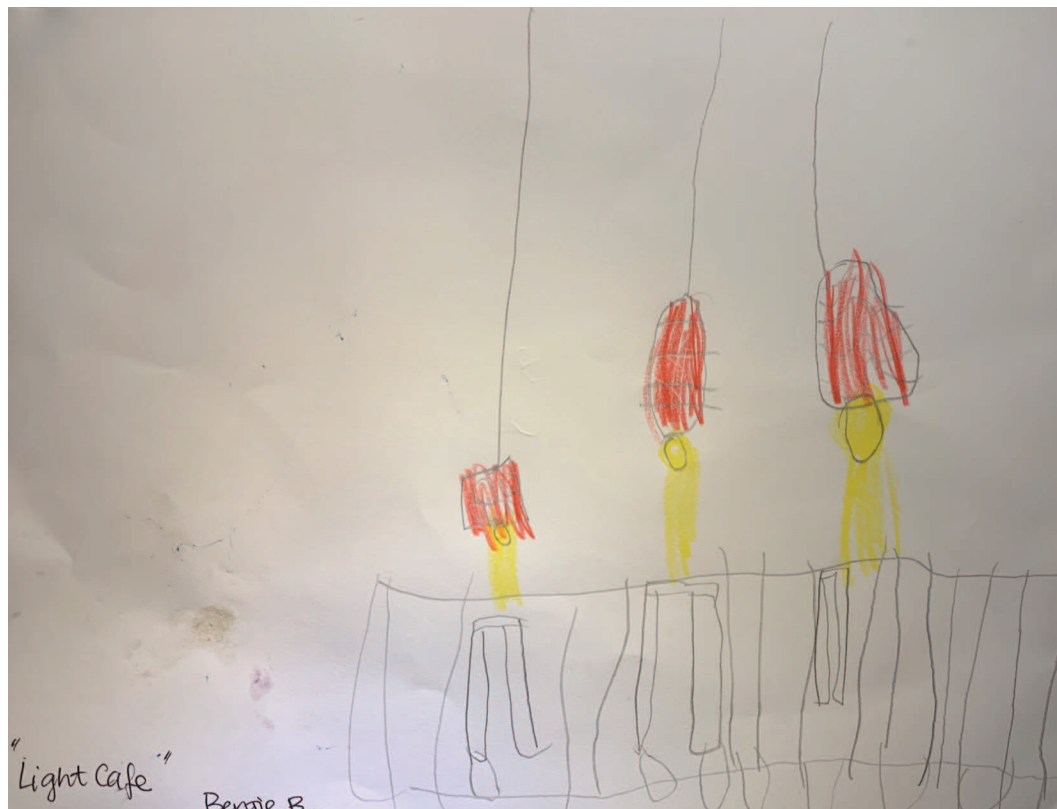
and assured in my approach. I also feel grateful for the opportunity to work with people who genuinely want to be there—in fact, that's probably my favorite take away from the "class" so far. After this experience, as a student, I will never again attend a class that I don't want to be part of. Learning and teaching are so joyous when the participants are willing to check in with themselves and each other to see how things are going. If they should shift, then they shift! To be able to integrate my life and interests so deeply into my teaching practice and share that with a willing audience is a true pleasure. If you're currently enrolled in a class that you hate attending, please get out.



"Bridge to Candyland" Benjie B.

Prompt: Bridge to a new world.

Benjie B., 6 yo. The Bridge to Candyland. I am walking on the bridge and then it leads to Candyland, land where there is an ice cream mountain, on the way to it there is a tree bark that's made of marshmallows, there are peppermint drops, and there are ice cream cones and cake. I was hungry.



"Light Cafe" Benjie B.

Prompt: draw three lamps.

Benjie B., 6 yo. Light Cafe. This is three lamps, chairs and tables that make up a cafe. All the quarantine, I want to go to a cafe.

Emma Duehr (b.1995) is a project-based artist, educator, and curator living and working in Portland, OR. Her work is invested in social engagement, storytelling, and material specificity. Her art practice facilitates discussions about domesticity, intimacy, and empowerment through gardening, craft, and mail. Using the web, educational settings, and urban environments, her work has attained international participation across the UK, Africa, Canada, Italy, Spain, and the United States. She is the Founder and Curator at The Portland Conservatory, Artist Mentor at KSMoCA, a part-time faculty member within Portland State University's School of Art and Design, and the Founder and Creator of Talking Tushies. She is a MFA Candidate in the Art and Social Practice Program at Portland State University. View her work at www.emmaduehr.com

Remote Learning Amongst COVID-19

By Emma Duehr

Winter term concluded with uncertainty. Over spring break, news surfaced that spring term would be taught remotely; this affected me both as a student, educator, and as an artist. My first independent teaching opportunity was about to begin, teaching Introduction to Sculpture at Portland State University. I never questioned if teaching sculpture online was possible; I was excited about offering tactile experiences, using everyday materials, and offering new skill sets from the comfort of home. Looking back on my education, I always felt empowered and inspired when I utilized the techniques I learned at school in my daily life. Twelve students enrolled in the class; I began by sending a survey to learn about their situations, desires, and accessibility. I learned that everyone wanted to work with clay, apply various building techniques, and work together; I designed my syllabus in response to the feedback.

I talked with various faculty across multiple universities and departments to discuss the possibilities that this time held. Collectively, we jumped into the term aware of our shared emotions, restrictions, and dedication to our fields. I learned that many sculpture classes were cancelled due to material and space restrictions. Critiques were addressed with various alternative approaches. Individual meetings became more frequent, and education became more individualized to student needs. Physical learning experiences became more focused on verbal communication. Adjustments were made on a whim and the majority of classes responded in the moment.

Internal dialogues between myself as a student and as an educator have impacted my experiences navigating online learning environments immensely. As a student, I am able to experience multiple different approaches to remote learning and respond to what is working and what may not be. I was able to shape my own class in response to my experiences in multiple online classrooms.

As a student, the term began quite overwhelmingly. I felt concerned about what I would be able to get out of school without being present with my cohort. As an educator, I wanted to do anything I could to assure that taking our online class would not affect their educational path and program curriculum. Being in both of these roles simultaneously influenced one another. The dedication and motivation I see in my students aided in my own motivation for my own homework.

Since our critiques rely heavily on documentation, I used this opportunity to focus on the importance of quality documentation. Students were creating strong sculptural work from their homes and I found it really important to consider presentation and place. Some students incorporated their homes as an essential element to the work and some students camouflaged their homes to provide clean backgrounds.

Drue Kutka is a second year student pursuing their BFA in Art Practice. They have shown great enthusiasm, dedication, and innovation during the stay-at-home order. Within the following conversation, Drue and I discussed the decisions behind a recent project and the challenges and benefits of working creatively from home.

Emma Duehr: Throughout the course of our term together so far, you created a couple works in response to COVID-19 safety restrictions. How has the coronavirus impacted the work you are creating?

Drue Kutka: The Covid-19 pandemic has influenced my daily life to the point where it's impossible to not think about it over the course of the day. When I leave the house it isn't just keys and wallet, there's a mask on that checklist now, too. I think that the coronavirus has impacted my work the same as any event within my life would have, it's just one of the things I think about most right now, so I've aimed to express my thoughts and feelings surrounding it through some of my art.



ED: Can you share the inspiration for your work in our most recent body casting project? What was this process like for you?

DK: The body casting process was one of trial and error. The overall process of creating the cast is one I feel I learned a lot from that will be applicable when thinking about how to use a 3-D space. Given the chance to cast a piece of myself I found it fitting to create a piece that focused on how I was feeling, it felt very personal to use a copy of a part of me. I wanted to create something that looked so much bigger than it actually was, in order to describe the feeling of being trapped by the garbage I create. That pose of reaching up evokes a sense of helplessness, one where people can feel the body's inability to escape, reaching out of something is a last ditch effort crying out for help. The garbage

used in the piece is all garbage I created and chose to use as I found the single use items present throughout the piece to be overly wasteful. I don't think it would have read the same had I used garbage I didn't create. (See Image)

ED: What are some of the challenges you have faced over this term due to Remote Education? What are some of the benefits?

DK: Other than that I've found this term of remote learning to be much more beneficial than not, it has allowed me to create larger pieces than I think I would've been able to had I been going between two locations. I've enjoyed the chance to work at more of my own pace. Having the space I live in turned into the classroom has allowed me to continue working on projects at times that

class would not have, whether that be first thing in the morning or after campus buildings would have been closed. Although, it can be tough to really focus on classwork when home is the classroom setting, sitting down and working on a project or assignment for a couple hours can feel nearly impossible when you're the only one in the space working on something. In addition, tutorials on how to use materials can prove difficult, it has been interesting to try new materials and not be able to ask questions as I am doing so.

With three weeks left in the term I continued to reflect, notice, and respond to the situation and changes happening daily. Below are questions I asked various educators and their responses.

I am really grateful for the opportunity to teach a class remotely, as it may have never been an experience I would have been offered from an institution. My experience throughout this period will impact future teaching opportunities. Of many, one major take-away from this experience is experiencing the importance of community within the classroom. Nurturing the community between people in a class has cultivated intimate connections through this period. Responding to our situations together has helped build deeper connections with classmates, students, and educators.

Why is education important during this time we are currently experiencing? For yourself and for your students.

Lucy Cotter: I couldn't imagine forging ahead with 'education' right now if that meant teaching a preconceived curriculum with little or no space for the particularity of this moment. This pandemic will no doubt have an impact on our lives, on our educational institutions, and on the sectors in which we work for several years, and in some cases permanently. I appreciate that education provides a forum and platform to digest the changes as they are happening, to look forward collectively, and to break what is for many people a time of social isolation in positive and constructive ways. Teaching is always meaningful, but now more than ever.

Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr.: I think education is always important,

however I find that this time is maybe... less important to focus on traditional education outputs. I think we have an opportunity to rethink what we want education to look like, but I feel like the importance of maintaining it during a pandemic is maybe less important.

Roz Crews: I'm finding that people are learning new things that might not have been possible before. The kids I'm working with are spending way more time with their parents, learning about their habits and rituals in a way that wasn't possible when k-12 school was in session. I really like that. Michelle Illuminato: The truth of the matters is that this is a time where I am doing everything I can to keep students in school because of this situation. If they're in class, there is creative activity and a group of people outside of their family that cares about what they're doing. I'm there to give another layer of support. This is a time that I really feel that I am shifting some of my approach by saying, "What can I do to help you?" If we can help the students to be successful, in whatever way that means right now, that is what is important.

Do you think the forced term of remote education will have a long term impact on your teaching and art school structures?

Jason Stecklein: I have been forced to use many forms and tools for teaching that I never would have if not for this situation.

Michelle Illuminato: I am thankful I got this glimpse into a very different way of teaching, a different perspective, especially one that is so directly opposed to my normal mode. It's very personal too, being at home. Students see me in my living space. I see theirs. I feel like I know them more personally. I have been doing short individual meetings each week. These are more productive than my individual meetings in the classroom, and I might just keep doing them this way. I'm also learning new ways to create community, like Zoom chat rooms and Flipgrid for students to share and critique their creative work.

Lucy Cotter: I do think it will have an impact on art school structures. Businesses are currently noticing that they have cut costs by having workers work from home. As the educational institutions grapple with their own

financial insecurity, it is likely that some of the current "temporary". structural changes will remain for the longer term. I will certainly remember this period of teaching, but it's too early to tell whether or how it will impact my teaching in the long term."

Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr: I think for me I've really realized that education is an exciting avenue for me and if teaching remains online, or not, I have a strong presence in an online format and am looking forward to seeing what kinds of opportunities I can leverage that being the case.

Roz Crews: Yeah, I think so. I'm not teaching at the college level right now, but I started teaching an online drawing class for people between the age of 3 and 150. It's taught me that I don't necessarily need the institution to do what I want to do...so I'm pretty excited about that."

Have you altered your expectations from your students?

Roz Crews: Definitely - I never really cared about grades (I went to a college without grades), but now I'm more adamantly opposed to the grading system. I believe it's truly harmful, and I think the process of grading is way too motivated by a teacher's egos.

Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr: I had always intended to subvert the traditional structure by telling all the students they were getting A's in the class, and that it was their responsibility to show up to class and help to build the collaborative community. I think that I approached it exactly the same, but everyone has realized how important it is to help hold the space of class. I have been intentional to be direct about expectations and how they are NOT designed around fulfilling the assignment. How they're specifically designed to help them in their own practices and that their investment.

Lucy Cotter: I've been very aware of the heightened mental health challenges brought about by the quarantine, which has altered my approach to my students somewhat. I see that some students need extra support and material to work with to help keep up their motivation, and others may not be able to achieve

the mindset to do focused work. I have tried to make space for these different states of mind and to provide individualization as well as group learning to make even more space than usual for individual concerns and questions.

From your experience so far, how has COVID-19 affected what elements of life to bring into the class? How has remote education expanded or reduced the conversations?

Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr: The shift to a completely online format is certainly different than what was originally planned for my class “Object and Social Context,” however we’ve been able to stay engaged as a class and produce meaningful connections and new work. The format for how the work is being produced has shifted slightly and opened broadly to center the individual making practices of all the different students in class.

