

ARTIST FILES



**a blade of grass
nurtures socially engaged art**

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All artist texts are by Kalia Brooks,
Elizabeth M. Grady, and Anna Harsanyi.



FOUNDER'S
FOREWORD

SHELLEY RUBIN

Artist Files, A Blade of Grass' first grant to individual artists, was an exciting experiment that used the dialogical tactics of socially engaged art in an effort to better understand the type of art we support and the community of artists we serve. It was a reciprocal experience that reflected our desire to fund art that works in the real world with people and communities.

By engaging in sustained conversation with these twenty Fellows, we learned a great deal about how socially engaged art is practiced, and how we can best nurture it as we develop a fellowship program for individual artists. By inviting a broader public into the conversation about what socially engaged art is and what constitutes excellence in this field, we were able to refine our place as a funding nonprofit dedicated to this rapidly evolving, and sometimes confusing, form of contemporary art.

The process of Artist Files demanded that we not merely listen to this cohort of artist Fellows, but allow their input to shape the grant itself.

This felt risky, but it paid off!

A Blade of Grass is an experimental, young, flexible organization—one that is willing to take risks in an effort to find the most relevant possible contribution it can make to the dialogue around socially engaged art. We were able to learn a great deal about the community we serve because we interacted directly with prospective grantees. The immediacy of direct interaction is what socially engaged art is all about!

I am particularly excited by the way Artist Files has evolved into the A Blade of Grass Fellowship for Socially Engaged Art. I founded A Blade of Grass because I saw an opportunity to bring two of my most important interests together: art and social justice. All social change is really cultural change. Artists can create cultural shifts by coming at an issue from a completely new direction, and by transforming complex problems into opportunities to reimagine and wonder. A Blade of Grass will affirm and nurture this special artistic practice as we move forward as dedicated funders of socially engaged art.

The background features abstract geometric shapes. A large green area is on the left, with a purple triangle pointing downwards from the top edge. A white rectangular area is on the right, outlined in a thin red line. At the bottom, there is a purple triangle pointing upwards and a thin blue line forming a shape on the right side.

INTRODUCTION: ARTIST FILES

DEBORAH FISHER

I want to talk about how Artist Files worked. It was a one-time, experimental, curated grant that deployed a number of dialogical tactics common to socially engaged art projects. Our intention in developing and implementing it was to increase institutional understanding of what A Blade of Grass is as an organization, and what we are doing when we say that we nurture socially engaged art. Artist Files put us in relationship with twenty prospective grantees for a year and created a public dialogue around both the artists' work and our work as grant makers.

This process was not tidy, and occasionally it was uncomfortable. But I am deeply grateful for these artists and this process, and I know that A Blade of Grass has benefitted tremendously from the concerted effort behind Artist Files. Actually enacting what we fund deepened our organization's understanding of social engagement. Sustained dialogue with our prospective grantees enabled us to focus on how art and artists are valued and what this means to individual artists' economies. And it forced us to negotiate the power dynamics between grantees and funders. This negotiation demanded that we create and regularly exercise a set of core values that will serve A Blade of Grass meaningfully into the future, not as window dressing but as a real framework for making tough decisions. Our prospective grantees gave us a lot of important information about how to fund socially engaged art in ways that are meaningful to their practices, and we are using this information to roll out an enduring fellowship program that we could never have dreamed up by ourselves. And we engaged a larger public in dialogue about what constitutes excellent socially engaged art. This conversation, which unfolded over a whole summer and fall on our website and social media platforms, informed both the criteria for choosing Artist Files grantees and our specific institutional stake in social engagement as we move forward as the first funding organization solely dedicated to socially engaged art.

Here's what happened.

Kalia Brooks, A Blade of Grass' first curatorial fellow, began by choosing twenty artists whose work is particularly generous, and in doing so represented a very wide range of socially engaged art practices. She then engaged these artists in dialogue. Kalia conducted interviews with each prospective grantee, and A Blade of Grass, working with videographer Anne Goodfriend, created web dossiers—short bio texts and descriptions of work written by Kalia, short videos and the full interview from each artist—on our website in an effort to stimulate discourse. The dossiers were designed to be comprehensive, to introduce new audiences to the artists' work and process. And Anne's short videos were designed to draw out conversation about issues common to socially engaged art projects: authorship, representation, audience, ethics; whether they're art at all.

We wanted, and assumed we'd get, a robust conversation that was mostly about the content of the short videos and the nature of funding individual artists. What we got was mostly requests to apply for Artist Files, lots of very fair feedback about the unfair nature of a curated grant, and one metric ton of testimonials for Lulu Lolo, who is hands down the artist fellow with the most energized fan base!

As happens with a lot of socially engaged projects, we dove into a dialogical process with great intentions, but didn't get the results we anticipated because we started with an assumption of equality that wasn't shared, and wasn't true.

Eventually Artist Files did stimulate some great public discussions about how one looks at socially engaged art. We talked about the difference between co-creation and artists acting as anthropologists. We talked about the risks artists face when they make socially engaged art—how sharing authorship with participants leads to a loss of artistic control, and how much more difficult it is to call yourself an artist when you do community-based work. These conversations and others were satisfying, and they helped us create criteria for Artist Files grantees and informed what kind of art we will fund as we move forward.

We never successfully invited a wider public to chat with us about the problems and opportunities of giving grants to individual artists in the first place. This happened at much closer quarters and with different stakes, within the community of prospective grantees. This was the most important part of Artist Files because it forced us into a more thoughtful relationship to our own power as funders.

This conversation started because many of the artists emailed me suggestions or questions about the allocation of funds for the grant. Our original plan was to give \$10,000 to four of the twenty prospective grantees—all twenty receive exposure. From the artists, I received one suggestion to give \$2,000 to each of the twenty prospective grantees, three discrete proposals for lumping the \$40,000 together and doing something collectively, and three emails asking questions about whether it was appropriate to suggest something. This meant that

about a third of the twenty prospective grantees had ideas about the form of the grant itself.

This was an important inflection point. I discussed the situation with A Blade of Grass's Board Chair, and we both felt that it was important to honor these requests because it's a dialogue-based process. So we extended Artist Files in order to learn from our initial mistake of assuming a level playing field that isn't there. Instead of assuming that power isn't important, we asked the artists to negotiate the power dynamic with us directly.

To do this, we threw out our plan for administering the grant, and started asking questions of this group of artists that, to be honest, we had a bit of power over because we were ultimately going to make a funding decision. We asked them to talk to us about their financial lives. We asked them to talk about how funders could work more effectively with artists. We asked them to suggest alternatives to what we originally proposed.

This was a lot to ask, on a few different fronts.

First, it was just a lot of work. A lot of long, thoughtful emails were flying around, and people were writing in a separate Google doc as well. All that writing about funding and money is a lot to ask of artists who are already very busy with all the other aspects of their careers and projects.

This work was voluntary as far as we were concerned, and had zero impact on who got the grants. The dialogue aspect of the grant was not experienced by the Advisors who chose grantees, and participation in it played no part in their decision. But I don't think it would have been possible for A Blade of Grass to truly communicate this intention, particularly because it couldn't have been 100% true. If we could have guaranteed zero impact, then we wouldn't have been serious about co-creation.

In retrospect, this was an interesting rupture, but it was not comfortable for the artists. They felt at least two distinct types of pressure to participate. On one hand, if A Blade of Grass was sincere about giving the artists a stake in this grant, artists who didn't participate weren't advocating for themselves and could wind up with an outcome that wasn't good for them. This was pressure to participate. On the other hand, funders often make applicants do a great deal of work to be funded, so it was equally possible to see participation as yet another hoop that all applicants had to jump through. Pair these pressures with the fact that everyone was in competition with one another for limited funds and being asked to work somewhat collectively, and, well...

...let's just say that this wasn't a scenario that a responsible funder would create on a regular basis.

I'm here to explore why it was so important to do it once, even though it was messy and difficult. Even though it isn't a best practice. It's challenging to negotiate power dynamics, and fundamentally Artist Files consisted of the artists and the funder negotiating power together. All the writing culminated in a meeting that 16 of the twenty artists, Kalia and I attended, in which we hammered out what to do with the \$52,000 we had allocated for the grants and attendant Artist Files publication or exhibition. I think everyone was tense walking into this meeting. But I perceived it as a generous, productive forum in which we honestly discussed the impact grants to individual artists have in very real terms, defined what A Blade of Grass could offer in addition to funding, talked about the role artists have in creating value for their own work, and drafted a proposal for reallocating funds and administering the grant.

We started with what everyone's financial life actually looks like: how many people have full time jobs, work as teachers, have credit card debt, and so forth. Helpfully, Nicky Enright had already started a survey project about this with both the artists and the A Blade of Grass staff. Artists described the debt-time-money treadmill that they often find themselves trapped on. They affirmed a lot of things we already know: that artists self-fund projects, tend to carry credit card debt, tend to trade money for time. We affirmed that opportunities such as residencies and exhibitions tend to have hidden costs—from time off work to shipping and travel—that are generally borne by the artist.

I left this part of the conversation with two impressions. First, it seems important to address the fact that artists are expected to live with one foot in the exchange economy we all live in, and one foot in a gift economy. Artists have to eat, pay their rent and chip away at their student loans just like everyone else. But the art economy demands that artists give their time and their work away, work for exposure or credit, self-fund projects. This is what puts artists on the debt-time-money treadmill.