Lucy Cotter: I have consciously expanded conversations to allow more space than usual to address how this moment in time produces the conditions in which we discuss, consider ideas, and engage with materials. I feel that this has expanded the conversation in a number of ways. However, not meeting new students in person has also had its limits. The things which do not happen as a result are more elusive but still palpable to me as an experienced teacher and presumably also to the students themselves.

What alterations have you made to your curriculum that are creating an exciting alternative? How has this time affected your prior approach?

Roz Crews: Everything is much more open-ended than I would do in a university setting, and I think I’ll bring this back into the university with me when I return.

Jason Stecklein: The videos that I produce can incorporate interesting simulations and visualizations that we would not have easily had access to in in-person classrooms.

Lucy Cotter: I have introduced some topics that would normally not be an area of focus in my classes, which I feel are important facets of the pandemic

and quarantine experience. I have also tried to acknowledge my own challenges during the quarantine to keep the frame of conversation as horizontal as possible. In my view theory necessarily comes from daily life and always remains in dynamic relation to the everyday. As we are in the midst of a phenomenon that is unprecedented it’s exciting to make that fact especially palpable for the students. We all know that the thinking we are doing has not been done before. Theory is unfolding as we think through this experience and try to articulate it to ourselves and others.

Nola Hanson (b. 1991, Milwaukee, Wisconsin) is an artist based in Brooklyn, New York. Their practice includes independent work as well as collaborative socially engaged projects. Nola is the founder of Trans Boxing, an art project in the form of a boxing club that centers trans and gender variant participants. They are an MFA candidate in the Art and Social Practice program at Portland State University, and the 2020 Artist-in-Residence at More Art, an NYC non-profit organization that supports public art projects.

Trans Boxing Conceptual Exercises

By Nola Hanson

Trans Boxing is an art project in the form of a boxing club that centers trans and gender variant people. Over the past three years we have developed a praxis that is experimental, disciplined, and responsive. The educational components of the project extend beyond what is typically experienced in most boxing clubs. In addition to providing high-level boxing training to groups who have been traditionally excluded from the sport, we have facilitated education for our partner gyms around trans and gender inclusive practices, provided teaching opportunities for participants, and have given lectures about our work across the country. Myself, my collaborators Hill Donnell and Liv Adler, and the participants of the project also informally educate others—family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues—in an ongoing way, through casual conversation. Trans Boxing functions as a medium through which to engage in dialogue about broad complicated topics like inequity, gender, inclusion, history, power, and accessibility. This mediation has given me the ability to talk about my own personal experiences indirectly, and has allowed me to use metaphors and symbols to explore these experiences.

The practice of gender and the practice of boxing mirror each other: they both represent a discipline which is created through the repetition of embodied gestures and actions. Over

time, the accumulation of these actions results in the formation of a cohesive subjectivity. The self— as theorized by John Dewey, one of the founders of Pragmatism—is an organization of habits, that is always in relationship to its particular situation, or context.

My in-progress project, Trans Boxing Conceptual Exercises, uses the rituals of boxing training to explore this relationship between the self and its context. In the project, participants are invited to follow a set of instructions and submit documentation of completed “exercises” which formalize the rituals of boxing training. The project serves as an educational resource, providing practical and useful information for a wide audience, while also reclaiming the day-to-day practices of the boxer and framing them as conceptual works in and of themselves.

The instructions included in this project support a pragmatic approach which facilitates embodied knowledge, inquiry, and experiential learning. The exercises can all be done at home or in your neighborhood using ordinary materials. In addition to the educational potential of the exercises, through representing their own experiences and presenting it to a wider audience, participants also occupy the role of the teacher. This, along with the documentation, installation, and distribution of the work will further expand the pedagogical potential of the project.

Throw These
Punches: Jab, Jab,
Cross, Hook, Cross.
Kerry Thomas, Long
Island, NY. 2020.



Throw These Punches: Jab, Jab, Cross, Hook, Cross, Hook

Make a video (10-20 seconds or so) of yourself doing the following combination: 1-1-2-3-2-3. (1=jab, 2=cross, 3=hook) The video does not have to include your face, or even your hands, but some part of your body should be included in the shot. The video can be edited/cropped.

Make a Slip Bag

A slip bag is a small, weighted bag which hangs at eye-level and swings in a pendulum-like motion. The bag is used primarily to practice bobbing, weaving, and slipping punches. The instructions for this exercise are to make a home-made slip bag and install it in your bedroom. Take a photograph of the slip bag with the flash on. The slip bag should be the main object of focus. List the materials used.

Take an Epsom Salt Bath

After a workout, take a bath with Epsom salt. If you have a fan in your bathroom, turn it off so that the room can fill with steam. The bathwater should be hot. As the tub is filling up, pour in 4-5 pounds of Epsom salt. Run your hand through the water to break up any clumps and to make sure the salt has fully dissolved. After you're done with your bath, and before you drain the tub, take a photograph.

Shadowbox in a Public Place

Find a location in your neighborhood that is traditionally busy, with pedestrians, shoppers, people waiting for the bus, etc. Shadowbox for 3 minutes. Leave. Record the date, time, and location where the action took place.

Teach Someone How to Throw a Jab

This can be done through in-person or virtual instruction. After some practice, ask the person you taught to send you a short (1-3 paragraph) written reflection of their experience.

Take a Picture of the Inside of Your Glove

The photo should only include the interior of the glove and should be taken with the flash on.

Make a Slip Bag (tennis ball, sock, handwrap, curtain rod) Ada Jane McNulty, New York, NY. 2020.



Take a Picture of the Inside of Your Glove. Liv Adler, Brooklyn, NY. 2020.



Afro Contemporary Art Class at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School: A Flexible and Responsive Pedagogical Approach to Teaching Cultural Content to Young People

By Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr.

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

I attended the first session of the Afro Contemporary Art Class armed to the teeth and ready to teach. Much to my surprise, and matching a range of my initial expectations, the level at which I had prepared myself greatly exceeded what could be dispensed and or absorbed by those in the class. Also matching my expectation, the class, its participants, and the deploying content were all benefited by being sensitive to the room. And, that while beneficial, the amount of preparation I had projected for myself, became more about and for myself, than it was for the participants in the class. I found that while the content is heavy, significant, and nuanced, that the young folks' inquiries were never what I had anticipated, and being responsive to their experience became complementary to their way of learning and the unfurling of my own personal discovery of the black experience. In essence, the search was the lesson, for all of us.

I had prepared a syllabus of questions as a way of exploring what I didn't know, or what I was curious to learn, by teaching the class.

The following is a short excerpt from an interview with Paige Thomas, the primary staff helping to facilitate ACAC programming at MLK Jr. school, followed by the original syllabus of questions I had created along with some questions added by the students on our first day.

Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr: So that brings me to the next question. I approached this class with a syllabus of questions with the inquiries I was reflecting on as I got ready to teach the class. This was the only syllabus for the class, there was no, first we'll do this next we'll do that. And I'm curious, again, leveraging your awareness of approaching a class with a syllabus or even the very strict guidelines of a primary school teacher. What are your thoughts about this?

Paige Thomas: So you know that our school we're a International Baccalaureate at Dr. King school, so one of the founding principles of an international baccalaureate education, it's inquiry based learning, right? So it's really guided by and shaped by kids. So you might have some overarching questions, but really you want kids to develop those questions and pursue the things that they're interested in so that they are the agents of their own learning, and that they are invested in their own learning. They are the ones that are directing what that is. And that gives power to the kids, which especially for our kids [at King] that maybe don't always see themselves represented in any kind of school culture. And like you were saying many who don't necessarily fit into that traditional mold

Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr. is black, non-binary, and practices primarily in America. The Artist collaborates with people to make art-work for the people.

Paige Thomas received her Master of Arts in Teaching from the University of Portland in 2010. She has spent the last 5 years of her career teaching and learning at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School in Northeast Portland. This year she is leading a cohort of teachers on the school's CARE Team. This team focuses on teachers examining their practice through a racial lens in the hopes of interrupting the achievement gap present for students of color in Portland Public Schools. It also consists of planning and teaching units through a social justice framework - this year teachers are examining themes of identity, diversity, justice and action.

Karmyn Chandradas (a spanish name) (goes by KK) is excited to draw.

Azariah Nsikk Abasi Nathaniel Elijah (Leonardo aka Brave Lion) is excited to draw and learn.

Dayna Chandradas (a spanish name) is excited to learn and to draw stuff (draws like an angel)

Zemaj-Dwayne-Mitchell-Johnson (Mr. Mitchell or Mr. Johnson) is looking forward to being a movie director and helping create the movie.

Olivia Rose Edwards-EI is excited to draw.

Gracie Allure Edwards-EI is excited to draw.

Israel Ramone Idongesit Elijah is interested in clay and drawing.

Mekhi Alan Kent-Thomas is excited to eat the cookies.

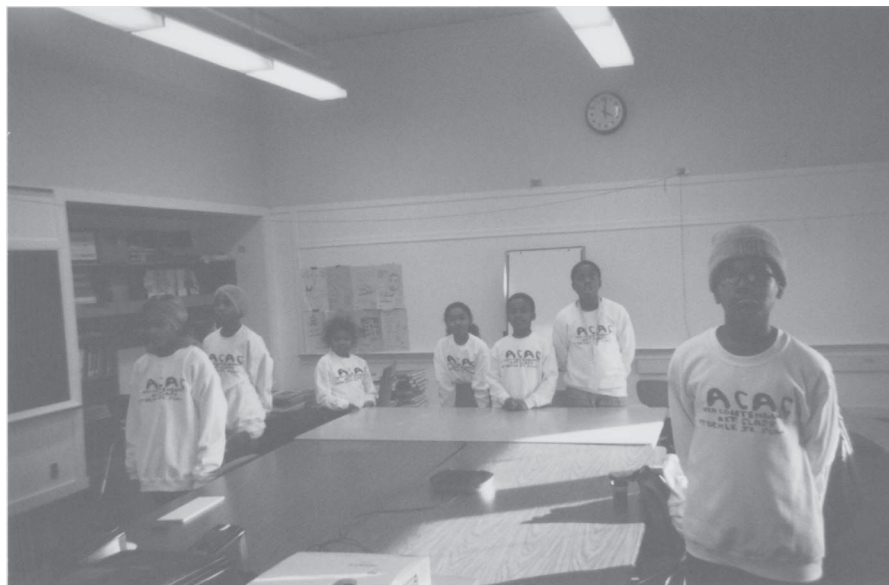
of school. That structure is perfect for them, which is why we wanted to have this opportunity for our students so that they have another way to experience learning and to make them feel like they were the agents in their own learning and that they had a lot of voice and choice and power in how they get to how they get to engage in their academics. While also having it be a different experience than perhaps what they have in other parts of their day. So I think that structure is really powerful.

AMBSJ: Yeah, it's interesting given that King school is an IB school. Are there ways that you see that this class was

distinctly different? Because if you're saying I leveraged an inquiry based method which I would never have claimed knowingly, but that the school is also already doing that.

PT: Yeah, you know, in classrooms we can let kids ask questions, but we also are mandated by state and national standards to make sure we get through a prescribed amount of curriculum or some prescribed standards. So I think that the way that you had inquiry, it was much more open ended and it was much more responsive to kids needs and to kids experiences.

The Afro Contemporary Art Class in the classroom at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School reenacting an archival photograph of some young Black Panthers.



An archival photograph of Black Panther youth in a classroom.



Afro Contemporary Art Class Syllabus of Questions

By Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr.:

Why is it important to study Black history?

What is Black history?

How does one separate or manage the trauma from learning the complexities of Afro history?

Can Afro history be taught by examining the work of contemporary artists?

Is it possible to learn Afro history guided by the inquiries of young people?

How much is too much to learn for a young person?

What proportion of good to challenging content is appropriate?

When does African history become African American history?

What parts of Afro history are important to include to help a young person understand contemporary contexts?

Who are the most important people in Afro culture to include?

Is Afrofuturism a part of Afro history?

What does Afro history include?

Which history is more important, Local or Global?

Is it important to include Afro histories from all continents?

What is Black Thought?

What is a black identity?

What is Black Activism?

What is gender in the black community? Is it different that it is in a non-black context?

Where does the mixed race experience fit into Black History?

Is learning the history of your own family constitute as Black History?

What are the differences between Black History, African American History, and African History?

Afro Contemporary Art Class Syllabus of Questions By The Students:

Why do artists do things?

Isn't it important to include EVERYONE in the study of Afro history?

Can one tell when they're mixed?

Does it hurt when people of African Descent get culturally significant piercings?

Are Michael's piercings culturally significant?

Does Michael's tattoos represent African History?

Does Michael's shirt represent this class? What we're learning about?

Was Dread Scott named after Dred Scott?

Why was Martin Luther King Jr. Assassinated?

Via Handwoven Tape: Understanding and Weaving Early American and Contemporary Tape, a book written by Susan Faulkner Weaver

As she writes on pages 10-11:

Every culture needed long, narrow bands of cloth for their tying and strapping needs. Different cultures have referred to tape in their own manner, and have made it with their own variations in style and appearance... Oral traditions were important for passing down the Early Americans' common tape patterns... functional, utilitarian tying and strapping tape, used for such things as cloth ties and satchel straps.

Weaver, Susan F. Handwoven Tape: Understanding and Weaving Early American and Contemporary Tape. Atglen, PA. Schiffer Publishing, 2016.

Learning process described by **Mary Olin Geiger**

These are my reflections on the initial stage of learning a hand-craft in social isolation. Over the course of several days, the importance of human interaction in this process became apparent: especially in the act of learning. This length of tape was made with materials I already had in my home prior to quarantine, including cotton thread and a borrowed loom. Here, I translated my notes from a handwritten list into verse.

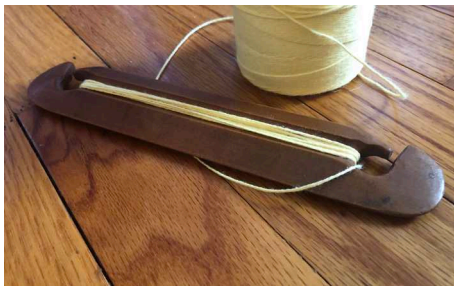
Learning by Hand

By Mary Olin Geiger

Page 102 #14, Tape Pattern: Single Dash with Border

Notes:

Reproduction, original weaver unknown.
This weaver could have been my great great great grandmother.
Or her sister, or her aunt, or cousin;
all the women and children used to do this.
So, men had it in their muscle memories too, probably.
They taught each other using words and hands
not writing it down.
I go to my warping board,
purchased at a store not far from where
they used to weave this kind of tape. Pennsylvania Germans.
I never thought I'd return to the place where half of my family came from.
Tape is utility made by women and children
A fibrous material needed to tie clothing and other materials together,
before zippers and velcro
to bind attach hold
I wind the warp. This I know
from past learning. Back and forth, tie it off, remove it.
Back to the book:
Tape is utility made by women and children
A fibrous material needed to tie clothing and other materials together,
before zippers and velcro
to bind attach hold
Daisy chain, hands around loops, fingers
at the cross, making sure not
to lose it.
Start from the front.
like I usually do.
Back to the book:
A little unclear on warping – I take a measured guess?
I've lost 3 strings in the cross. Ah,
Because they are individual colors. Damn.
now the warp is tangled
travelling through slots and holes.
Will it stay messed up?
more knots
wind the shuttle. Begin. How do I beat? It's too loose.
Research this. Look at the pictures.
Ahhh, I look and see
the edge of the shuttle – that is the tool.
It's tapered. That makes sense.
My hands are clumsy This rhythm
is harder than I thought.
Why is it so loose? Why is my
warp not evenly tensioned!
Angry. It's all messed up. Try to
start over; with this warp though.
It gets tangled. Can't be saved.
(Scraps for later I guess.)
Cut.
Begin again.
Go back to the warping board.
Wind again.



Ok, now, tie all the strings together, to
avoid those tangled, out of order threads.
Cross is intact. Good. Better than
last time. Let's keep it front to back.
that feels familiar.
Warp again.
Through holes and slats, tie one knot. Start.
This feels better. continue wait
It's wrong again. I wish I had someone to show me.
I'll talk to Chris when I'm able to see her again.
She'll know. Susan might get back to me soon,
I'll ask her.
For now, continue. Terrible.
tension is wrong again. should I
stop? for the day? no, just re-tie.
Cut.
Re-tie, get tangled. Don't start
over again, just stretch it out
Take the time to untangle.
I do this.
Spread out the warp maybe? More
spaces? Try it. 3 knots now
instead of one.
Begin again @ new knot at the
front. Feels better.
Tension is great. Although
The weave is balanced and not
right. Too much spaces between threads.
Cut.
New knot @ front. Re-sley. Take out
half the spaces
Begin again better
closer. Getting a rhythm
feeling my hands learning the motions.
Up, pass, hold, shift grip, beat, repeat
Oops I miss a string. That's ok.
Maybe?
Take away more spaces. Now
it looks alluvial. This works better.
Now, much better than before.
continue
back and forth back and forth
back and forth. Step away.
Come back. Back and forth.
I see the end knots. A few
more passes.
Cut.
First one done.
I coil the length, and carry it into another room.
Laying it out on paper to show the full length, I take a photograph.
What if they were here to help me?

Mary Olin Geiger

(Mo) makes collaborative artworks, theater, performance, and the materials that live within those worlds and at their intersections. She is an MFA candidate in Portland State University's Art and Social Practice Program. For more information, visit mogeiger.com

Susan Faulkner Weaver

has been weaving and teaching hand weaving workshops for almost 30 years. She began her studies at The Mannings Handweaving School in East Berlin, PA. Susan worked for a number of years as a Textile Educator and Demonstrator at Landis Valley Village and Farm Museum, a PA German Living History Museum in Lancaster, PA. She is a member of the Central PA Guild of Craftsmen, as well as a Heritage Crafter in Lancaster. Her weavings are sold regionally.

**Excerpt from a phone conversation on May 14th 2020:**

Mary Olin Geiger: It was interesting, over the couple days that I worked on this first (length of) tape, I thought, "I'm doing this all by myself, getting frustrated." I was having a conversation with this book, which is written words on a page, not dialogue. I was thinking about that, in this time of social isolation, and I realized how important that social part would have been: even in the learning.

Susan Faulkner Weaver: You know, you can really reflect on whatever you want when you're in a private setting, doing some kind of craft or art, whatever it is. I know one thing with weaving: weaving guilds are very, very important in today's world. And that's because, you know, weaving is a very private way of creating. Guilds are a way of coming

together with all these people, coming from their private time, weaving together, sharing, educating, having fun, laughter. It's really, really, really important. And it sort of balances out with that private time that you have in the weaving-focus. You know, other art forms, I'm sure they have their ways of gathering and communing together, which is very important. Another thing I just want to mention is that I have been teaching for many years, (and) if I teach a rag weaving workshop, I just do a little monologue on the history of rag weaving. I focus on the 1930s in Appalachia, and the importance of rag weaving to certain cultures. And then I get into the nitty gritty of how to do it. I don't like the concept of "how-to do it," you know, the concept of "make and take." I think it's important, and so I was doing that before I got into tape weaving, exploring different cultures and respecting where people were coming from a long

time ago. I just think that's so important when you're going to work on something, to know that history before you go beyond it.

MOG: That's something that I both think about a lot and struggle with, because I think nostalgia can be a big rabbit hole. How do you have, or how do you live with, a history and act around a history while not saying it's better or worse, or you know, any of those things? What are the ways that we can just exist with these histories? I do think craft is one of those ways. It's a very direct connection.

SFW: When you're learning the weave structure, historically, you're also learning about the people, and everything that was going on around them. It's not just that narrow focus of weaving; you're learning an overview of that particular period of time and what the folks were about and what was important to them. You're using weaving or textiles as the focus, but yet, it's not this narrow focus with blinders on.

MOG: It's kind of like a conduit. to look at people through the things that they make.

SFW: It's a symbol. Yeah, I just find that fascinating. And so, in writing this book, the focus was tape. But I was incorporating a lot of what I learned about Pennsylvania German history into that, and that was important. I know one of your questions had to do with something about other kinds of inherited learning?

MOG: Yeah! If you'd like to talk about that one, that would be a good transition.

SFW: Well, I was thinking of my mother. My mother's father worked in a weaving textile mill, and he was just there for the machinery. He wasn't really into the craft. But my mother has always been... she's always been very creative. She was always a really good seamstress. She would buy her material, make her suits, and then she would go out and buy the accessories: the hat and the handbag, and the shoes to go with it. You know, the colors and everything back in the 50s and 60s. She was very good that way and a phenomenal designer: she'd upholster her own furniture, you know,

stuff that I wouldn't even attempt. I'm really bad on the sewing machine, which is where I have to do all my finishing work, and I cringe when I get off the loom and have to finish with hemming and all for handbags. But she has really been my role model, just from watching her. And I guess I took one step backwards and went into the world of weaving, creating the fabric, and she would do things with the fabric. I remember when I first bought my 42 inch floor loom—I had no clue what to do with it. I didn't know whether it was a good loom or not, but I bought it from a farmer's wife: she sold it quite reasonably to me. I came with all this 8/2 cotton thread, so I put the whole width of the warp on the loom—the whole width of the loom was warped up with this cream colored cotton thread, and I wove curtain material. I had no idea what I was doing, but I had no fear in me! I just did it. And I always think back on that, and it's like you had got to have been crazy, Susan, but it worked! And so, bottom line is, I made a beautiful fabric: cotton fabric. The weft had some slub in it, so it had some interest, and (I) took it off the loom. And then I realized there is no way I could possibly make curtains out of this! I made the fabric, but I can't do anything with it. I could not cut into it! So I gave it to my mother and she turned my fabric into beautiful curtains. And it was just wonderful. I guess I inherited that little bit from my mother, you know, how to examine fabric and play with it, then creating it.

MOG: Right. That's an interesting lineage too, because you identified stepping back in the process to the fabric itself, but you can also see how (the two parts of the process) interact and how the ways that you learned about fabric before inform what you're doing now.

SFW: I had never really thought of it that way before. (I've) never thought of my mother and having that much influence, but then I started really thinking: it was definitely there.

MOG: A lot of what I'm thinking about is how to talk about and how to make sense of these relationships, like you just described with your mother, acknowledging the connections in ways that aren't just related to the pristine craft object where it's like, "I learned

this from this person," or all of those direct lineages. There's also indirect things at play that we don't often see (clearly). If it's not being passed down through oral tradition, is it changing?

SFW: Well, it is and it isn't. You know, you can still make the tape from my traditional tape patterns. But that's why, in the book, I have the history and the tradition in the front and then (in) the back is contemporary. And I did that on purpose so that you would be able to take it and go with it. It isn't changing, because it looks just the same, you know. But yes, it's changing as far as the colors and patterns and things like that. I don't quite know how to answer that.

MOG: I don't quite know how to answer it myself. I guess this is one of the questions that I try to bring in to conversations like this every once in a while, so maybe I can get a little closer, you know what I mean?

SFW: If you're not learning it by the oral tradition way, if you're learning the "how-to," that would be the same as (being) curled up with your mother for years and learning how to do it with your sister or something. But you're not learning any kind of little shortcuts, or tips that they would have been expressed in the oral tradition. So the change would be in the loss of some of the finer techniques, maybe, or in the spinning of the fiber. It's being changed by not having all of that, and having to sort of pick up the pieces and go on. And that's the sadness of oral traditions is that you're losing some of the knowledge because it's not documented. But you do the best you can, and hope that your reproductions are adequate.

MOG: And maybe it didn't want to be preserved.

SFW: You know, I have some of my own pieces of tape, and some of them are from that period. And you can almost tell, I mean, sometimes they get a little wobbly... and you can sort of tell that maybe someone else was taking over on the loom. And this is one of the most beautiful things about tape weaving. A loom, in weaving, it's a private thing. You work up your loom and you weave what you want to weave - it's all you. But with the tape weaving, the beauty of the

tape loom is that it is not just for one person: it's all different people in the family that were weaving the tape. And to me that is just phenomenal! With a tape weaving, you had a bunch of different people weaving that length of tape. It wasn't just one person as a tape weaver; that wasn't their one chore. And so, to me, that was just an amazing concept: more than one person was weaving that piece of tape and you can't really identify how much did one person do, before (they) got off the loom to do other chores, and someone else got on it later - if it's raining or whatever, moving inside the house. You just have no clue. And to me, that makes it magical because it wasn't just one person.

MOG: That's a beautiful thought.

SFW: It was a shared piece of tape. It could have been one person, it could have been two, it could have been many people working on that because they were weaving yardage. They weren't just weaving a couple of feet - they

would put a huge warp on their loom, especially on the standing looms, and then weave it off. Not all at once, (but) whenever they had a free moment: so it was a continuous project.

MOG: Yeah, and it's connective: it's like connective tissue between people. Then and also now.

SFW: It's very social, you know: tape has so many people's hands in it. People have different tension; everyone weaves a little differently. That was something that I would always think about when I was weaving tape at Landis Valley, before a lot of visitors would come in. When I would be on these old historical looms, by myself, and (my) mind starts wandering and wondering about who was weaving, what was the purpose, (and) who was it going to be used for. There's just so many questions out there: unanswered questions. But I think it's beautiful to have unanswered questions.



Dot the “i’s” with hearts: Working with kid designers at RECESS! Design Studio

A conversation between Jordan Rosenblum and Roshani Thakore.
Edited by Jordan

RECESS! Design Studio is a creative agency housed inside of a classroom in The Dr. Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School in Northeast Portland. Working with third, fourth, and fifth-grade designers, the studio is one part classroom, one part creative agency, and one part artist project. The project is co-directed by artists Jordan Rosenblum and Kim Sutherland, in collaboration with visiting artists and designers.

RECESS! serves as the in-house studio for the artist-run project, The King School Museum of Contemporary Art (KSMoCA). The studio’s ongoing design services include posters for exhibitions and lectures, signs for classrooms, and promotional material for school events.

The ambition of RECESS! is to create a full-service creative agency directed and run by elementary school students.

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

In the classroom, RECESS! students develop classic graphic design skills—creating experimental typefaces, designing business cards for student entrepreneurs, and learning about visual literacy and making meaning through text and image.