It also felt clear that grants to individual artists should be designed to help artists get off the treadmill. The treadmill negatively impacts creativity, forces short-term thinking, seriously impacts the quality and stability of artists' lives. How much money does it take to get an artist off the treadmill, and can money alone do it? Is it possible to get an artist off the treadmill forever?

In discussion with the artists, it became clear that not even \$40,000 would get most artists off the treadmill for any appreciable amount of time, so we thought through some collective approaches. What if the \$40,000 was set aside as a savings account that all twenty artists had access to? What if all twenty artists listened to everyone's career trajectory and decided together to give that \$40,000 to the one who was able at that moment to leverage it best?

At this point we all began discussing the fact that money is only part of the equation. Many of these artists needed organizational resources in order to do their work because their work is community-based. The idea of a fellowship relationship with A Blade of Grass felt useful to many of the artists. So did the concept of an artist-driven legacy in which the artists have a year to year role in choosing the next round of fellows, creating a more collaborative power dynamic.

We also talked about how excluded artists feel from important decisions about their own careers. When artists apply for opportunities, they don't tend to receive useful feedback. Many artists feel that their careers are in the hands of powerful gatekeepers who consolidate power, and I do see and understand how this works. Artistic value is generated by informed consensus, so those whose role it is to know the art and affirm its value are more powerful than the makers themselves. There were many ideas on the table about changing this dynamic that involved artists choosing grantees, watching the process and/or receiving detailed feedback.

Ultimately the following recommendations were presented to the Board:

- New Allocation: \$750 honorarium for all twenty artists and three \$10,000 grants to artists; \$7,000 publication.
- All twenty Artist Files artists should remain in an active fellowship for the remainder of the year.
- Artists should choose the grantees collaboratively. Everyone gets to vote for themselves, obviously, and then choose two others.
- Barring this, artists should create criteria for choosing grantees.
- Artists should get detailed feedback about the Advisors' decision-making process.

Board and Advisors discussed these recommendations, and came back with the following:

- New Allocation: \$750 honorarium for all twenty artists and three \$10,000 grants to artists; \$7,000 publication.
- All twenty Artist Files artists should remain in an active fellowship for the remainder of the year.
- The Executive Director and Curatorial Fellow should develop criteria based on public discourse and dialogue within the Artist Files process.
- Artists will receive a detailed feedback report about the Advisors' decision-making process.

That's what was implemented. Twenty honorarium checks were disbursed. Kalia and I sat down and parsed the discussion about what makes great socially engaged art, and developed criteria based on the artists' and the public's ideas. Advisors chose three strong grantees from a diverse and talented pool of artist fellows. The process for choosing grantees was made relatively transparent to the artists. Kalia constructed and A Blade of Grass implemented a fellowship curriculum that consisted primarily of putting our fellows into direct, casual, conversational contact with gatekeepers like funders, gallerists, scholars and curators. Many of our first fellows have attended intensive workshops, gotten feedback and

advice on projects, used our conference room, and so forth.

While working with these first fellows, A Blade of Grass has also been developing an enduring fellowship program for individual artists that capitalizes on all the feedback we received during this process. This fellowship for socially engaged art acts as an incubator for artists who are working as leaders within communities in ways that are relevant to everyday life, at an ambitious scale, to enact social change. By focusing on these criteria, and by providing support that includes documentation and assessment of artists projects, we hope to expand our understanding of how this work is valued.

The biggest question I am left with is whether the discomfort was worth it. What A Blade of Grass gained was significant. The organization came out of Artist Files with a much more mature and intentional sense of our power, and with a much clearer sense of what we want to accomplish with it.

The thing about power is that it's very difficult to see it when you have it. We began this process with a somewhat naive conception of our own power. Recognizing that we weren't getting the conversation we anticipated, we opened the grant up to co-creation, making our power visible to us—to me and the Board. A Blade of Grass came to this process with a lot of assumptions. We assumed that artists can and should see exposure as a form of compensation. We assumed that a wider public of artists would have the time and desire to talk about how funding artists works, when that wider public of artists couldn't actually apply for funding. We assumed we would be believed when we said that participation in shaping the grant had no bearing on who gets the grant. I could go on.

Artist Files' process gave us a clear opportunity to see and address these assumptions. In order to do this, we had to engage in important conversations at the Board level about our power, our values and the meaning of A Blade of Grass in a larger philanthropic landscape. But that was only half the work. Artist Files greatly benefitted the organization because it compelled us to do more than just talk about these values. We had to deploy them among a cohort of artists who were interested in holding us accountable

Philanthropy is an expression of power. To give funding is to have funds to give! This is not something that we should try to hide from or dismiss. Rather, as a funder of social engagement, A Blade of Grass has a responsibility to understand exactly what our power is, develop a real sensitivity and care around it, and use it to make meaning. Artist Files was a critical foundational step in this direction.

For the next few years, we will be focusing this meaning-making energy on the issue of value. How is socially engaged art valued, and can value accrue to socially engaged art in a less insular, more democratic way?

For the next five years, we will dedicate 70% of our grant budget to funding individuals in a way that prioritizes this value question. By dedicating resources to the documentation and assessment of individual artists' projects, and by acting as a consultant that equally values the aesthetic and social aims of each project, we hope to clarify how exactly this work is valuable, and to whom. This work defining value feels like the best first step in changing the value proposition for artists.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

AN EXPERIMENT IN SHAPING
ONLINE DIALOGUE
ANNA HARSANYI &
ANNE GOODFRIEND

The Artist Files project was developed by A Blade of Grass and Curatorial Fellow Kalia Brooks as an experiment that would critically assess the grant process. We strove for transparency in the criteria and decisions involved in choosing the organization's first recipients of grants to individual artists. The curatorial concept challenged the usual model of the closed relationships between grant makers and grantees. Generally, grant makers maintain a level of anonymity during the decision-making process, and only begin to form relationships with applicants that are chosen as grantees. We conducted the Artist Files experiment entirely online, aiming to stimulate dialogues about the granting process and socially engaged art. Presenting such a process in real time on the web is challenging, and we learned a lot from exploring and responding to these challenges. We hoped that engaged participants would respond to video content, and considered their voices crucial to the transparency of the project. Through this ambitious project we learned that online engagement is a valuable tool for shaping dialogue, and we are continuing to evaluate Artist Files as a learning process.

The grant application that artists are typically required to fill out often presents a fragmented view of their work. Artist Files artists did not apply but rather were selected by a curator according to criteria that were made public and open for critique on the website. Interviews were conducted so that the artists would have a chance to put their practice in their own words, presenting their work more organically than then could in an application.

Artist Files also created a way for the public to experience and explore the artists' personal connection to socially engaged art. Rather than proposing a definition, explanation or set of criteria delimiting social engagement, the videos demonstrated how different artists identified their practice with it. By presenting short, edited videos of these interviews on the Artist Files site, the artists were given an opportunity to be more visible as not just grant applicants, but as artists talking about their work in this context. Publishing videos

of these interviews on the Artist Files website was a large part of the effort to facilitate, amplify and broaden the conversations we hoped this experiment would provoke.

In connection with our goal of transparency, we also thought about how to encourage public participation online. We presented these videos together with questions they prompted, and then directed them toward the viewer. Some questions were: "How do artists create alternative systems of value? Is it the responsibility of artists to inspire dialogue? Is the process of making socially engaged art based on trust?" The audience was able to answer, refute or diverge from the questions that were raised, and the artists had an opportunity to moderate and respond to the comments that were made about the videos. This format was a tool for community building, allowing exploration of what it means to be an artist, what it means to have a socially engaged practice and what it means to be an institution opening up the grant-making process.

This method of creating a dialogue based on online content and direct questions was connected to the experimental structure of Artist Files. However, since its completion we have found ourselves asking how effective our method was. With the experiment over, we are now in the position to ask, "How did our experiment end and what did we learn?"

The most challenging aspect of Artist Files was how complicated the engagement process became. It was much harder to facilitate conversation than we initially assumed it would be. As we added content, over 80 posts cluttered the website, becoming a barrier for visitors to easily and quickly follow what we were presenting. We also assumed that people would readily participate by starting critical discussions on the website. Though there were many videos that sparked in-depth dialogues that occurred over a period of time (such as Sean Fader's interview and Nobutaka Aozaki's "I Need Collaboration to Make an Artwork"), much of the dialogue questioned the very structure of Artist Files, not the specific issues raised in the artist videos.

We also thought that people would be as excited about our experiment as we were. We were enthusiastic to provide a wealth of content—after all, grant processes often generate much content in written proposals, comments, panel meetings, etc. But we didn't organize that information in a way that would be accessible and easily navigable from different entry points and contexts. We assumed that visitors to the website would explore Artist Files without much guidance, so we did not provide any incentives for participation aside from the chance to be part of a dialogue that would have a direct effect on the grant process.

While not all of our decisions produced the results we had hoped for, we did have many successes. Much to our excitement, relationships were formed amongst the artists and the people who did participate. As a result, the artists' networks expanded and we received insightful commentary from artists and website visitors. This feedback has allowed us to reflect on how better to structure such a process in the future, how to establish a level of clarity in our intentions moving forward, and how to communicate the why in this entire grant process. Also, Artist Files now exists as a digital archive that can serve as a model for other institutions interested in exploring how to make transparency possible in grant processes.