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

The following conversation took place in May 2020 between Roshani Thakore, Artist and Organizer, and RECESS! co-director Jordan Rosenblum.

Roshani Thakore: Let’s start off with talking about the early days of RECESS! Design Studio. What was the beginning of it like.

Jordan Rosenblum: The idea for teaching design at the King School (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School) came from a series of conversations between Harrell Fletcher (co-director of KSMoCA, with Lisa Jarrett), Kim, and I. Within a month, we were in the library pitching to recruit kids to opt-in to our fledgling class.

When Kim and I started having planning conversations, we were really asking, “Well, what is graphic design? What is design? And what do we want to teach about it? Why should kids care about it?” We were thinking a lot about narrative, about storytelling, and about communication as a kind of core piece of this, as well as how design impacts them. We were really interested in how kids can and do construct meaning.

From the beginning it was going to be a project-based learning environment. The studio was going to provide design services to KSMoCA (The King School Museum of Contemporary Art), which was one of the things that made the project compelling to us. That is, the idea that we would have a classroom of kids that were creating design work for real clients. One of the goals for us was that the studio would eventually provide design services to the school, and extend out into the community.

We also had never formally taught children before, so we were—and still are—trying to figure that out. I feel like we’re in total infancy in terms of understanding how to work with kids.

Roshani Thakore uses art to broaden an understanding of place, uncover histories, elevate voices, and expand a sense of belonging, all with the hope of shifting power. Since 2019 she is the Artist-in-Residence at the Asian Pacific Network of Oregon, a statewide, grassroots organization, uniting Asians and Pacific Islanders to achieve social justice. Prior to this residency, she received funding from the Division Midway Alliance Creative Placemaking Projects Grant with her project 82nd + Beyond: A Living Archive. More information about her work is at www.roshanithakore.com

Jordan Rosenblum is an artist, designer, and educator based in Portland, Oregon. His projects engage land use, climate change, and agriculture, human relationships to time, and how structures of power function through design. Jordan’s socially engaged work include exhibitions, publications, and curriculum. He teaches at Portland State University, and co-directs the RECESS! Design Studio (in affiliation with the King School Museum of Contemporary Art), an artist project that explores design with elementary school students. For more information, visit jordan-rosenblum.com.

RT: I know that you were formally trained in graphic design, and have had a long history working as a designer, and you teach design at Portland State University. You are also an artist, and enrolled in PSU's Social Practice program. Working in design is just one part of what you do. What does design mean to you, and how does it enter your life?

JR: I have always been ambivalent about design. The constructive role that design can play is serving as a conduit for interpretation, and as a vessel for communication. It functions for me as a process for relating to things. It is useful for looking at systems, breaking them down, and problem solving. There are also lots of complications with the role of the designer finding and solving problems, but I think that's a separate conversation.

RT: I think the most interesting thing about the project is that it is in the King School, which is a public elementary school in Northeast Portland that has been historically African American, as opposed to, for example, a private school. The demographic of the school is changing as the neighborhood gentrifies. Beyond thinking about teaching design to elementary school students, there's something powerful that's happening in choosing to lead with this concept of design as interpretation, and design as communication. Many of our systems, and so much infrastructure that we know, are created by a specific group of people—white, cisgendered, men.

This is an opportunity—and any kind of art education can be—to start talking about interpretation, and communication, and breaking down systems. That's the most interesting thing to me.

At a young age to even start to consider, "Oh, somebody designed my school," is a big deal. To have an understanding that the school is somebody's concept. Or, that "I could design my own school, and I could build my own world." Or, "I can communicate the things that are actually important to me and relevant to me because of my worldview." Which may not match up with what I'm being told every day, as a person of color, as an African American, as queer, as all these other aspects of identity and experience.

The power is in the revolution right there. You are working with a specific site.

JR: We are interested in exploring how design relates to power, and how design can also be a tool to look at power. We hope to provide some agency for students to explore that for themselves, in their own lives. We are trying to approach it in a couple of ways. I think one piece of it is through having students designing client-based work. For many of the projects—especially the early ones—Kim and I were doing the art direction, and the students were designing, but we want to move in the other direction. We are interested in flipping it, where the students tell us what to do. What if they worked as hovering art directors, telling us to push pixels around, make something smaller, move it to the left, etc.? That's one of our ambitions. I think it's a lot less interesting when we are running it like a traditional design studio where Kim and I are the creative directors and the students are doing the production work. Despite our commitment to making this flip happen, we haven't been fully successful in doing it yet. In part, I think it has to do with the students really trusting that they have full permission to do what they want with the material. They are receiving lots of messaging implicitly and explicitly to perform or think a certain way—by us, too, despite our intentions. And there also secondary expectations that come into play from other places. This was particularly clear on a project that involved a pretty complex collaboration with parents, students, and some of the school administration. Issues came up around whether things were written well enough, or drawings of people were good enough representations. That is to say... we didn't all agree. Merging these different forms of education and an approach that is sometimes purposely not affirming what is good or bad can be complicated and confusing.

At the same time, I also think there is power just in the fact that students create things, and all of a sudden those things are hung up all over the school, and published on the web, etc...

I also don't want to downplay the role of formal design education, and of course that's in there. We spend a ton of time looking at and creating typefaces, we talk about form and hierarchy—"what's the most important thing on this poster? And, how do you know what to read first?" etc.

We started off with an approach that

was pretty abstract—making collages out of cut paper that would evoke feelings, and drawing typefaces that represented qualities, like fast, or soft, etc... but they just didn't seem to work. In part because we were so new to working with children, we were just throwing stuff against the wall that seemed interesting. As it progressed, we would go back and forth between doing client work, where we would draw or design posters and things for the school, and return to these shorter exercises. We became interested in longer collective projects where students would each contribute something that would form the whole. One example would be the posters we designed for a couple of KSMoCA artist's lectures. We created one for Hannah Jickling's talk about their Big Rock Candy Mountain's project, and another for Arnold Kemp's lecture. For both of these, each student designed letters for the poster that collectively formed the text for the poster. They created typefaces that were created together. These were also tactile, where the letters were created out of materials that related to the artists' work. A really simple lesson for us about teaching young folks is that they love tactile materials. For the talk about Big Rock Candy Mountain, we crafted letters out of clay that resembled candy. It's not totally clear to me why, but the tin foil we used for Arnold Kemp's poster was totally captivating for them. We love these projects, but also recognize that at a certain level they are really dealing with form, and not so much with content from the students.

We started working more directly with content. We asked students to choose portions of Dr. MLK Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, and to illustrate a graphic poster out of it. So, we were experimenting with narrative, where we would have all of these posters that would basically line up together to form the whole speech, but allow these individual interpretations in a mix of word and image. When the speech itself was removed, we had these wonderfully evocative posters that related to each other, but were also clearly individual expressions. The project had clearer boundaries and goals, and some really evocative imagery to work with, and because of that were easier for the students to access. More importantly, the project opened up discussions into the places where student's individual experiences could meet up with the communicative power of graphic design.

RT: It seems like it's a meshing of traditional design education, and on-the-job training—which is also experiential learning. If your classroom is one of only a few spaces in the structure of King school that operate that way, it's going to take some time for the kids to realize they're in a different kind of class, with a different set of expectations. KSMoCA is pushing the lines of experiential education in the school in a major way.

I think for kids to have to adjust to another space in their school for an hour a week, while seven hours a day they are in more traditional classrooms is just another unseen layer in how you are working with them. You are really butting up against traditional education models. Students having to navigate to very different types of spaces, and move between them must be such a big transition for them. Especially when you are talking about projects that are really asking students to show up as their whole selves.

JR: I think that's absolutely right. In some very real ways we are taking them out of one system and just like dropping them into another for forty minutes.

The most significant shift in the classroom started when Kim and I started to give ourselves freedom to more directly explore the kind of questions we were interested in as artists. I began to center my interest more in a way that I think has opened up different conversations with the kids; of course, that's way richer for me. Doing so has fed back into the way I'm teaching in higher education right now, where I am giving myself permission to do similar things in those classrooms.

I think granting ourselves that freedom has allowed us to go deeper into our initial intent. Like we were talking about earlier, in working on this project my interest has a lot to do with using design as a tool to explore and shift power. Graphic design is a professionalized craft, and in many ways is about providing legitimacy and authority. That craft and visual language can be applied to voices and media that traditionally don't have access to it. And, to voices that are denied authority which certainly includes youth.

In a recent project I walked with the RECESS! Designers around the school for about an hour. They wrote down a list of every sign that was hanging in the school. They created this long catalog of

all kinds of signs, which was pretty fun, kind of a treasure hunt. We mapped all kinds of signs—exit signs, fallout shelter signs, wayfinding, signs for the principal's office and teachers' lounge, historic plaques and markers, obscure indicators for infrastructure—everything. Even though there are a lot of different kinds of signs and indicators on the walls of the school, many of them are operating in an official framework. Most of them are unquestioned, and many go unnoticed, consciously speaking.

This started out as an act of observing and noticing. It brought up the students' curiosities about what was and wasn't being shown, and it brought up questions they had about the space and its history. This idea owes a big debt of gratitude to Rosten Woo's work, which served as a big inspiration.

Back in our classroom, we started to talk about what their experiences of the school are, and how that related to the signs and indicators that are on the walls.

RT: Just to be eight years old and to consider that the instructions and signage and language around you is not "truth," that's a big thing. To allow for multiple truths to exist, and allowing your personal story to exist in a visible way in relation to parts of the school experience. Even that is kind of like a foundation. I think this side project is a great iteration of that. I think the core of what you're working through is young people at a place in their lives where they are often told what the truth is, and you're using the elements of design, education, and art. The juiciest stuff is how it's all mixed together. You're expanding the way of thinking about design through an artist's perspective, and because of that the classroom is an art project. It is an art project that uses the tools and principles of other fields. I think there is a real possibility for arts education to serve as a leader in opening up new kinds of spaces within schools.

Jordan: Adopting or playing the role of the artist as an educator can grant more permission to ask questions that might not be asked otherwise.

Often, even in spaces in schools which are safe and allow for deeper sharing, or that encourage critical inquiry, student's insights are focused around a specific subject. That might be historical, like a revisiting or reinterpretation

of histories. It's hard to imagine a school giving permission to look at what is on the walls around them, and asking for that to be interrogated. It's too close to home, and potentially threatening to the institution itself.

At the same time, thinking about signs in the school is not expressly or inherently critical. It can just serve to simply to create a vessel for student's curiosities and experiences to be expressed. By focusing around whose voices are being expressed, how signs work, and how they affect culture students can begin to see the possibility of alternatives that more closely support their needs or views. One example is a sign above a drinking fountain. The sign has a set of rules about drinking water, there is a time limit for how long you can drink, and an instruction about how to stand in line. Something like "drink for one minute, and move on." One of the RECESS! Designers wanted to rewrite the sign to say "drink until your thirst is quenched." In another, a student wanted to change the sign for the library to read "Kids' Lounge in the Library, Yay!" In the design for it, the dot of the "i's" are hearts. That small gesture reorients the space to a child's experience. The library is renamed in a reflection of care and fondness. Institutional language—which is the language of most things we consider signs—doesn't allow for that. There is real power in exploring how the world is interpreted, and allowing for a combination of both critical and personal perspectives. I think one of the possibilities for art and design education is to really bridge the spectrum of experience, so that nothing is left out. So that there is room for the political, the critical, and spiritual, and the personal. It makes me wonder what schools, or institutions, or spaces would be like if the people—or kids—who utilized them had their interpretations and experiences made visible. I think I'd like to live in a world where a library sign had a heart above the "i."

Daniel Godínez Nivón

Estudió Artes Visuales en la Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas de la UNAM y la Maestría en la misma casa de estudios. En 2011 es coautor del Libro Medios Múltiples 3. Su obra se ha presentado de forma colectiva en la exposición Jardín de Academus: Laboratorios de arte y educación en el MUAC, VanAbbe Museum en Holanda y el Center for Contemporary Arts CCA en Glasgow. Ha sido Becario del Programa Jóvenes Creadores durante 2011 - 2012 y 2019 - 2020 del Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes. En 2014 estudia en la Escuela Nacional Superior de Bellas Artes de París. En 2019 es nominado para obtener el Visible Award.

Daniel Godínez Nivón

studied Visual Arts at the National School of Plastic Arts of the National Autonomous University of México. In 2011, he co-authored the book Multiple Media 3. His work was presented in a collective exhibition in Academus Garden: Art laboratories and education in MUAC, Van Abbe Museum in the Netherlands and CCA in Glasgow. He was in the Fellow Young Artists Program (2011-2012 and 2019 - 2020) by the National Fund for Culture and the Arts for his Tequio-Rolas project. In 2014, he studied at the Superior National School of Fine Arts in Paris. In 2019 is nominated for the Visible Award.

Propedéutico Onírico/ A Dream Propaedeutic

Spencer Byrne-Seres with Daniel Godínez Nivón

Spencer Byrne-Seres conversa con artista Daniel Godínez Nivón sobre su obra investigando el conocimiento indígena, ciencia occidental, y las realidades que creamos a través de nuestros sueños. Su proyecto, Propedéutico Onírico, trabajó con jóvenes para explorar sueños colectivos como una manera de crear mundos alternativos.