NOBUTAKA AOZAKI

Nobutaka Aozaki lives and works in New York City. He attended the School of Visual Arts and holds an MFA from Hunter College. In 2012, he was awarded the A Blade of Grass Artist Fellow grant, and he received Hunter College's C12 Emerging Artist Award. His work has been exhibited at The Bronx Museum of the Arts' Artist in the Marketplace (AIM) Biennial, the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, Marianne Boesky Gallery and the UCLA Broad Art Center. He has participated in artist programs such as the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Swing

Space program, The Bronx Museum of the Arts' AIM Program and Emerge 11 at Aljira Center for Contemporary Art in Newark, NJ. Aozaki was an Artist In Residence at The Willowell Foundation in Vermont. His work has been featured in *Cabinet*.

SMILEY BAG PORTRAIT, 2011
Approximately 48 x 72 x 24 in.,
Dimensions variable
Participatory performance
Photo by Xiaotian Yang



VALUE ADDED 240950
 (Del Monte whole kernel corn
 no salt added), 2012-ongoing
 Canned corn and receipts
 3 x 9 x 3 ½ in.

"I take one canned good to multiple
 supermarkets and re-buy it.
 By 30th December, I had purchased
 that single can of corn from
 100 supermarkets, for a total
 of \$107.42."



Nobutaka Aozaki focuses on experiences that reflect everyday encounters in urban life. Inspired by his experience of immigrating to New York City, Aozaki considers how urban residents **RESIDENTS CAN PLAY AN UNKNOWING ROLE IN THE CREATION OF HIS WORKS** can play an unknowing role in the creation of his works of art. He works in public space, interacting with his audience on the street, in cafes and in shops, and displays the imagery that results from these interactions as the visual product of the many exchanges he participates in. However, the artwork that Aozaki creates is not entirely made up of visual objects. Rather, the interactions and experiences he engages in are just as fundamental and definitive to his creative process as creating

the visual result. Projects like *From Here to There*, *Names on Starbucks Cups*, and *Smiley Bag Project* infiltrate everyday moments in city life.

In *From Here to There*, Aozaki stops strangers on the street to ask for directions. He collects the drawings of these individuals' suggested routes—small scraps of paper with quick sketches of various sections of Manhattan—and assembles them to make a crude map of the city. For *Names on Starbucks Cups*, Aozaki collects cups from beverages he has ordered at Starbucks, each one displaying both correct and incorrect interpretations of his name. The range of interpretations provides a humorous take on the mistakes and misunderstandings of the artist's name, poking fun at the fast-paced friendliness that the customers and employees at Starbucks are accustomed to.

SMILEY BAG PORTRAIT, 2011

Approximately 48 x 72 x 24 in.,
Dimensions variable

Participatory performance

"I invite pedestrians to sit and model for me as I draw their portraits for free with a Sharpie marker on the smiley faces of the ubiquitous takeout plastic bags."

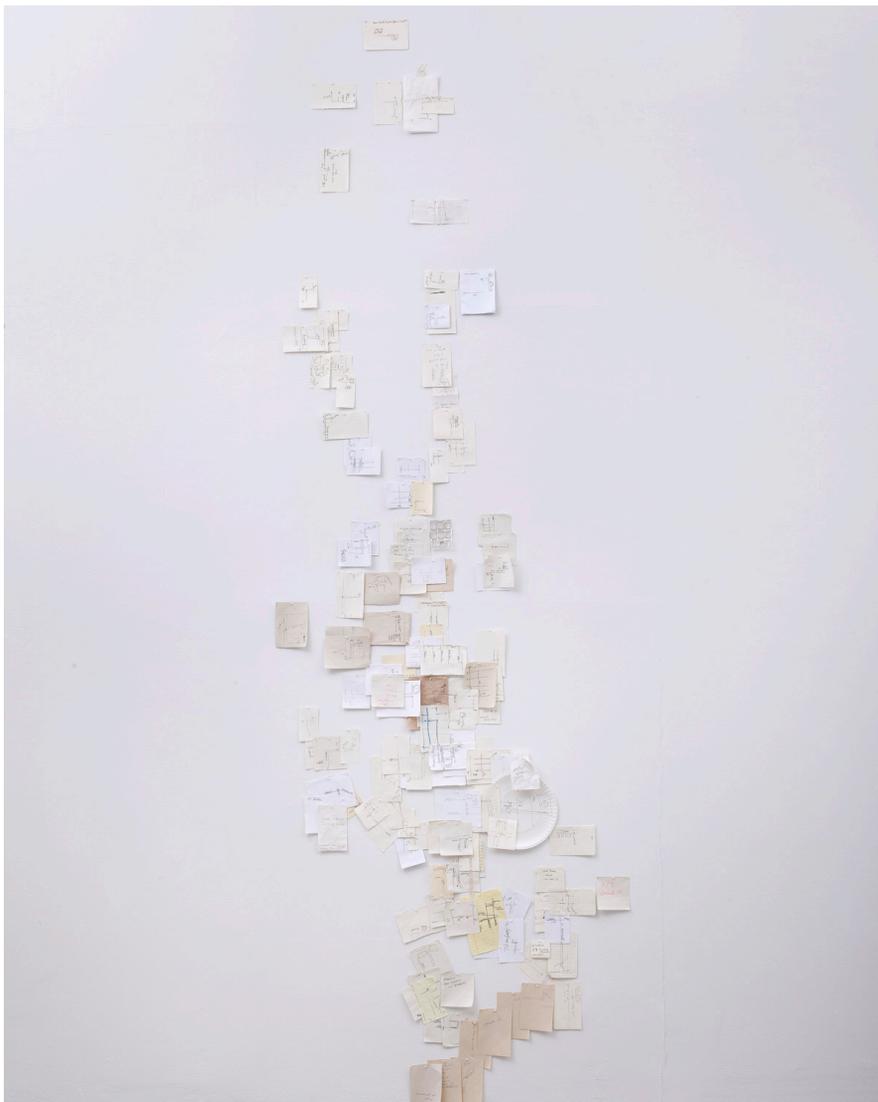
Photo by Yuriko Katori



Smiley Bag Project is an ongoing pop-up drawing station where Aozaki utilizes common plastic bags with smiley faces, often used for takeout food, as canvases for portraits. Asking passersby to sit for a portrait, Aozaki sketches their features on the smiley face, adding a spontaneous alteration to a familiar, disposable feature of urban life. This project is yet another humorous take on a familiar aspect of the city—the streetside caricature and portrait artists who do drawings for tourists. All of these projects involve the participation of random city dwellers in an exchange that influences the outcome of Aozaki's artworks. He envisions these interactions as collaborations, working with his audience to create artworks that might begin as a smiley

bag portrait or a Starbucks cup, but unfold over time as a unique exchange between two individuals. Experiences that may otherwise be forgettable become cherished interactions that inform and inspire Aozaki's imagination.

As an immigrant from Japan, Aozaki experiences New York City in relation to the way he defines and seeks out his audience. By blending his process of art-making into the routine experiences of city life, he becomes more closely connected to this foreign place. Rather than communicating to the participants that these encounters have an artistic goal and labeling himself as the sole author of the experience, Aozaki understands his role in the artist-audience relationship as equal, maintaining his position as a member of the everyday and appreciating the momentary connections that unfold.



*FROM HERE TO THERE, 2012
Various pens and paper, adhesive
120 x 38 in.
A map of Manhattan composed of
hand-drawn maps by various
New York pedestrians whom the
artist asked for directions.*

DANIEL BEJAR

Daniel Bejar lives and works in New York City. He has a BFA from Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, FL and an MFA from the State University of New York, New Paltz. His work has been exhibited in El Museo del Barrio's "The (S) Files Biennial", at the Bronx Museum of Arts, SITE Santa Fe, the University of New Haven in Connecticut, and Artnews Projects in Berlin. He has participated in The Bronx Museum of the Arts' Artist in the Marketplace Program and Smack Mellon's Hot Picks program,

and has completed residencies at Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace Program, SOMA in Mexico City, the Vermont Studio Center, and the Atlantic Center for the Arts in New Smyrna Beach, FL. Bejar's work has been written about in *The New York Times*, *Hyperallergic*, and *The New Yorker*.

GET LOST! (BREUCKELEN #1),
2009-ongoing

Site-specific intervention,
archival pigment prints,
photographic documentation
Dimensions variable





GET LOST! (NYC MTA Subway Map),
2009-ongoing
Site-specific intervention, archival pigment
print, offset posters
Dimensions variable

Daniel Bejar uses historical **SUBVERT IDEAS OF ESTABLISHED TRUTHS IN PUBLIC SPACE** narratives to subvert ideas of established truths in public space and to examine the influence of history in defining contemporary social and cultural narratives of power. In his project *Get Lost!*, Bejar redesigned New York City subway maps and signs to reflect the geography and topography of New York's Native American and colonial histories. Signs to Brooklyn were altered to read "Breuckelen," the original Dutch name for the borough. This map, which is based on 18th century British military cartography, was repurposed

to depict only the geography of the ubiquitous five-borough subway map void of any subway lines, calling attention to New York City's un-urbanized landscape prior to colonialism. These maps and signage were then re-inserted into the subway system, presenting the public with a glimpse of the native and colonial military traces embedded in the history of New York City. In *Neither Here Nor There*, Bejar traveled by plane and boat to the coordinates 22 11.517 N, 73 34.328 W, the halfway point between the United States and Puerto Rico, to document the site through photography. That location is 28 miles off the southwestern coast of the Bahamian island of Mayaguana. Bejar used the free public mapping software Google Earth to plant the photograph and coordinates into the software, putting the halfway point

literally on the map and making it a “real” place for the public to visit on Google Earth. But this digital snapshot of the Atlantic Ocean is actually no place at all; the universally recognizable yet ungraspable image of an open expanse of ocean emphasizes the liminal nature of Puerto Rico’s current political status, as neither an independent government nor a fully incorporated part of the United States of America.