Spencer Byrne-Seres: Daniel, quería empezar, por hablar un poco de esta idea de pedagogía y cómo empezaste a trabajar en un contexto social?

Daniel Godínez Nivón: Yo conocí el tequio al comenzar a intentar desarrollar un proceso de trabajo con un grupo, la AMI, la Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas en Ciudad México. Todo esto fue en 2009—yo acababa de salir de la escuela y comencé a trabajar en un seminario; un seminario que en realidad es donde me formé, que coordina un artista mexicano llamado José Miguel González Casanova.

Este hombre es mi mentor y una persona que ha brindado ese tipo de relación de procesos pedagógicos de un arte que podríamos llamar, “Ampliado”, que involucra asumir cómo un artista se preocupa por la producción, distribución y consumo de su trabajo. Reflexiona sobre el público y la repercusión en los otros contextos. En fin, ese fue como el perfil de este proceso de trabajo en el cual yo me incorporé y comencé a reflexionar sobre mi propio pasado y mi familia.

Mi familia es de Juchitán, Oaxaca. Tengo una familia zapoteca, mis padres ya crecieron aquí en la ciudad, pero yo crecí con esa fascinación por las historias y los relatos de los abuelos. Pero conociendo muy poco también del pueblo. Durante la escuela, mi trabajo previo había sido con esa imagen: los relatos de los abuelos, esa identidad zapoteca, de las tehuanas, y el pueblo Juchiteco. Eso había sido mi obra plástica.

El seminario de José Miguel me hizo reflexionar sobre tratar de ampliar la relación de identidad en mi familia con el papel de los migrantes en la ciudad. Dentro de esas reflexiones fue que decidí encontrar un grupo de personas con los cuales pudiera trabajar.

La Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas, la AMI, fue formado por egresados de la Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, personas que hoy en día tienen hoy sus 50 años; es gente política y educada en el sentido de entender varias cosas en su activismo. Yo llegué a la AMI, y solamente estaba un joven, Apolinar se llama, un de Ultatepec. Yo llegué diciendo, “Yo soy Daniel, soy artista”. Esto es 2008.

SBS: ¿Puedes hablar ahora un poco de cómo encontraste el sueño como tema y esa obra que estás como cumpliendo ahora, creo? Intentando terminar o mover a otra cosa.

DGN: El primer proyecto que hice con la Asamblea de Migrantes Indígenas fueron las tequiografías. Las tequiografías son un proyecto editorial, un material didáctico que emula un material oficial hecho por la Secretaría de Educación. La Secretaría de Educación trae estas planillas de papel con dibujos y al reverso texto. Se distribuyen por cientos, por miles, en todo el país y tienen una versión oficial de los conocimientos.

Las tequiografías son un material que brinda otra versión de los conocimientos, no es la versión oficial o la versión histórica. Específicamente trabajando con los grupos de la AMI, existe la monografía escolar con el tema de salud, que es la versión de la OMS y toda esta cuestión de la Organización Mundial de la Salud.

Nosotros hicimos una tequiografía de salud, que tiene la versión de la partería, el conocimiento de plantas, del



cuerpo humano, la versión de la naturaleza. En fin, brinda otra versión, básicamente. Al trabajar esta monografía de salud, esto fue en 2010, fue que conocí a un grupo de parteras triquis. Estas mujeres comenzaron a hablar de una cosa muy interesante, porque ellas hablaban del papel de los sueños.

Ellas decían, “Es que nosotras aprendemos a partir de sueños. Es en sueños, desde que somos muy pequeñas, desde que somos niñas, se nos revela nuestra futura profesión”, es como un llamado. Eso a mí me pareció, más allá de querer comprobar la veracidad de este hecho, como artista me pareció algo muy hermoso, muy poético, enigmático, muy potente la idea de que en los sueños puedes elegir profesión, puedes tener tus primeras experiencias de trabajo.

Pensando en arte, educación y el tequio como herramienta educativa, educación vivencial, dije, “Es que los sueños para estas personas son una escuela”, ahí fue donde dije, “Imagínate una escuela que ocurre en sueños”. Concretamente, de ahí surgió esta idea del propedéutico onírico. Las experiencias de las parteras tienen un propedéutico onírico.

Me preguntaba cómo sería nuestra educación, imagínate en la preparatoria, en la secundaria, que tuviéramos un taller de sueños para elegir profesión en lugar de estas pruebas de aptitudes, de que, “Tú eres bueno en pensamiento lógico matemático.”

Hay muchísimo más en la complejidad de la mente humana y las actitudes que simplemente la currícula escolar. Los sueños parecían una dimensión nueva en la cual uno podría encontrarse, conocerse más en tanto a su lugar en el mundo.

Imagínate el colegio militar, las fuerzas armadas de los países que tuvieran un taller de sueños, o los policías. Esta gente en México, por ejemplo, si los policías que tuvieran un taller de sueños, no solamente los artistas; los médicos, la gente vinculada con la idea de curación, en contextos llamados. En fin, para mí los sueños me parecían la posibilidad de conocerse un poco más y elegir un camino profesional, pero por lo menos sin identificar la práctica. Apasionante, ¿no?

SBS: Sí.

DGN: Pensando en estas nociones, tuve una invitación de una fundación de arte que ya no existe en México, que se llamó Alumnos 47, que trabajaba en proyectos de educación. A mí me invitaron a hacer una propuesta para trabajar con un grupo de chicas, de 12 chicas adolescentes de una casa hogar—de un orfanato.

Ellos ya llevaban trabajando con estas chicas por cuatro años, haciendo talleres de arte, pero era un formato más escolar de talleres y ahora me invitaron a hacer una pieza. Entendiendo las particularidades de este contexto, este grupo de chicas—más allá de sus



Image still from Propaedeútico Onírico.

historias de vida, muchas dramáticas y fuertes, eran adolescentes, y en la adolescencia todo está pasando, además.

Me parecía muy importante vincular, de alguna manera, el papel de las parteras, mujeres de conocimiento, mujeres de poder, su sensibilidad con sus estrategias, y pensar en cómo yo podría compartirlas con esas chicas. Sugerí, “Voy a hacer un propedéutico onírico. Voy a hacer un primer planteamiento propedéutico onírico”.

El propedéutico onírico consistió en un proceso de trabajo que duró dos años con estas chicas. Al inicio iba a ser un proceso de seis meses, pero el proyecto se volvió mucho más complejo, rico e interesante y yo no quería precipitarlo a presentar algo inacabado. En fin, el propedéutico onírico comenzó con un par de sesiones a la semana, vernos todos los domingos en la casa hogar, en Yolia, se llama el lugar; un lugar para hablar de los sueños, hacer meditación, dibujar, tener nuestra bitácora de sueños.

La otra sesión fue los miércoles a las 3:00 AM, en un sueño colectivo. La idea era tratar de verlos en un sueño, claramente con esta idea de sensualizar. Era como un gesto salvaje, increíble de hacer algo nuevo, “Vamos a vernos en un sueño”. Desde luego que causó mucha especulación y fascinación por muchas chicas, otras me decían, “¿Qué estas diciendo? No me vengas a mentir. ¿Por qué dices mentiras? Eso no va a pasar. ¿Qué ganas mintiéndonos?”.

Le digo, “Tú no sabes qué puede pasar, yo lo que quiero es que lo intentemos”, y lo intentaron. Después de seis meses no ocurría nada significativo, es decir, pasaba un proceso bastante

tranquilo y muchos sueños no me los contaban. Obviamente, pasaban cosas muy íntimas y tampoco era como que algo para compartir. Fuimos hablando mucho de sueños, hablando de las parteras, hablando del uso de los sueños para comunidades.

Digamos que había pequeños gestos que aún no se lograban materializar en nada, hasta que después de seis meses comenzaron a aparecer plantas, algunas formas de plantas en los sueños de tres niñas en una sola noche. Una niña soñó que le crecía un helecho en la cabeza, otra estaba en la cima de una palmera, otra tenía el aroma de la manzanilla. Eso se volvió para mí, yo dije, “Ya, las plantas, con esto vamos a trabajar, esto va a hacer nuestro material simbólico”.

Conseguí semillas de estas plantas, y empezamos a hacer un pequeño huerto en la casa hogar, a sembrar nuestras plantas, fueron creciendo. Las niñas empezaron a ver sus plantas del sueño crecer. Esto es un acontecimiento, porque ver ese pequeño brote, esa ternura de una plantita que surgió de un sueño de ellas era como si estuvieran cuidando, es como procurar un cuidado y una ternura a esto que venía de ellas, de los más precioso.

Eso fue muy especial. Muchas niñas dijeron, “Creo que sí está pasando algo en los sueños de estas niñas, creo que voy a intentar también”. Comenzaron a surgir muchas más plantas. Nuevamente esta idea de las parteras, de encadenar los procesos; lo que pasa en el sueño encadenarlo con el mundo lúcido, el mundo real. Planta soñada, planta que sí se siembra. En este jardín comenzaron a crecer más y a trasplantar.

Así pasaron estos seis meses, donde estuvimos trabajando una relación entre

plantas y sueños. Hicimos una pequeña almohada donde pusimos semillas, plantas aromáticas y esto era como la almohada de los miércoles, para detonar este gesto de encadenamiento, algo que puede ser como un gatillo, que tire la lucidez en los sueños. Poco a poco las plantas soñadas fueron un poco más extrañas, ya no eran plantas reconocibles, como manzanilla o un helecho.

Seguía viéndolas todos los domingos, también tenía maestros invitados, gente especialista en botánica, agronomía, gente que sabía preparar cierto tipo de tés. Desde luego que nunca trabajamos ninguna cuestión de utilizar plantas para tener sueños más lúcidos o algo así; no, para nada. Eran usos diversos de plantas, o conocer las semillas, cultivar.

Yolia está como en una parte superior. La arquitectura de la casa hogar es muy parecida a una escuela pública; por aquí hay una cancha inicial, un par de dormitorios. Es bastante estándar en eso, tiene una azotea que no estaba activada, no se podía subir a la azotea, simplemente era el techo, pero por la altura este lugar tiene muy buena vista, una vista de toda la ciudad.

Yo sabía, me enteré que estas niñas en las noches de luna llena solían subir a escondidas al techo para ver la luna y tener baños de luna, algo que me pareció muy hermoso y dije, “Ojalá, esperaré que las niñas lo sigan haciendo, pero que no arriesguen su vida,” porque realmente tenían que subir al techo de un baño para tomar otra escalera y era una cosa tipo un poco impertinente e imprudente.

Con el dinero de la fundación dije, “Ahora yo quiero hacer mi taller de los sueños”, ya llevamos un año trabajando, quiero hacer mi taller en el techo con esta idea de ascensión, también generar otro espacio.

Imagínate esto, son 12 niñas adolescentes, hay otras ochos niñas chiquititas, la idea de la intimidad o la idea de un espacio solo con adolescentes es un problema. Usar el techo era ganar un espacio también, un espacio para las niñas grandes y un lugar en el cual también se puede observar el mundo, tener otra perspectiva, como los sueños brindan otro espacio, usar ese techo era otro espacio.

A partir de una de las plantas soñadas que era como una enredadera, hicimos una escalera bastante impráctica, es más como una escultura, una escalera

pudo haber sido simplemente algo más sencillo, pero esto era una escalera que llegaba— Una cosa bastante rebuscada, obviamente trabajado con un arquitecto y viendo presupuesto para que no fuera tan poco una excentricidad terrible.

Si bien era una escultura pero era funcional, y que en 20 años funcionara muy bien, y también construimos una barda a lo largo en el perímetro de la azotea para que fuera seguro y ahí comenzamos a tener nuestro taller y observar la ciudad, pude llevar binoculares, algunos aparatos para observar. Era increíble, ya había otra perspectiva, otra relación con el espacio.

También tuve posibilidad de trabajar con el Instituto de Astronomía de la UNAM, la universidad, para conseguir unos telescopios, un taller de observación. Ese espacio se volvió nuestro observatorio, un lugar en el cual nos podíamos entender con una mayor presencia en el mundo, puedo decirlo así, como observarlos, en sentirnos en el mundo, tener más control, más dominio, como de arriba para abajo observamos.

Ya no es como desde esta casa a escondidas sino, “El mundo es nuestro”. Esa relación me pareció muy linda para empezar a encontrar el cierre del proyecto, “Ya estamos hasta aquí con este material simbólico, tenemos plantas de los sueños, tenemos muchas cosas”, cómo cerrar, y pensé qué podemos hacer que tuviera que ver con este espacio, con este techo también, con esta vista.

La pieza final constituyó en hacer un jardín de cerámica con barro y ceniza del volcán que está aquí muy cerca, que es el Popocatepetl, y colocaron una montaña, hacer un jardín de cerámica y colocarlo en otra montaña que es el Iztaccíhuatl, que es otro volcán inactivo, está muy cerca del otro.

Un buen día sin contaminación se pueden ver los volcanes desde la casa de las niñas, dije, “Sería muy lindo, un cierre increíble poder hacer este jardín y colocarlo en esa montaña”. Que además Iztaccíhuatl es una palabra es una palabra náhuatl que significa mujer dormida, porque supuestamente tiene un parecido a la silueta de una mujer dormida boca arriba. Entonces dije, “Esto ya es un supercierre, increíble, vamos a hacer este jardín de los sueños en la montaña”.