During the 2012 Presidential elections, Bejar created *Rec-elections*, a series of performances and interventions that used past United States Presidential campaign signs and slogans in the context of public protests against the 2012 Republican Presidential nominee. Signs like Richard Nixon’s “Now more than ever” and George Romney’s “Great

for ‘68” subverted both the slogans of the past as well as those that were disseminated in the 2012 elections. By calling attention to the mechanisms of political messaging, Bejar challenges what it means to campaign for political power, and how most political campaigns weaponize history and memory as tools for manipulation.

Working almost entirely in public space—the subway, the Internet, the street, protests—Bejar points out how such spaces are defined. The unseen and underrepresented histories that are not included in common conceptions of “public” or “history” become the symbols that Bejar uses to explore such unresolved moments as New York’s colonial past or Puerto Rico’s international political status. He engages with these histories by expanding upon ideas like geographic borders and a dominant language, things that define a place both historically and in the present day. Through a visual language that involves subversion as a method of critique, Bejar compels his audience to stop and think again.

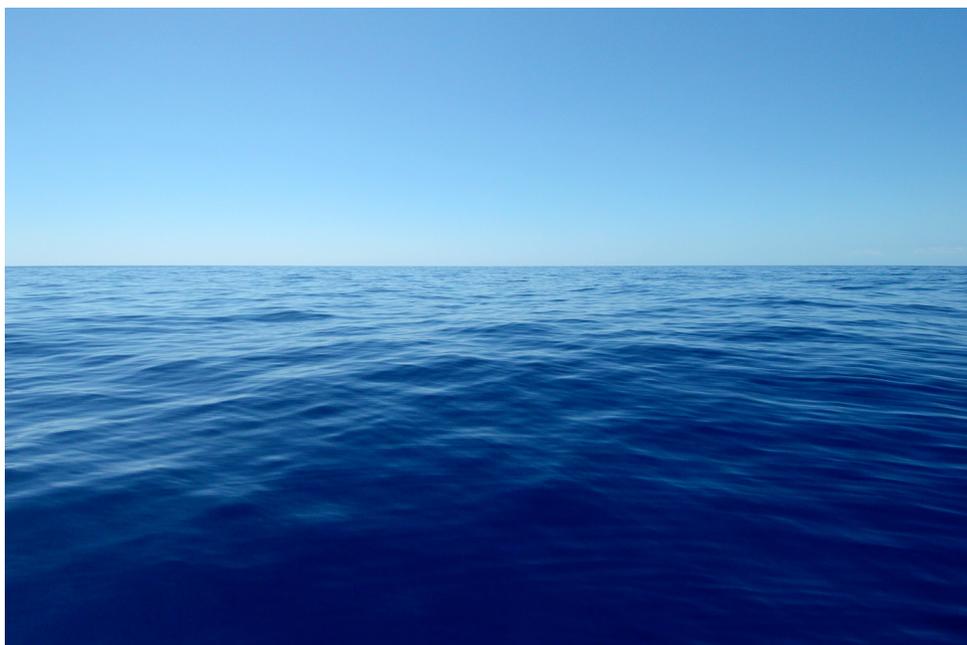
- KB, AH

GET LOST! (NYC #1),
2009-ongoing

Site-specific intervention,
archival pigment print, offset posters,
photographic documentation

Dimensions variable





22° 11.517 N, 73° 34.328 W
(Neither Here Nor There), 2011
Google Earth intervention,
digital C print, offset postcards,
PC, monitor
Dimensions variable

TRACY CANDIDO

Tracy Candido has presented projects in and around New York City, both at major institutions and with artist collectives. Her work has been featured at the Whitney Museum of American Art (with Trade School), the New Museum's Festival of Ideas, the Brooklyn Museum, Old Stone House, New York University, Exit Art and Design Trust for Public Space, and by Trade School and Bruce High Quality Foundation University.

She has won several awards and fellowships, including the Culture Push Fellowship for Utopian Practice (2012), the Fellowship of Emerging Leaders of New York Arts (ELNYA), and a Public Interest grant from the Puffin Foundation (2011). She received her BA in Visual Media Arts from Emerson College and her MA in Visual Cultural Theory from the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University.

COMMUNITY COOKING CLUB, 2010

Interactive performance



SWEET TOOTH
OF THE TIGER, 2008
Interactive performance



Tracy Candido is a New York-based artist, producer and designer who creates events which explore social issues through the lens of food. Using a range of strategies, from presenting privately prepared food in public spaces (*Sweet Tooth of the Tiger*) to the collaborative making and consumption of food (*Community Cooking Club*) Candido uses food as a medium and views eating as a social practice, investigating spaces of vulnerability, exchange and power.

In graduate school, Candido observed that the quality of discussions of weighty theoretical writings improved when she brought sweets to share. So she conceived a project in which homemade treats were the vehicle for exploring power relations and generating conversations. For *Sweet Tooth of the Tiger* (2008-2010), Candido made baked goods in her Brooklyn kitchen and sold them at inflated prices from a table at art galleries during the economic recession. She hoped to raise questions about the role of the gallery in commodifying objects and experiences, and in a wry commentary took the homey bake sale to the pristine white box gallery environment in the hopes that her customers would smile a little, get their fingers sticky, and even smudge the walls.



SWEET TOOTH
OF THE TIGER, 2008
Interactive performance

COMMUNITY COOKING
CLUB, 2010

Interactive performance



Making the food was a personal experience, solitary and within the confines of Candido's home. By exposing her creations to public scrutiny, she laid herself open to interaction and criticism, sharing a part of her private self and pointing out both the vulnerability of the social act of sharing food and ideas—even of the very act of eating. In this way, she encouraged participants to consider the artificial and guarded interactions that are typical of art gallery receptions. Further, Candido's invitation to eat desserts drew a parallel between eating sweet food and buying contemporary art as a decadent, indulgent consumption.

In *Community Cooking Club* (2010-present), Candido has inverted the exchange relationships initiated in *Sweet Tooth of the Tiger*, creating instead an ongoing collaborative cooking and eating event where participants prepare recipes from guest artists, authors and educators, and then eat what they have prepared together at a communal table. The piece addresses the idea of shared labor and communal preparation. During the event, participants break into groups of two to four to work together to decipher different recipes, creating a menu of seasonal dishes. *Community Cooking Club* functions as

art because it offers a hands-on **HANDS-ON ENGAGEMENT** engagement among participants **AMONG PARTICIPANTS** who learn from and with their peers in a direct, experiential way by sharing cooking skills and feeding one another.

Her most recent project, *Youth Food Lab* (2013), was conducted at The Door in Tribeca. Sponsored by Culture Push, it served to empower LGBTQ youth. By demonstrating how food can be used as a tool to enhance the health and strength of a community, Candido introduced the youth to the food world, and gave them a window onto a potential creative future in the food industry. Regardless of the project, then, Candido uses the social nature of food as a medium for building community and discourse around creative production, and as a tool to enhance dialogue.

- KB, EG



SWEET TOOTH
OF THE TIGER, 2008
Interactive performance

NICKY ENRIGHT

Nicky Enright was born in Ecuador and raised in New York City. He has a BFA from Cooper Union and an MFA from Hunter College. His public art projects have been commissioned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Arts for Transit in New York City, and the Smithsonian Institution and NASA in Washington, D.C. His work has been included in numerous exhibitions at galleries and institutions such as the Bronx Museum of the Arts, Third Streaming, Exit Art, The Art Museum of the Americas and Artists Space. He participated in The Bronx Museum of the Arts' Artists in the Marketplace Program and apexart's

Outbound Residency program in Bangkok, Thailand. He has been awarded residencies to the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Atlantic Center for the Arts in Florida, and the École Nationale Supérieure Des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, France. His work has been featured in various publications including the Abrams book *NASA/Art*, *Whitehot Magazine*, *Hyperallergic*, *Art Fag City*, and *The New York Times*.

GLOCAL CARD, 2012

Plastic card

4 x 6 in.

The *Glocal Card* was an international phone card that offered free worldwide calls for a limited time in exchange for filling out an anonymous online survey about the call. The Skype-enabled card could be used anywhere with an internet connection. The artist made charts to illustrate the global connections to the Bronx that the survey data generated. The title conflates "global" and "local" both to interrogate the connotations of the words and to evoke a vision of local immigrants reaching out across the globe.



ROME, 2011

Matchbooks

2 x 2 in.

Photo by EPW Studio/Maris Hutchinson.

These matches play with a colloquial expression—when viewers notice that the word “built” has been replaced by “burnt,” they cannot escape the fact that they are holding the matches in their hands. Therefore the piece functions as an intervention, implicating the viewer in the construction/destruction of empire.



Nicky Enright is a multimedia artist whose work is often rooted in themes of internationalism and the global economy. Influenced by his experience growing up in a multicultural household in New York City, his work explores the cultural transformations that result from an increasingly global society. Believing music to be a potential connector of disparate peoples, Enright (as DJ Lightbolt) spins music from around the world, much of it collected from his travels. Also, Enright calls attention to global relations as problematic: as the world grows more connected and culture more universal, inequality and injustice persist. Works like *The Globo*, *The Glocal Card*, *Rome*, *The Free Flag* and *Sense Us* function as cheeky symbols of globalization and the difficulty of earning a living and maintaining individual identities in a global economy.