Trabajamos con la facultad de artes en la escuela y trabajar con las

estudiantes del taller de escultura, de modelado, para hacer reproducciones de estas plantas. Las niñas de Yolia conocieron a las estudiantes de arte, quienes estuvieron materializando los sueños. Fue vincular a mucha gente, a los astrónomos, vincular a los botánicos, vincular a la gente de esta escultura.

El barro se hace con los cuatro elementos naturales y este jardín en la montaña no iba a generar ningún tipo de contaminación, no era invasivo, era una cosa como muy pertinente, muy congruente, y también que un atractivo muy importante es que la cerámica tiene un promedio de vida como de 5.000 años. Esto es un jardín, una pieza proyectada para durar 5.000 años, por lo cual las niñas pueden verlo desde la casa hogar, pero también el público y la gente pueden seguir viendo esta pieza durante mucho tiempo.

También de esa experiencia hicimos un pequeño filme, un pequeño documental yo le llamo, que es una manera de compartir la experiencia también, la idea de cómo los sueños de las niñas se transforman en plantas y esto viene acompañado de un poema que también estuvimos trabajando en las sesiones del taller de los sueños, pensar en la materialidad del sueño y la poesía como detonante de la imaginación a este tipo de imágenes mentales, es una manera en la cual considero los sueños están hechos también de poesía.

Así terminaba este proyecto inspirado en las parteras y en este tipo de experiencias. Lo que estoy trabajando ahorita, y finalmente estoy por terminar este año, porque ya es el gran cierre de este proyecto, es que lo que ocurrió fue que estas 12 plantas, nos quedamos con 12 plantas soñadas, extrañas, no sabíamos qué plantas eran. Yo las llevé con los botánicos, los científicos de la UNAM, les dije, “Ustedes son los expertos, tenemos estas plantas, no sabemos si existen, tal vez podrían ayudarnos,” dijeron, “En realidad no las conocemos, no conocemos estas plantas, excepto esta. Esta planta se parece mucho a una que crece en las montañas altas de Escocia.”

SBS: Es muy interesante esta tensión entre la academia y trabajar con biólogos y luego con las niñas, tener esas dos formas de saber y conocer. La niña es la que ha soñado la cosa y luego tienes un

biólogo intentando crear un sistema de cómo funciona la planta.

DGN: Sí, es muy ligado a esta parte que te decía de exotizar también estos procesos. Dedicar el tiempo para un botánico, para estudiar una planta encontrada en un sueño, parecería un acto hasta subversivo, crítico de la idea de productividad a esta velocidad.

SBS: No reconocemos tanto la influencia que tiene al arte y las cosas creativas en crear el futuro, tampoco. Toda esta tecnología ha sido soñada antes de que existiera y es algo que tiene mucho que ver en las decisiones que tomamos para cómo construir el mundo en que vivimos.

DGN: Desde luego que sí. También es que esta separación entre arte y ciencia es bastante nueva. La historia de la humanidad, la historia de la sensibilidad y la creación, es bastante nueva y ha sido lo que ha generado más distanciamiento entre los campos. A mí me gusta pensar más en términos de entender la creación, el conocimiento o la ciencia de los pueblos indígenas, lo que en antropología se le conoce como los chamanes, sí, pero en realidad son hombres y mujeres de conocimiento.

Una partera es una mujer que da la bienvenida a nuevos seres al mundo, conoce de plantas, conoce de cantos, sabe tejer y sabe generar lo artesanal. Esa persona hace un trabajo mucho más loable que cualquier artista. Esa mujer está haciendo realidad, haciendo mundo, no pretende hacer arte, pero su trabajo es superior al arte. De tal manera que yo me inspiro en eso.

Me inspiro también de la conocida alquimia, los alquimistas, gente que estaba investigando sobre los sentimientos de los minerales, que observaban. Las últimas personas que ya comenzaban a entender más volverse físicos, pero venían de ese conocimiento y de esa pasión casi secreta de apasionarse por entender la realidad. ¿Qué es lo que hacemos los artistas? Tratamos de entender cómo se comporta la luz en los materiales de la pintura, cómo funciona el vínculo, la intersubjetividad, las relaciones, los afectos—es lo mismo.

Nuevamente tanto en la educación como el arte buscamos entender la realidad, ampliarla a la situación. Un botánico, en su oficina, en la

universidad, está haciendo lo mismo que yo estoy haciendo de alguna manera dentro de ese gesto ingenuo o esa pequeña incipiente detonante de claridad. Estamos en lo mismo, somos curiosos.

Queremos entender el mundo y el arte es eso. Nuevamente, genera conocimiento y de esta separación arbitraria ha hecho generar una mercancía del saber, descapitalizar las profesiones, pero este deseo de vincular astrónomos, estudiantes de arte, botánicos, parteras en un proceso de los sueños, parte del hecho es decir, “Amigos, estamos juntos en esto, compartimos el mundo.”

Spencer Byrne-Seres talks to artist Daniel Godínez Nivón about his work engaging and understanding indigenous knowledge, western science, and the realities we create through our dreams. His project, Propedéutico Onírico, involved a years-long collaboration with teenagers that investigated collective dreaming as a way to create alternative worlds.

SBS: Daniel, would you want to start by talking a bit about tequio, and how you began to work in a social context?

Daniel: I got to know the tequio when I started trying to develop a work process with a group, the AMI, the Assembly of Indigenous Migrants in Mexico City. This was all in 2009 — I had just left school and started working in a seminar; a seminar that is actually where I got my training, coordinated by a Mexican artist named José Miguel González Casanova.

This man was my mentor and a person who has provided that type of relationship of pedagogical processes of art that we could call “Expanded,” which involves focusing on how an artist cares about the production, distribution and consumption of their work. As well as reflecting on the public impact on other contexts. In short, that was the profile of this work process in which I joined and began to reflect on my own past and my family.

My family is from Juchitán, Oaxaca. I have a Zapotec family, my parents already grew up here in the city, but I grew up with that fascination for the stories of my grandparents. But knowing very little about this group of people as well. During school, my previous

work had been with that idea: the stories of my grandparents, their Zapotec identity, and of the Tehuanas and Juchiteco people. That had been my physical work.

José Miguel’s seminar made me reflect on trying to expand the identity relationship in my family to include the role of migrants in the city. Amid those reflections was where I decided to find a group of people with whom I could work.

The Assembly of Indigenous Migrants, the AMI, was formed by graduates of the National Pedagogical University—people who are now in their 50s today; they are political and educated people in the sense of understanding various things in their activism. I arrived at the AMI, and there was only one young man, his name is Apolinar, one from Ultatepec. I arrived saying, “I am Daniel, I am an artist.” This is 2008.

SBS: Can you talk a little bit now about how you found the dream as a theme in the work that you’re fulfilling now?

DGN: The first project I did with the Assembly of Indigenous Migrants was the tequiografías. The tequiografías are a publishing project, teaching materials that imitates official documents made by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education produces these sheets with text and images that are distributed by hundreds, by thousands, throughout the country and have an official version of knowledge and history.

The tequiografías offer an alternative version of this knowledge, it is not the official version or the historical version. Specifically, working with the AMI groups, we looked at the official monograph on the topic of health, which is based on the World Health Organization.

We did a health tequiografías, which has midwifery knowledge, knowledge of plants, of the human body, the other versions of nature. It offers another version of the official narrative on health. While working on this health monograph, this was in 2010, it was then that I met a group of Triqui midwives. These women started talking about a very interesting thing—the role of dreams.

They said, “We learn from dreams. It is in dreams, since we are very young, since we are children, that our future profession is revealed to us. It is like a

call.” That seemed to me, beyond wanting to verify the veracity of this fact, as an artist it seemed something very beautiful, very poetic, enigmatic, very powerful the idea that in dreams you can choose a profession, you can have your first work experiences.

Thinking about art and tequio as an experiential education, I thought “dreams for these people are like a form of school.” Imagine a school that happens in dreams. This is the origin of this idea of the dreamlike propaedeutic. Midwifery experiences have a dreamlike propaedeutic.

I was wondering what our state education would be like, imagine in high school that we had a dream workshop to choose a profession instead of those aptitude tests, that say “You are good at logical mathematical thinking.”

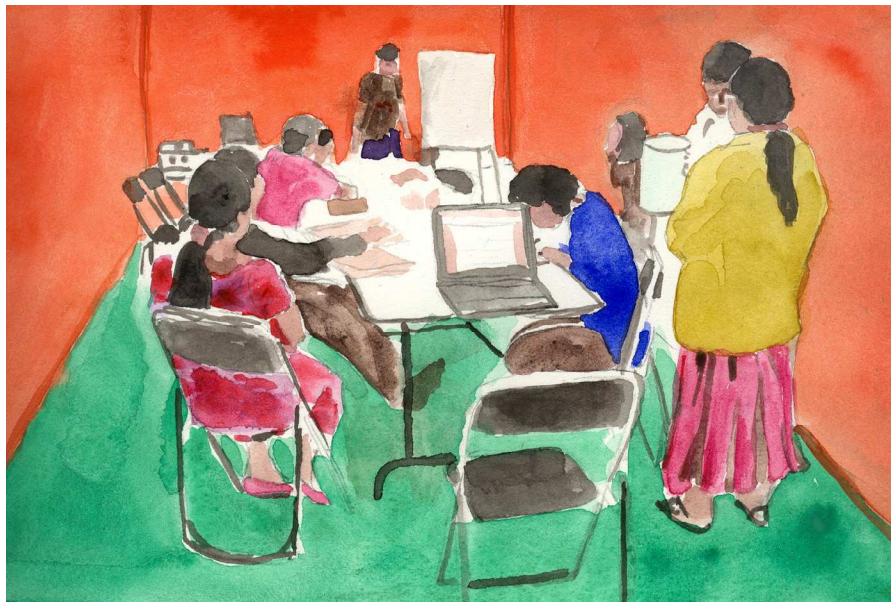
There is so much more to the complexity of the human mind and attitudes than just the school curriculum. Dreams seemed like a new dimension in which one could find oneself, to know oneself as much as one’s place in the world.

Imagine the military college, the armed forces of countries that had a dream workshop, or the police. These people in Mexico, for example, if the policemen who had a dream workshop, not only the artists; doctors, people linked to the idea of healing, in contexts called. Anyway, for me dreams seemed to me the possibility of getting to know a little more about oneself than choosing a professional path, and without identifying the methods involved. Exciting, isn’t it?

SBS: Yes.

DGN: Thinking about these notions, I had an invitation from an art foundation that no longer exists in Mexico, called Alumnos 47, which was working on education projects. I was invited to make a proposal to work with a group of girls, 12 teenage girls from a family home — from an orphanage.

They had been working with these girls for four years, doing art workshops, but it was a more scholarly workshop format and now they invited me to do an art piece. Understanding the peculiarities of this context, this group of girls—beyond their life stories which were dramatic and powerful— they were adolescents, and in adolescence everything is happening.



Tequiografías, Daniel Godínez Nivón.

It seemed very important to me to link, in some way, the role of midwives, women of knowledge, women of power, their sensitivity with their strategies, and think about how I could share them with these girls. I suggested, “I am going to do a dream propaedeutic. I am going to do the first dream propaedeutic approach.”

The dreamlike propaedeutic consisted of a work process that lasted two years with these girls. It was going to be a six-month process at first, but the project became much more complex, rich, and interesting, and I didn’t want to rush him into presenting something unfinished. In short, the dream propaedeutic began with a couple of sessions a week, meeting in person every Sunday at the home—a place to talk about dreams, do meditation, draw, have a forum of sorts.

The other session was on Wednesdays at 3:00 AM, in a collective dream. The idea was to try to see each other in a dream. It was like a wild, incredible gesture of doing something new, “Let’s see each other in a dream.” Of course it caused a lot of speculation and fascination for many girls. Others said to me, “What are you saying? Don’t come to lie to me. Why do you tell lies? That won’t happen. What do you gain by lying to us?”

I say, “You don’t know what can happen, what I want is for us to try,” and they tried. After six months, nothing significant happened, that is, a fairly calm process was going on and many dreams were not told to me. Obviously, very intimate things happen in dreams

that are not something to share. We talked a lot about dreams, talked about midwives, talked about the use of dreams for communities.

After six months plants began to appear, some forms of plants in the dreams of three girls in a single night. One girl dreamed that a fern grew on her head, another was on top of a palm tree, another had the aroma of chamomile. That became for me, I said, “Now, plants, with this we are going to work, this is going to make our symbolic material.”

I got seeds from these plants, and we started to make a small garden in the home, to plant our plants. The girls began to see their dream plants grow. Seeing that little bud, that tenderness of a little plant that arose from a dream of theirs was like procuring a care and tenderness to something that came from them.

That was very special. Many girls said, “I think something is happening in these girls’ dreams, I think I will try too.” Many more plants began to emerge. What happens in the dream by connecting it with the lucid world, the real world. Dream plant, plant that is planted. In this garden they began to grow more and to transplant the plants.