Enright created a universal currency, *The Globo*, by merging elements of the legal tender of numerous countries. He uses this currency as a prop for spontaneous performances on his travels around the world, trying to exchange it at currency exchange booths, attempting to use it for transactions, and leaving it in tip and donation boxes. A symbol of the mysterious nature of national monetary systems, *The Globo* is a subversion of the powerful structures of economic exchange that are accepted as commonplace.

For an exhibition in 2012 at the Bronx River Art Center, Enright designed *The Glocal Card*, a free international calling card that, for a limited time, could be used anywhere with an internet connection. Participants received the card in exchange for completing a survey that asked questions about where the calls were placed, to whom and why, and the struggles of international communication.

For his project *Rome*, he designed matchbooks with a spin on the colloquial expression, "Rome wasn't built in a day." Enright's incendiary version replaces the word "built" with the word "burnt." Like *The Globo*, *Rome* is distributed to the public, implicating the possessor of the matchbook in the construction and destruction of empire.

The Free Flag was installed on the flagpole of the Andrew Freedman Home in the Bronx for No Longer Empty's exhibition "This Side of Paradise." Waving in the wind, the flag simply displayed, in bright yellow letters, the word "FREE." While flags are often used as visual imagery that ties individuals to a geographic location, Enright's flag represents the global citizenship of people who identify more with the concept of freedom than with any particular nationality. The flag is Enright's contribution to ongoing dialogues about the contemporary experience of homeland, travel and immigration.

His interactive wall painting, *Sense Us 2010*, presented the 21 races officially recognized by the US government during the latest census. This work highlights America's obsession with racial classification, and invites viewers to question the endeavor.

With a touch of humor, Enright invites his audience to contemplate his artworks as symbols of a global society, **REIMAGINING ONE'S** opening up possibilities of **INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY AND** reimagining one's individual **ROLE IN SOCIETY** identity and role in society with boundless creative possibilities.

- KB, EG



THE GLOBO,
2008-present

Prints:
Archival inkjet print on bond paper
29 x 52 in.

Currency:
Archival inkjet print on bond paper
2 1/2 x 6 in.

Photo by Cary Whittier

The Globo is a universal currency. A fusion of the legal tender of over twenty-five countries, *the Globo* evokes a vision of world unity and progress while simultaneously suggesting the ever-increasing reach of corporate globalization. This currency exists as large framed prints and as actual bills distributed in the real-world economy.



THE FREE FLAG, 2012

Fabric, metal flagpole

Flag: 60 x 96 in.; flagpole: 30 ft.

The Free Flag is a symbol for global citizens. Rather than representing a certain territory, this flag stands for those who yearn to be free to travel and live wherever they choose. In the contemporary globalized world there are growing numbers of people with complicated relationships to nation-states; people born between borders and laws, with no clear status, or multiple citizenships and therefore uneasy associations with flags. The Free Flag challenges notions of nationhood and patriotism.

SEAN FADER

Raised in Ridgewood, NJ, Sean Fader has spent most of his life as a performer, acting, singing and dancing since he was five years old. After attending Northwestern University and The New School University, he performed on several national tours with stops both on and Off-Broadway. Fader earned his MA from the Maryland Institute College of Art where he was the recipient of the Murthy Digital Arts Award, and his MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He was named *Fringe Underground Magazine's* "Art Star" in their Fall 2005 issue. In 2007 his work was featured in "First Look II" at the Hudson Valley

Center For Contemporary Art. He received the Critics Choice Award in the Professional category at the 11th Annual Chicago Art Open (2008). Fader was the recipient of 3rd Ward's "Fall Solo Show" prize (2008) and was named as one of the winners of the Magenta Foundation's Flash Forward Award for Emerging Photographers (2012). Fader resides in New York City.

I WANT TO PUT YOU ON,
RAINI, 2007

Archival inkjet print
24 x 30 in.





20twenty22, Dlist.com, July 23, 2010

20twenty22: "Straight acting" is a code for "self hatred." Educate yourselves.

You are a stellar guy Sean Fader.
See you soon :)

You are a stellar guy and you bring out the best in me. It's so good to have you around.

Ok so I assume you got my text messages. This is my last one. You can text me and tell me I can expect a phone call from you today or never call me again. The choice is yours.



Evan Bolton Hill, Baltimore, July 24, 2010

SUP?

Left: 20twenty22, Dlist.com, July 23, 2010
Right: Evan Bolton Hill, Baltimore, July 24, 2010

Archival inkjet print

30 x 50 in.

Although the end result of Sean Fader's practice is photography, his real work involves intimate interaction with friends and strangers, and an exploration of how we perceive identity. His practice is informed by his long history of working in theater, which Fader uses when he alternately models the identities of others and asks others to model their own and his ideas about who they are in a unique kind of interactive portraiture.

In *I Want To Put You On*, Fader makes portraits that fuse his body with that of his sitters, who are friends and family. He asks his subjects to pose as the person they imagine themselves to be, takes their portraits, then turns the tables. Assuming the poses from their portraits, he **"TELL ME HOW TO BE YOU"** asks them, "tell me how to be you." The ensuing conversation reveals unexpected nuances of personality, as demeanor and facial expression are tweaked and adjusted until the right balance is struck. Fader then uses Photoshop to fuse his own likeness with the sitters' bodies, superimposing a zipper on the torso, which makes it look like he is "wearing" his subjects' bodies. Through this process he assumes the identity of the sitter, asking viewers to question the gap between self-perception and the way we are seen by others.



AM82, Grindr, February 28, 2010

You are the first and ONLY person
to get this pic...
Please do not share :)

You tell that to all the boys

You know, in the name of
art... and in the name of
Adventure. I think you should
come directly to my place and we
should have our first date in my
room. Raw. Real. What better
place to get to know me?

Ps I woke up to this from you last
night. "If you were Amy awe-
somer you would dpinta-
niaoously combust.". I nearly
shat my bed I laughed so hard.
We were both there together be-
cause I didn't notice the misspell-
ins last night. Hehehehe.

I hate men. Let's get coffee this
week.



Adam, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, February 28, 2010

SUP?

Left: AM82, Grindr, February 28, 2010
Right: Adam, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, February 28, 2010

Archival inkjet print

30 x 50 in.

In another project, the performative aspect of the work involves a deeper commitment. For *SUP?*, Fader spent a year trolling online dating sites, looking sincerely for good matches and imagining in advance what the men might look like. For each, he engaged in only online conversation in advance—no phone calls. If they agreed to a date, Fader asked to make a portrait of each man, depicted as Fader envisioned him from his online profile. He explained that he would like to begin the encounter at their place, with a portrait made using their clothes and a backdrop staged using their possessions. After the portrait session they went on the date, and then the sitter invariably offered an unsolicited account of who they “really” were—their families, lives, past experiences. Apparently the portraits created an aura of trust and openness, which encouraged a confessional atmosphere. Following the dates, Fader would re-photograph the men based on their self-descriptions, allowing them to stage their own portraits. He continued to date some of them for up to several months.

Fader calls this approach “lived performance” because he recognizes that the art is inseparable from his daily life experiences. The two images are presented side by side, allowing viewers to compare the preconceived idea and the self-presentation. This work focuses on the way people edit themselves to appear more desirable, and the disjunction between our public and private selves. Fader uses photography to create intimacy between people, and bring awareness to how we imagine ourselves as a way of achieving greater authenticity.

- KB, EG



I WANT TO PUT YOU ON, DAD, 2007
Archival inkjet print
24 x 30 in.

ALICIA GRULLON

Alicia Grullon received her BFA from New York University, and her MFA from the State University of New York, New Paltz. She has lived and been an artist-in-residence in the US, the Netherlands, England, Germany and South Korea. Her work has been featured in numerous exhibitions in New York City and abroad, including the Seoksu Art Project in Anyang, South Korea; Jamaica Flux in Queens, New York; and Performa 11 and Art in Odd Places, both in New York City. She has held residencies at Migrating Academies in Kassel, Germany during dOCUMENTA (13), Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts Art and Law Residency in New York City, chashama in New York City, and Arts Council South Korea

International Artist Residency in South Korea. Grullon has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants including the Franklin Furnace Fund Grant for Performance Art, the Sol Sharvio Award for Emerging Artist in the Marketplace at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, the Puffin Foundation and the Compton Foundation. Her work has been featured in publications such as *The World Journal of Post-Factory Photography*, the *Daily News* and the *Bronx Journal*.

ENJOY THE REVOLUTION, 2011

Reenactment

In August 2011, Grullon reenacted the distribution of 100 fliers handed out in Cairo, Egypt during the Arab Spring in front of the Wells Fargo Building near Wall Street.



Alicia Grullon is a performance artist whose work focuses on the encounters between people. She works in public spaces, inviting passersby to participate in her social interventions and reenactments of true stories. Her interventions pertain to race, class and gender-based identities, as well as ideas of belonging and not belonging. *Illegal Death* responds to the untimely deaths of undocumented workers in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. The piece is inspired by the death by exposure of a twenty-year-old undocumented worker from

Honduras in a makeshift shelter in a forest on Long Island. Grullon originally restaged the horrific scene in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx, playing the part of the worker. In this original version, the performance is presented to the audience through photographs, echoing the way Grullon learned of the tragic event through images in the media.

ENJOY THE REVOLUTION, 2011

Reenactment

In August 2011, Grullon reenacted the distribution of 100 fliers handed out in Cairo, Egypt during the Arab Spring in front of the Wells Fargo Building near Wall Street.



In another reenactment entitled *The Stella D'oro Piece: No Cookies*, Grullon recreated signs from the 2009 strike at the Stella D'oro cookie factory in the Bronx. For ten months, workers were striking to protect their wages, health insurance and sick leave. Ultimately, the company moved the factory operation to Ohio to avoid conceding to its employees' demands. Grullon remade the signs and stood at the site of the strike where the empty factory remains, handing out cookies to people as they passed by on the street.

In her conversations with people at the site, Grullon was surprised by how many did not know of the recent event, which had a major impact on the quality of life in the neighborhood.

Grullon developed civic actions like *Enjoy the Revolution*, in which she handed out flyers that read "Enjoy the Revolution" in front of the Wells Fargo building on Wall Street. Happening during the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011 in New York City, this action contributed to the dialogues



PICK IT!, 2011

Social sculpture

For the "Performa 11 Consortium," as part of the "S-Files Biennial" at El Museo del Barrio, Grullon invited audience members to create individual protest signs and picket with her.

that were then taking place in the area. She has also formed encounters through activities like the intervention *Rice Cake: Structure* performed in a market in Anyang, South Korea in which she asked a local shop owner to show her how to make *dok*, a rice cake delicacy. Through the experience in South Korea, she reflected on the relationship between herself and the shop owner, the action of getting to know a community through its food, and the loss of local identity in globalizing cities. The work uses the familiar setting of the food market and the activity of preparing traditional food as sites to explore identity, civic action and urban form. It underscores how individuals in the public realm exchange information, and how critical actions and current events reflect

upon a society that is ultimately
A SOCIETY THAT IS ULTIMATELY JUDGED
judged by the well-being of
BY THE WELL-BEING OF ITS PEOPLE
its people.

Grullon embodies the historical moments that inspire her, exploring social justice issues and representing the diversity of human experiences of city life. She invites the audience to participate in interactions that involve reflecting and responding to current social situations through participatory actions and social cooperation.

- KB, AH



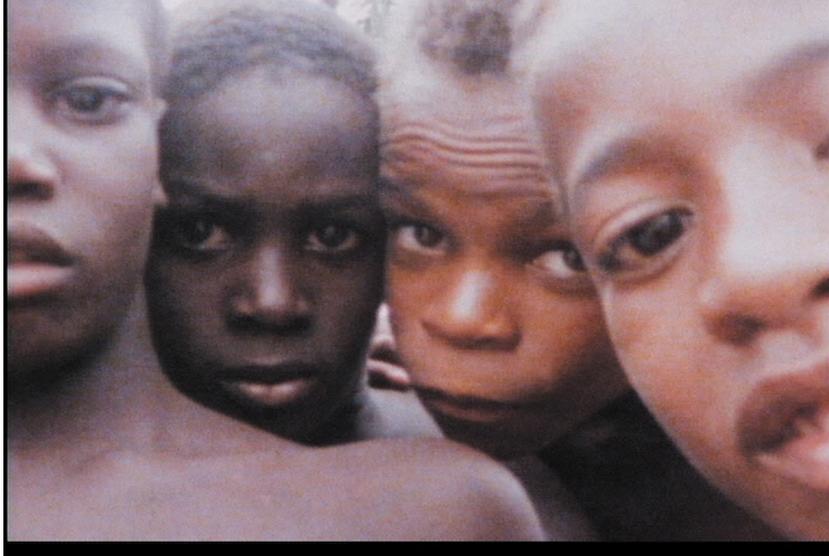
PICK IT!, 2011
Social sculpture

For the "Performa 11 Consortium," as part of the "S-Files Biennial" at El Museo del Barrio, Grullon invited audience members to create individual protest signs and picket with her.

THOMAS ALLEN HARRIS

Thomas Allen Harris was raised in the Bronx, New York and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. He received a BA in Biology from Harvard College and participated in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program as a Helena Rubinstein Fellow in Critical Studies. He has received grants and awards from the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Jerome Foundation, the Paul Robeson Fund and the Lannan Foundation; a United States Artist Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Rockefeller Fellowship, two Emmy nominations, a Sundance Documentary Program and a Tribeca Film Institute Nelson Mandela Award. Harris' films have been screened internationally at the Toronto, Berlin, Sundance, FESPACO, Flaherty and

Tribeca Film Festivals. His films have been broadcast on PBS, the Sundance Channel, ARTE, CBC, Swedish Broadcasting Network and New Zealand Television. His short videos and installations have been exhibited in the Whitney Biennial, the Gwangju Biennial, and at the Museum of Modern Art, the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Long Beach Museum of Art. Harris has taught at numerous institutions, including as an Associate Professor of Media Arts at the University of California, San Diego. A published photographer, curator and writer, Harris lectures on the use of media as a tool for social change. He is completing his fourth documentary feature, *Through a Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People*, which looks at photography as an art form and how it has been used in developing a cultural identity in African-American communities since the 1840s.



Thomas Allen Harris melds audiovisual narratives and documentary storytelling into cooperative actions. His ongoing community engagement project, *Digital Diaspora Family Reunion (DDFR)*, is a mobile, participatory multimedia initiative that motivates people to use their family photographic archives to create historical narratives and better understand themselves and their communities. Beyond preserving these mementos, Harris enlivens the personal family stories of individuals, shining a light on the intricate and fascinating details that add up as important symbols of a collective history.

DDFR engages audiences to create new communal experiences around collective storytelling. The *DDFR* team leads community photo-sharing

events, working jointly with local participants to create a narrative from their family photo archives. These events are precursors to larger public presentations, known as *DDFR ROADSHOW GRAND FINALE*. During these performances, local audiences gather for journeys of discovery through family photographs in which personal images help to illuminate a shared humanity. Live events are streamed online and digital viewers can interact with a live audience, thus enlarging the communal experience that emerges. Individual photo-journeys are also curated and shared online. *DDFR* brings to the forefront the visual histories that would otherwise remain hidden from the larger collective narrative, creating a digital archive of vernacular history that provides a unique portrait of who we are at a particular moment.

Harris draws from the rich heritage of the literary and arts canon of African-American autobiography to redefine "personal" inquiry through the documentary form. Harris' documentary feature films explore issues around identity, family and desire in the context of the larger African diasporic community. "VINTAGE•Families of Value" (1995) looks at African American families through the eyes of LGBT siblings; *E Minha Cara/That's My Face* (2001) is a mythopoetic journey of self-discovery across three generations of Harris' family; *Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela* (2005) tells the story of some of the first South African freedom fighters—one of whom was Harris' late father—who left their country to further the struggle to end apartheid. In his video installation *AFRO (is Just a Hairstyle): Notes on a Journey Through the African Diaspora*, Harris draws connections between religious, cultural and sexual festivals by juxtaposing scenes of public spaces in Brazil, Burkina Faso and the United States.

Harris combines his inquiry into cultural identity and historical narrative with interactive performances that make active participants out of spectators. Harris' films tell stories through a unique cultural lens, providing a rich historical and social context through which to look at the extraordinary lives of those around us. With *DDFR*, Harris extends his documentary filmmaking practice. Participants who engage in the narrative set up by *DDFR* tell their family histories from their own viewpoint and choose which documentary elements to include as symbols of their personal histories.

RECONSIDERING HISTORICAL PERIODS THROUGH HIDDEN CONTEMPORARY FAMILY NARRATIVES
In this way, Harris creates a larger dialogue about the human experience and about reconsidering historical periods through hidden contemporary family narratives.

- KB, AH

Film Still,
TWELVE DISCIPLES OF
NELSON MANDELA, 2005





*Production Still,
DIGITAL DIASPORA FAMILY
REUNION ROADSHOW, 2013
Live interactive cinema performance*

HEATHER HART

Heather Hart earned a BFA from the Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle and an MFA from Rutgers University, and has participated in the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program. Her work has been exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum, the Studio Museum in Harlem, EFA Project Space, Art in General, Socrates Sculpture Park, Providence Art Center and Soil Art Gallery in Seattle. She has participated in residences at Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA; Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop in New York

City; Santa Fe Art Institute in New Mexico; Skowhegan School for Painting and Sculpture in Maine; and the Seattle Center. Her work has been featured in publications such as *ArtNews*, *Huffington Post*, *Art in America*, *The Village Voice* and *The New York Times*.

BUILD A BROTHER
WORKSHOP, 2009
Doll skins, stuffing,
accessories, participation





Heather Hart creates spaces of encounter that use objects as a way of exploring ideas of exchange and communication. Works like *Barter Town* and *Juju for the Blood* conceptualize public interactions through the exchange of things like medicinal herbs or drawings on a napkin, and the conversations that arise during and after these exchanges. *Barter Town* brings together individuals who offer services and activities in return for other goods, services or simply participation in the activity at hand; no money is used in this process. *Juju for the Blood* is a similar project that channels the artist as a purveyor of goods, offering the audience possessions that she understands to have spiritual value. Individual perceptions of value and money are built into the structure of *Barter Town* and *Juju for the Blood* —places where notions of currency,

value and exchange are constantly being explored and redefined according to personal encounters. By carving out a space free of money, Hart asks her audience to consider how new systems and principles of value can arise from experiences that are void of monetary exchange. Also, Hart invites strangers to meet each other via these exchanges, at once mimicking but also subverting the relationships that are defined by the economic transactions we engage in every day.