So six months passed, where we were working on a relationship between plants and dreams. We made a small pillow where we put seeds and aromatic plants on Wednesdays, to trigger the dreaming gesture, something that can be like a trigger, that pulls lucidity into dreams. Little by little the dream plants were a little bit stranger, they were no longer recognizable plants like

chamomile or fern.

He continued to see them every Sunday, we also had guest teachers, people specialized in botany, agronomy, people who knew how to prepare certain types of teas. Of course we had any ideas about using plants to have more lucid dreams or something like that; not at all. They were diverse uses of plants, or knowing the seeds, cultivating.

Yolia is on top of a hill. The architecture of the home is very similar to that of a public school; there is an initial court, a couple of bedrooms. It is quite standard in that it has a roof that was not activated, you could not go up to the roof, it was just the roof, but due to the height this place has a very good view, a view of the whole city.

I found out that these girls on full moon nights used to sneak up on the roof to see the moon and have moonbaths, which I thought was very beautiful and I said, “Hopefully, I hope the girls keep doing it, but don’t risk your life,” because they really had to go up to the roof of a bathroom to take another ladder and it was kind of a bit impertinent and reckless.

With the money from the foundation I said, “Now I want to do my dream workshop,” we have been working for a year now, I want to do my workshop on the roof with this idea of ascension, and also to create another space.

Imagine that there are 12 teenage girls, there are eight other little girls—the idea of a space with only teenagers is a problem. Making the roof safe was gaining a space too, a place where you can also observe the world, have another perspective, as dreams provide.

Inspired by one of the dream plants that was like a creeper, we made a rather impractical staircase, it’s more like a sculpture, a staircase could have been just a little bit simpler, but this was a staircase that was a rather elaborate thing.

Although it was a sculpture, it was functional, and in 20 years it would still work very well, and we also built a fence along the perimeter of the roof so that it was safe and there we began to have our workshop and observe the city. It was incredible, there was already another perspective, another relationship with space.

I also had the opportunity to work with the Institute of Astronomy at UNAM, the university, to get telescopes, and do an observation workshop. That

space became our observatory, a place in which we could understand ourselves with a greater presence in the world—how to observe, to feel ourselves in the world, to have more control, as we observe from above and below.

That relationship seemed very nice as a way to start finding the closure for the project, “We are already here with this symbolic material, we have dream plants, we have many things.” To close, and I thought about what we could do that had to do with this space, with this roof too, with this view.

The final piece was to make a ceramic garden with mud and ash from the volcano that is very close here, which is called Popocatepetl, and make a ceramic garden and place it on another mountain that is the Iztaccíhuatl, which is another dormant volcano very close by.

On a good day without pollution, you can see the volcanoes from the girls’ house. I said, “It would be very nice, an incredible closure, to be able to make this garden and place it on that mountain.” It just so happened that Iztaccíhuatl is also a Nahuatl word that means sleeping woman, because supposedly it has a resemblance to the silhouette of a sleeping woman face up. So I said, “Incredible, let’s make this garden of dreams on the mountain.”

We worked with the arts faculty at the school and with the students in the sculpture department to make reproductions of these plants. The Yolia girls met the art students, who were making dreams come true. It was linking many people, astronomers, botanists, students.

The clay is made with the four natural elements and this mountain garden was not going to generate any type of contamination, it was not invasive, it was a very pertinent thing. Very congruent. And also a very important attraction is that ceramic has an average life of about 5,000 years. This is a garden, a piece designed to last 5,000 years, so girls can see it from the home, but also the public and people can continue to see this piece for a long time.

Also from that experience we made a small film, a small poem-documentary I call it. It is a way of sharing the experience as well, the idea of how girls’ dreams transform into plants and this is accompanied by a poem that we worked on. In the dream workshop sessions, we thought about the materiality of the dream and poetry as a trigger for

the imagination to create this type of mental image. It is a way in which I consider dreams are also made of poetry.

Thus ended this project inspired by midwives and their experience. What I am working on right now (and I am finally about to finish this year, because it has already been a long time closing this project) is to look at these 12 plants, we had in total 12 dreamy, strange plants—we did not know what plants were. I took them to the botanists, the scientists from UNAM, and I told them, “You are the experts, we have these plants, we do not know if they exist, perhaps they could help us,” and they said, “We do not really know them, we do not know these plants, except this one. This plant closely resembles one that grows in the high mountains of Scotland.”

SBS: It is very interesting this tension between the academy and working with biologists and then with the girls, having these two ways of knowing and understanding. The girls are the ones who have dreamed these things and then you have a biologist trying to create a system of how the plant works.

DGN: Yes, it is closely linked to this part that I told you about, which was to also exoticize these processes. Spending time for a botanist, to study a plant found in a dream, would seem like a subversive act, critical of the idea of productivity and speed.

SBS: We don’t recognize the influence that art and creative things have on creating the future. All this technology was dreamed before it existed, and it is something that has a lot to do with the decisions we make about how to build the world we live in.

DGN: It is also that this separation between art and science is quite new. The history of humanity, the history of sensibility and creation, is quite new and has generated distance between the fields. I like to think more in terms of understanding the knowledge and science of indigenous peoples. In anthropology they might be known as shamans, yes, but in reality they are men and women of knowledge.

A midwife is a woman who welcomes new beings to the world, knows plants, knows songs, knows how to weave, and knows how to generate crafts. That

person does a much more laudable job than any artist. That woman is making reality, making the world, she does not intend to make art, but her work is superior to art. In such a way that I am inspired by that.

I am also inspired by alchemy, the alchemists, people who were investigating the feelings of minerals, who were observing. The more that people began to understand, the more they transitioned to become physicists, but that science came out of that study and from that almost secret passion of understanding reality. What do we artists do? We try to understand how light behaves in painting materials, how intersubjectivity, relationships, and affections work—it’s the same thing.

Again both in education and art we seek to understand reality, expand it. A botanist, in his office, at the university, is doing the same thing that I am doing in some way within that naive gesture or that incipient little trigger for clarity. We are doing the same thing, we are curious.

We want to understand the world and art is that. It generates knowledge and this has caused the generation of a commodity of knowledge, the capitalization of professions. But this desire to link astronomers, art students, botanists, and midwives in a dream process is a way to say, “Friends, we are together in this, we share the world.”

Living as Pedagogy: a four-part meditation on an ongoing, collaborative artwork among apartment neighbors

By Amanda Leigh Evans

The Living School of Art (LSA) is an ongoing, intergenerational living art project that takes the form of an alternative art school and artist collective. It is located within a 120-unit affordable housing apartment complex in East Portland, OR. Neighbors of all ages teach and contribute to activities such as cooking workshops, garden building and planting, performance games, crafts-based practices, and artmaking. Founded in 2016, the project includes exhibitions in 8 laundry rooms, a visiting artist residency program (with artists chosen by a youth committee), a community garden, a medicinal herb garden, and field trips. The project is Co-Founded and Directed by artist Amanda Leigh Evans, who lives in a basement apartment next door to a shared art studio space used for classes and gatherings. The project is funded by Community Engagement Org, a nonprofit supporting artist projects in affordable housing buildings.

Seeing and Being Seen

For the past few months (or however long we've been quarantined), I've been taking daily walks to my community garden plot, which is located behind the hospital near my apartment complex. I don't go for walks at the same time each day, just whenever I can't stand staring at the computer or being inside any longer.

Along the way, sometimes I stop to throw pinecones at my neighbor Deewa's window, to see if she'll peek her head up and go to the garden with me. Sometimes I walk around the long way, to see if Eunice is sitting outside or Erick is riding his bike.

"We saw you," said Maryam and Fatimah during Drill Team, our weekly girls' art group that typically meets in person, but currently meets virtually. It's an after school program at The Living School of Art that includes girls aged 5–13 years old and me, a 30 year old. "Oh really?" I said, scrunching up my eyes. "Well, how did you know it was me?"

"You were on the blacktop carrying a white bag and wearing a blue hat," they said.

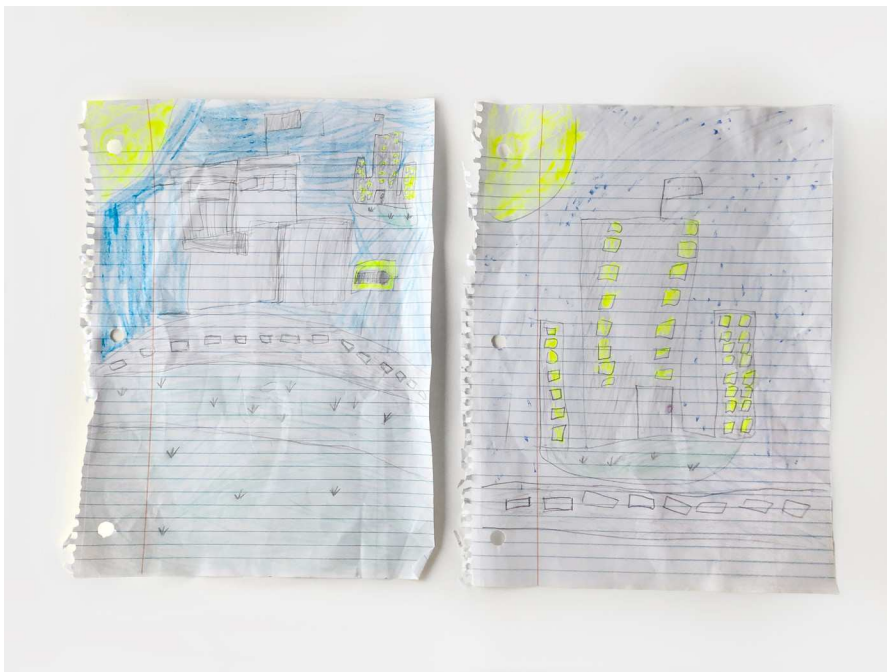
I turn my head to the side, "Well, I guess you did see me. Next time, bang on your window so I can wave to you. I miss seeing you."

Before they shared this information, I already knew they had seen me. They are always watching from their bedroom window overlooking my regular route to the garden. I get similar reports from them about once a week—who they've seen and what they were doing—and sometimes they slip in a prank to throw me off. Fatimah will say, "We saw a giraffe with 100 spots near the office. It stepped on your truck, but just on the back part of it." Whenever I walk to my garden, I wonder if they're looking out the window at that very moment. When they are, it's a delight to see their faces.

Many aspects of life in our apartment complex aren't private like they are for people who live in houses. By default of living in close proximity, my neighbors and I have become familiar with one another's rhythms, habits and customs. For the most part, I find it comforting to be seen and I appreciate being part of this rhythm. I feel a greater sense of belonging and responsibility knowing that I am seeing and being seen. It has taught me to look critically at how I spend my time and money and how I live my own life in relationship to the values I say are important to me. It has taught me the importance of flexibility and respect. I've learned this from my neighbors, many of whom have a much deeper capacity for patience than I do. In the daily intertwining of our lives, there grows a greater capacity for accountability, patience and trust between neighbors.

Of course, it's important to acknowledge that there are also downsides to being seen. Not everyone responds positively to the knowledge of our neighborly rhythms. There's the occasional neighbor whose boredom seems to result in meddling in other people's

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2 Drawings from Deewa
January 2, 2020

business. I guess a few of those people are to be expected in an apartment complex as large as ours. There are a lot of rules that generally help the apartments be a clean, orderly and safe place to live. It's not the rules themselves that are a problem, but how certain people tend to watch for any and all perceived violations. Maybe they believe they're helping to create a safer place to live, but those actions can result in negative, perhaps unintended consequences for themselves and others. This place, like life, is not perfect.

Rhythms

Nataliya waters her plants before she walks to work, Lupe washes clothes in the mornings, Sofe and Nycole go to 7-Eleven together after school, Robin waits for her bus on Tuesdays, and Hana's apartment smells like cardamom and frying oil in the afternoons.

This large apartment complex is a place of intersections. There are over 15 languages spoken here, and multiple generations and places of origin. People go to school and work, come to visit family and friends, and go about their mundane domestic tasks. The symphony of our combined rhythms has created a community-specific pedagogy unique to our apartment complex. Across differences, we are learning with and from each other. This living pedagogy is the foundation of The Living

School of Art (LSA), and through the form of LSA, we have built greater opportunities to share and connect.

Jayden plays basketball at the community center, Manuel parks his truck near the dumpster, Ana sits at the picnic table on summer evenings, Zaira goes to her grandma's on the weekends, and Nina does Nordic Walking on the blacktop.

Our paths cross at the mailboxes, in the laundry rooms and the garden. At these intersections, we carry our life experiences, our knowledge, our cultures, our families and our hobbies. We also bring our quirks, our traumas, our fears, our questions, our challenges, and our shortcomings. I mention both the highlights and shadows because actively participating in a neighbor community means seeing a complicated, holistic version of the people around you. The longer we live together, we witness greater low moments as well as the high moments. Our relationship grows deeper and more complex, holding more capacity for mutual support.

Adrian knocks on my window when the sun is out, Stas rides his bike to the park with his mom, Sheela walks home from Home Depot, Kul and Kumari weed their garden on Mondays, Sammy sneaks around the bushes when the boys are playing tag, and Myranda's parents decorate their porch on Halloween and Christmas.