THE EASTERN ORACLE:
WE WILL TEAR THE ROOF OFF THE MOTHER, 2012

Lumber, paint, iron, brass, gold, roofing, participation

Photo by Tsubasa Berg



Hart has developed a series of large, site-specific roof-like structures built for people to climb on. These have been created in Franconia Sculpture Park in Minnesota (*The Northern Oracle: We Will Tear the Roof Off the Mother*), the Brooklyn Museum (*The Eastern Oracle: We Will Tear the Roof Off the Mother*) and the Olympic Sculpture Park in Seattle (*The Western Oracle: We Will Tear the Roof Off the Mother*). These interactive structures invite audience members to climb on top of the roof, as well as enter the space through its attic. The interior might be a place of meditation, reflection, wish-making—it can be altered according to each participant's vision of the space in relation to themselves.

Instead of using objects as imagery, Hart creates structures both social and material that serve as tools for experience, interaction and discussion. The composition of her artworks are transformed into social spaces where human relationships are magnified and new ones are formed as a result of the parameters for interaction and experience created by the artist. Hart looks to her audience to complete the artwork by enlivening a given place in real time, allowing for a unique interaction that exists within the space of the project itself.

STRUCTURING HER ARTWORKS
AS SOCIAL SPACES

By structuring her artworks as social spaces, Hart looks to the audience to become the animators of the project's thematic properties. For instance, *Barter Town* would not function as an exchange system without the active participation of others. And without people to climb and explore the roof structures, the tension between interior and exterior would go unnoticed. Hart not only sets up experiences that invite the audience to play along, she asks others to take a part of each project and activate it.

- KB, AH



THE NORTHERN ORACLE:
WE WILL TEAR THE ROOF OFF
THE MOTHER, 2010

Lumber, roofing materials, gold, participation

Photo courtesy of Franconia Sculpture Park



THE EASTERN ORACLE: WE WILL TEAR
THE ROOF OFF THE MOTHER, 2012
Lumber, paint, iron, brass, gold, roofing, participation
Photo by Rebecca Reeve

KENDAL HENRY

Kendal Henry earned a BFA from the School of the Visual Arts in New York City. He served as the Manager of Arts Programs at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Arts for Transit for eleven years, and as a project manager at the City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs Percent for Art Program. He has curated exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, the Anna Akhmatova Museum at

Fountain House in St. Petersburg and at the West Harlem Art Fund in New York City. His public art projects have taken place in the United States, Europe, Russia, Asia and Australia. His work has been discussed in publications such as *Bermuda Sun*, *Time Out New York*, *Royal Gazette*, and *TransitTransit*.



CANNED WATER, 2009

Water, tin cans, reused plastic labels

Dimensions variable

Rivers and streams flow from the surrounding mountains into the city of Dushanbe, Tajikistan and large, elaborate fountains pepper the city, but water is not easily available to some citizens, who may have as little as an hour of running water a day. *Canned Water* was available for free at the local market but accessing the water within required rare and expensive can openers.

Alexey Shklyar and Kendal Henry
 COSMONAUT, 2011
 Steel, polyester resin, epoxy paint
 70 x 15 x 15 ft.

An abandoned structure in the center of downtown Kemerovo, Russia was transformed into a space station to commemorate Russian Cosmonaut Alexey Leonov, the first human to conduct a space walk. Leonov, who was from Kemerovo, is seen walking his two dogs in space.



Kendal Henry works collaboratively around the world, creating public art projects with the goal of engaging local residents in dialogues and experiences connected to social issues. He hopes to spark dialogue by asking a fundamental question: what **WHAT WILL THE ARTWORK DO?** will the artwork do? Henry travels to the location where he will work to meet with local artists with whom he partners. Their initial conversations and observations of their physical setting inform how they will work together to formulate their ideas.

In 2011, Henry traveled to Tajikistan to produce a series of collaborative projects about the politics of water. Though the country is a water-rich nation, this resource is privatized and access to clean drinking water is only sporadically available to the public. The artists contributed to the awareness of water issues by developing eleven water-inspired projects at various locations throughout the capital city of

Dushanbe. In one of the projects, Henry and his collaborators created a water bar that featured a tasting of bottled water allegedly from several foreign countries, as well as local Tajik water. Even though all of the water at the bar was in fact from Tajikistan, when asked which one they liked best, most visitors preferred the "foreign" water. This raised a debate about the value of a simple natural resource and how it is marketed.



Dennis Kulik and Kendal Henry
 CITY OF BIRDS: PHOENIX, 2011

Leaves, scotch tape, wire mesh

10 x 5 ft.

Phoenix was created out of fallen leaves to lure the citizens of Yaroslavl, Russia into a forgotten city park. The *City of Birds* in the park was a micro version of Yaroslavl's affluent community, cultural district, and developing neighborhoods.

A year later, Henry developed *Dirt City: Dream City* in The Quarters neighborhood of downtown Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The Quarters underwent a multimillion-dollar urban renewal project, and *Dirt City: Dream City* addressed the changes that occurred. In his typical style, Henry worked as a curator, artist and collaborator with fifteen artists to develop their projects through workshops, community collaboration and in-depth analysis of the history of the area. One of the artists involved, Matt Prins, contributed a work called *92.1 FM The Mouth Hole*, a temporary radio station advertised on a billboard. The station held broadcast and streaming radio programming hosted by two imaginary characters named Chuck and Chun, also known as The Quarters Morning Zoo—The Voice of the Quarters. The broadcast consisted of a one-hour loop including interviews with non-English-speaking members of the community, jingles from nonexistent businesses, an ice cream truck playing "The Entertainer," and various other transmissions. This radio station described the misinterpretations that occur during the process of urban

development when the voices of underrepresented communities get drowned out by the louder voices of civic and municipal infrastructure.

For Henry, developing artworks in a collaborative setting and connecting a diverse audience in public space are critical parts of the artistic process. His interest in a fluid working process allows the end result to take shape according to the dynamics of a specific location during a specific moment. The dialogues that result from his public initiatives become closely connected to social realities that he participates in. Rather than simply holding a mirror up to society, Henry's projects inspire contested perspectives of definitions of public space, political ideals and what it means to frame interpersonal connections around socio-political issues.



Igor Kuznetsov and Kendal Henry

CITY OF BIRDS:
UPSCALE NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE, 2011

Wood, polyurethane

24 x 18 in.

This leaf-inspired birdhouse is a centerpiece in the affluent community in the City of Birds. Over twenty-five birdhouses occupy a small, forgotten park in the city of Yaroslavl, Russia, each making reference to parts of Yaroslavl's thousand-year history.

NATE HILL

Nate Hill lives and works in New York City. The majority of his work has taken place in public spaces throughout the city since 2002. Though Hill de-emphasizes his work in the context of galleries and art institutions, it has been exhibited occasionally, at Grace Exhibition Space, Elga Wimmer PCC and Flux Factory. Hill has been featured in numerous publications including *Vice*, *Huffington Post*, *Hyperallergic*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *BlackBook* and *The New York Times*.



THE ARTIST IN WHITE AMBASSADOR
COSTUME, 2011

Photo by Tod Seelie



THE ARTIST IN COSTUME
FOR FREE CHEESEBURGERS
PERFORMANCE, 2012

Photo by Tod Seelie

Nate Hill plays the role of a merry prankster, oftentimes shocking an audience of unknowing passersby, absorbing them into his darkly humorous and highly imaginative participatory projects. Hill provides services for people, executed with an antagonistic yet playful twist. He embodies the situations he creates by frequently taking on an absurd character or egging on his audience to join him in his public actions.

Hill has led groups rummaging through garbage in New York City's Chinatown to collect what he calls "art supplies for eccentric artists, collectors or thrill seekers," in a performance called *Chinatown Garbage Taxidermy Tour*. He has dressed in costume as a plush blue fish to provide *Free Bouncy Rides* to New York City subway riders; wearing a white tuxedo, he has sold and delivered fake crack cocaine to customers who called by phone to order the *Candy Crack Delivery Service* to their homes. Hill's costumed services continued with *Death Bear*, in which the artist, adorned in a black teddy bear mascot head and black jumpsuit, is summoned by text message to a person's home to collect objects that "were causing pain" and returns them to his cave where they "disappear forever." Hill's last mascot character continued his tradition of the house-call



FREE BOUNCY RIDES, 2009

Performance

performance by allowing interested parties to take out their frustrations on a sympathetic panda acting as a punching bag. Another provocative act involved wearing white face in Harlem and walking around with a cardboard sign that read "White People Do Not Smell Like Wet Dog," a reference to a nonsensical stereotype. Parading through the streets of Harlem yelling slogans like "We are white, we smell alright," Hill was often stopped by people who were troubled or confused by his performance. He ended up engaging in many passionate debates about racism in New York City today. Hill has also taken on the character of a destitute artist, roaming the subways and giving passengers an art idea in exchange for "imaginary money." Though mimicking the omnipresent subway panhandler, Hill asks to receive no cash at all, instead proposing to give something of himself away. Rather than creating a simple parody, Hill challenges the value and worth of money in exchange for ideas, particularly in the art community.

By embodying the role of the impoverished and unappealing artist, Hill magnifies the reality of the art market, a place where only certain ideas deemed good enough are highly valued—a market that thrives on imaginary money.