Learning and teaching are happening at every moment. Living together is the school. Living together is the source of our work. Officially, the LSA meets

3-4 times a week for formal gatherings, but outside of those meetings we are still learning and connecting. Kids come over to my apartment just to play cards or do homework or bake cookies. I go to my neighbors houses too, or we talk outside on porches. We go to the grocery store together and we bring each other gifts. Within all of these moments, our pedagogy is happening. Our life together is the pedagogy.

Reciprocity

Each person, human or no, is bound to every other in a reciprocal relationship. Just as all beings have a duty to me, I have a duty to them. If an animal gives its life to feed me, I am in turn bound to support its life. If I receive a stream's gift of pure water, then I am responsible for returning a gift in kind. An integral part of a human's education is to know those duties and how to perform them.

—Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*

No one is required to be part of the LSA. The project exists within our apartment complex, but it's not conditional on anyone's rental agreement. Those who participate are opting-in. Because the LSA is an ongoing project, it's important that we each have the power to contribute as well as receive within the project. This reciprocity ensures that each person's perspective and experience is respected, and it creates an important balance and rhythm in the project. Reciprocity requires trust and letting go of insignificant details. It creates an opportunity for unexpected variables and manifests as a fondness, concern and delight in one another.

Reciprocity is a circle. My neighbors have helped me fix my truck's fuel tank, avoid stitches on a kitchen knife wound, practice and develop Spanish language proficiency, study medicinal plants, cook Injera, and learn how to be a good parent. In turn, I've helped build a miniature nativity scene for Las Posadas, taught someone to drive, cooked a Thanksgiving turkey, been a character reference for an immigration trial, and constructed a lemonade stand. Reciprocity is a cycle of sharing and receiving.

The generosity of my neighbors has taught me how to better participate in this cycle. It's not easy for me to accept a gift knowing it was of great cost to the giver. There is power in the position of giving, and humility in the position of receiving, especially when the gift has great value. However, within the circle of reciprocity I've learned how to accept what is offered to me if I want to be able to share something in return. If something I'm being given has deep value, I've learned how to accept and treasure that gift, and I find a way to return the generosity in the future. Being a neighbor-artist-collaborator, unlike being an arts program manager, requires the ability to both give and receive.

With reciprocity all things do not need to be equal in order for acceptance and mutuality to thrive. If equality is evoked as the only standard by which it is deemed acceptable for people to meet across boundaries and create community, then there is little hope. Fortunately, mutuality is a more constructive and positive foundation for the building of ties that allow for differences in status, position, power, and privilege whether determined by race, class, sexuality, religion, or nationality.

—bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place*

Early Saturday morning, my neighbor Khaibar texted me, and texted me, and texted me again to ask if I would take him near downtown to get his bike fixed. He's in 7th grade and is very persistent. I remembered our neighbor Steven had been fixing bikes and had offered to help anyone in our apartment complex for free. So Khaibar, his dad Abdul and I went over to where Steven runs an unofficial bike shop out of the garage under his apartment. Steven and Abdul tossed around a few greetings and jokes, and talked about how their youngest kids are in the same 1st grade class. Steven began to tinker with Khaibar's bike, and at some point we discussed the irony of Steven being a veteran and Abdul being from Afghanistan and the strangeness of all of us standing in this garage on a rainy Saturday during a pandemic. A few hours later, Khaibar ended up riding away on a completely different bike. Not an improved version of the same

bike he had brought, but a better one he had discovered in a corner of the garage and convinced Steven to fix for him instead. That persuasion is classic Khaibar. I told Steven that because Khaibar knows about his bike repair services, he should be prepared for requests from all kids in our complex. He laughed and said, "That's exactly what I want! People are giving me free bike parts and I want to share."

Accountability

Many of us have a limited ability to choose our neighbors, but we do have a choice in how we interact with our neighbors. Rooting in a place requires accountability. If you are my neighbor and I say something hurtful to you, I still have to see you tomorrow and next month and next year. When I fail you, I can't hide from you or run away. I have to

figure out how to right my wrongs, so we can continue to be in relationship. If you fail me, I must learn to be empathetic and flexible, and hold patience for you like you've held patience for me. In the future we might need each other again.

Accountability looks different for everyone, and within this project I hold the most responsibility. I am a white, cis woman with a higher ed degree in contemporary art. I grew up working class, but then I became a first-gen college student and now I'm middle class. I am a US citizen with healthcare and a car and an iPhone, and a network of people I can lean on if I lose my job or housing. I'm facilitating The Living School of Art because I was invited by the owner of the complex and a non-profit called Community Engagement

Tomato Plants from Nataliya
May 1, 2020



(CE) to do this work, and I receive some compensation. This position is obviously an incredible privilege. This is the work I want to be doing more than anything else in the world, and I was chosen because of my past collaborative artworks, and my skills as a crafts person, builder and teacher, which in part emerged from my own access to power and resources. I spend a lot of time thinking about whether I am the right person for this work, and how I can work toward tangibly being better at my work. I read and listen to a lot of people who are smarter than me, and I make a lot of mistakes. I shift the project based on neighbors' responses. I am accountable to be the best artist-neighbor I can be (within my own limitations), while simultaneously inviting neighbors and fellow artists into this project who can do things I cannot do.

When I said yes to this work, I decided I would have to make two commitments to justify my ability to be here. My first commitment was to be rooted here as long as my neighbors, the apartment owner, the nonprofit CE and the funding would allow (which is to say, much longer than my original 1-year contract). My second commitment was to begin by being a neighbor and community member, and to let our life as neighbors lead to whatever form our collective artwork might take. These two commitments were at the center because they're about accountability to my neighbors who are also my collaborators, and whose approval is ultimately the only approval that matters to me. These commitments were made in recognition of the long history of white people swooping in and out of communities in a way that ultimately benefits themselves more than the people they are supposed to be serving. I don't think any white artist should consider work with a low-income immigrant community unless they have a long-term, reciprocal commitment to that group of people, and are willing to be held accountable for their mistakes.

Through the framework of The Living School of Art, I am actively choosing a relationship with my neighbors. My neighbors involved in LSA are actively choosing this relationship too. My neighbors show up for art events, gatherings, or aspects of our community garden. In turn, I am accountable to show up and support my neighbors

by coming to their gatherings, and contributing when I have the ability to help. As a practicing artist, I have access to resources and connections that some of my neighbors wouldn't typically access, and I try to connect people in my community with resources that might interest them. Being accountable means recognizing that I can't expect someone to show up to an art program if their basic needs aren't being met. LSA must be holistic if it's to be relevant, and it must be generous with its resources. Artmaking cannot exist in a vacuum—it should not disconnect the head from the body, or the concept from the context. In order for this collaboration to work, this project must respond to the collective experiences of our community. The intimate intertwining of our lives must account for all parts of ourselves and how we're able to show up in the world and in relationship with each other. Within this project, we are the primary audience and primary authors of our work.

The values of reciprocity and accountability that exist in our community are not the result of LSA, rather LSA has been formed in response to the values that we all bring to our community. Many of my adult neighbors are immigrants who grew up in extended families or networks of mutual support. They've shared memories of kids from multiple households playing together while being watched by a grandmother, an aunt, or a neighbor. It seems that a big challenge in raising a family in the United States, a fiercely independent and individualistic nation, is the diasporic separation from that intergenerational network. I mention this because it's important to give credit to all of the mothers, aunts, grandmothers and friends cultivating those networks, and because their work influences the collective values of our community. Although our apartment community will never be a replacement for that same network, we do form some sort of patched together support system. This manifests in the ways we play, the artwork we create, the meals we share, and the plants we cultivate. We each hold a role.

Do you already know that your existence—who and how you are—is in and of itself a contribution to the people and place around you? Not after or

because you do some particular thing, but simply the miracle of your life. And that the people around you, and the place(s), have contributions as well? Do you understand that your quality of life and your survival are tied to how authentic and generous the connections are between you and the people and place you live with and in?

Are you actively practicing generosity and vulnerability in order to make the connections between you and others clear, open, available, durable? Generosity here means giving of what you have without strings or expectations attached. Vulnerability means showing your needs."

—Adrienne Maree Brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*

Futures

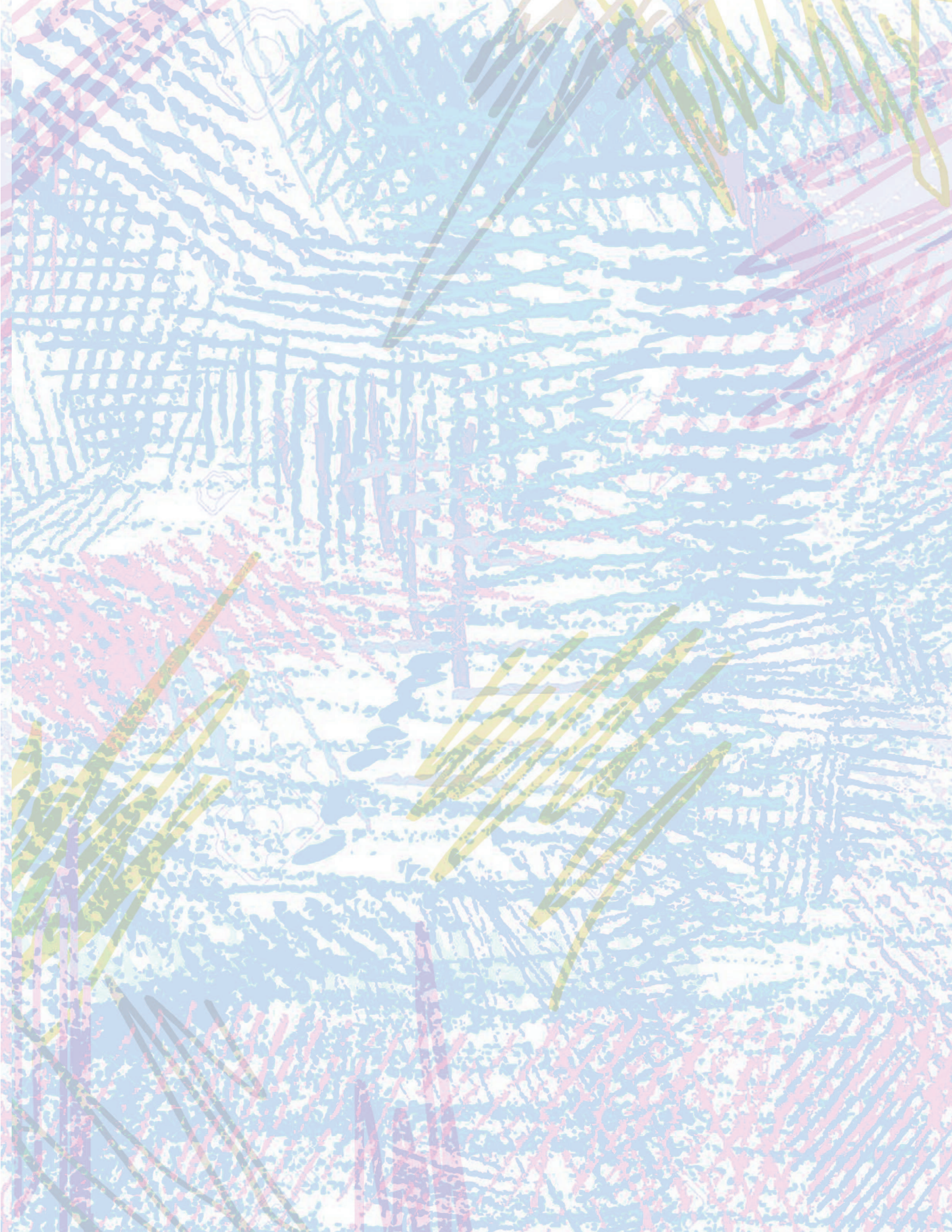
On January 1, 2020 I started documenting each and every gift my neighbors give me over the course of the year. I wanted a record of the generosity that my neighbors extend toward me, even through the smallest gestures. The global pandemic has shifted this project a bit, but little gifts still continue.


What is our responsibility to each other? As I edit these photos, I wonder what our world would look like if more people were choosing to be in an active relationship with their neighbors. What does being a conscious neighbor look like in gentrifying areas, in forests and oceans, in schools, between cops and civilians, in factories, or along international borders? Individually and collectively, we must all be committed to the wellbeing of others if we want to live in a better world. My hope for the future is that our society can become more conscious of the ways we are all linked together, and seriously consider our individual roles within our social ecology. Wherever we are, we must find the people around us already doing this work and join them in cultivating spaces for joy, resilience, and interdependence.



Red Delicious Apples
from Abdul. March 9, 2020







The Social Forms of Art (SoFA) Journal is a bi-annual publication dedicated to supporting, documenting, and contextualizing socially engaged art and its related fields and disciplines. Each issue of the Journal focuses on a different theme in order to take a deep look at the ways in which artists are engaging with communities, institutions, and the public. The Journal seeks to support writing and web based projects that offer documentation, critique, commentary and context for a field that is active and expanding.

The SoFA Journal is published in print and PDF form twice a year, in Spring and Winter terms by the PSU Art & Social Practice Program. In addition to the print publication, the Journal hosts an online platform for ongoing projects.

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