By making himself the target of impulsive reactions from passersby, Hill forms connections that challenge the ethical and political relationship between artist and audience. As a provocateur, Hill forges a bond with his audience that highlights the intrinsic contention that exists when his projects invite the participation of a broad public. Though on the surface these situations are designed as playful, Hill's serious approach to interaction and provocation turn the experience of his work into an opportunity to consider alternative ideas about the role of the artist in public space.

- KB, AH



THE ARTIST IN
DEATH BEAR COSTUME, 2009

Performance

Photo by Kevin Walsh

HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Rachel Falcone is a creative producer who has worked on such interview-based projects as EarSay Inc., None On Record and StoryCorps. Her independent radio documentaries and multimedia have been broadcast internationally and shared through interactive installations in partnership with The Laundromat Project, Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, SUPERFRONT Gallery, Adriala Gallery, Chashama Studios, the New Museum, MAPP International Productions, Asian Arts Initiative, Occupy the Empty Space and NPN/VAN. She has presented her art and organizing work at numerous festivals, educational institutions and other venues across the country, and she teaches oral history and storytelling for movement building in collaboration with the Museum of the City of New York, People's Production House, the Institute for Social Ecology and others. She studied Philosophy at University College London and Vassar College.

Michael Premo is a multi-disciplinary artist, theater producer and arts consultant who has worked with the Hip-Hop Theater Festival, EarSay, Inc., the award-winning national history project StoryCorps and The Civilians, among many others. He was a founding producer and curator of The Globesity Festival: Hunger Strike Theater. Premo studied the role of arts in social and political organizing at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. With Falcone, he has traveled widely sharing their work.



HOME (#2) NEW YORK CITY, 2009

Photograph

Dimensions variable

Photo by Michael Premo

Rachel Falcone and Michael Premo are the co-founders of Housing Is a Human Right, a collective and an art project in the form of documentary portraits of the ongoing struggle for home. Falcone and Premo interview people about their neighborhoods and their personal experiences while trying to find or maintain a home. They collect these oral histories as well as photographs and multimedia and share them on their website as an archive. So far, they have recorded more than a hundred stories in New York, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and South Africa. These narratives describe community and the right to affordable housing and land, **A LIVING LIBRARY DEDICATED TO HUMAN RIGHTS** creating a living library dedicated to human rights. Falcone and Premo met while working with StoryCorps, an oral history project organized by themes. They independently

observed, to their surprise, that regardless of the theme of the story being told, the people they listened to almost all seemed preoccupied with the way the topic intersected with their notions of home. Building on this, Falcone and Premo began to explore narratives of home, and the inextricably linked issue of housing security. This exploration led to an activist art practice; now the artists are working to use what they have learned as a catalyst for change by working with community stakeholders and organizations, hoping to improve lives in meaningful ways. Premo and Falcone work with a variety of community partners locally and abroad to meet the people whom they interview. They make sound recordings of the stories and share them in interactive exhibitions in unconventional spaces, as well as in broadcasts via traditional and new media outlets. Their website is the central repository that holds the

oral histories, video documentation and special projects. The "Stories in Sound" page is the first volume of nearly a dozen audio recordings collected in New York City. Visitors to the site can hear Lorenzo Diggs discuss the conditions of the Bedford-Atlantic shelter in Brooklyn, Beverly Corbin dispel the stereotypes of being a resident of public housing, James Roberts share his story of taking care of his partner who has HIV in their home together, and other stories that provide a diverse perspective on what home is and means. On another page Falcone and Premo document the human right to housing movement, where they follow advocates, grassroots and social organizations to document the strategies being used to bring awareness to issues like housing foreclosure, vacant buildings and homelessness. One such story focuses on an elderly Brooklyn homeowner, known as "Mama" to her family, friends and neighbors, who faced a foreclosure-related eviction after living in her home for 44 years. Through community support and activism, she won the right to remain. By foregrounding individual experiences, the artists put a human face on the housing crisis, and gather examples by which the depth and nature of the related issues can be better understood

by a broad audience. Their work came to a head in the current project, *Sandy Storyline*, an interactive archive where people can leave behind their stories of hardship, survival and hope. Designed to serve as a forum for discussion and a way of creating virtual community, *Sandy Storyline* is also showcased in exhibitions, where visitors are invited to watch and listen to survivors recount their tales. Falcone and Premo write, "*Sandy Storyline* highlights the voices and faces of people affected by the storm, bringing the human impact into the national conversation about economic inequality, climate change, infrastructure development and the future of coastal cities in America." The stories often reveal how storm recovery has been unevenly supported and funded, leaving many of the most vulnerable victims with inadequate aid. In this way, the project serves as the latest outlet of the artists' ongoing project to catalyze social change by impacting the way that we think about home, housing and issues of social justice.

- KB, EG



CYNTHIA TWIGG, SYMPHONY WAY TEMPORARY RELOCATION AREA A.K.A. BLIKKIESDORP, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, 2010

Photograph

Dimensions variable

Photo by Michael Premo



GENTLEMAN WHO DID NOT WANT TO BE
IDENTIFIED BY NAME, 2009

Photograph

Dimensions variable

Photo by Michael Premo

LULU LOLO

LuLu LoLo has been active as a performance artist, playwright, actor, historian and community activist since 1995. Her numerous exhibitions include everything from street theater performances to formal exhibitions, and range from impromptu actions in public to presentations at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the major art museums in Genoa, Italy. LuLu LoLo has received many awards and honors, including a Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Writer in Residence, a New York City Council Proclamation by Council Member 8th District Melissa Mark-Viverito (2007), and an award from the Triangle Fire Memorial Association (2012). She is a board member of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, the City Reliquary Museum, and the Vito

Marcantonio Forum. She is an apprentice of Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt. LuLu Lolo's work has been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, *nytheatre.com*, *The Jewish Daily Forward*, and *Oggi A New York*. Her plays and performances are discussed in Joseph Sciorra's essay, "A Lived History under Scrutiny: Italian American Performance Art," in *Teaching Italian American Literature, Film, and Popular Culture* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America), 2010.

MAMA SARACINO, MARCH
19, 2011, 11:30 AM

Performance at the site of the Saracino home, 118 East 119 Street, NY, now the 25th Police Precinct. The artist as Italian immigrant Mama Saracino bidding farewell to her daughters, Sarafina and Teresina, as they leave home for work at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory.

Photo by Dan Evans



14TH STREET NEWSBOY, 2009

Performance for *Art in Odd Places: Sign, NY*, where the artist as *14th Street NewsBoy* hawked *The Fourteenth Street Tribune* (researched and written by Lulu LoLo) on 14th Street one day a week for four weeks. A total of 1400 newspapers were given to passersby.

Photo by Paul Takeuchi



LuLu LoLo was born and raised in East Harlem/El Barrio with a family history spanning one hundred years, from the time her grandparents emigrated from Italy. LuLu LoLo's life as an artist is grounded in the legacy of her parents, who devoted their lives to improving the social conditions of the East Harlem community. Her home is full of photographs, documents and other objects that recall their prolific work as social workers and community organizers. Her performances often happen in the moment and on the street; inspired by her parents' example, they generally engage socially conscious themes and ideas. She embodies a wide range of characters, from Mother Cabrini to the unfortunate working class girl in *Soliloquy for a Seamstress: The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire*, a one-person play, which she also wrote. By creating imaginative reenactments of historical situations and characters, the artist keeps these figures, their habits and their sorrows in our sight, honoring their memories and questioning just how far

QUESTIONING JUST HOW FAR WE
HAVE COME AS A SOCIETY

we have come as a society. Symbolism, ritualism, memory and myth contribute to the aesthetic spirit of LuLu LoLo's art. This is evident in her performance as Mother Cabrini, Saint of the Immigrants in Campagna, Italy, where she first embodied the saint. Wearing the habit of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, while in Paris doing a second performance she sailed 25 paper boats (honoring the 25 voyages that Mother Cabrini made across the ocean) carrying the Statue of Liberty down the River Seine opposite Notre Dame Cathedral, to bring hope to the many immigrants in the world who leave one land for another. In *The Gentleman of 14th Street*

for *Art in Odd Places: Ritual*, LuLu LoLo appeared attired in top hat, white tie and tails to recreate the ritual of tipping one's hat as a sign of greeting. She reenacted this arcane custom as a way of bringing a sense of warmth, openness and community back to the 14th Street of the present day—a community hampered in its face-to-face interactions by the prevalence of mobile phones, texting, and the use of headphones to tune out the world.

LuLu LoLo incorporates research into her performance as *14th Street NewsBoy* attired in knickers and a cap for *Art In Odd Places: Sign*, handing out four weekly issues of the Fourteenth Street Tribune, which she researched and wrote recalling the famous, notorious and tumultuous events from the history of 14th Street. LuLu LoLo

has written and performed seven one-person plays Off-Broadway highlighting her Italian immigrant heritage and her passion for historical research and social justice, especially pertaining to the dramatic struggle of women in New York City's past. LuLu LoLo's practice is rooted in her love for family and community, and her performances in public spaces are compelled by a strong sense of giving. Her art regenerates collective memory and puts historical records back into public circulation by means of performance. Both in her performances and her one-person plays, even those dealing with tragic circumstances, humor is an ever-present, essential component of her art.

- KB, EG



THE GENTLEMAN OF 14TH STREET, 2011

Performance for *Art in Odd Places: Ritual*, NY, with the artist enacting the once popular male ritual of the 19th and early 20th centuries of tipping one's hat as an act of nonverbal greeting, respect, and a gesture of chivalry towards women. For the final performance, the *Gentleman of 14th Street* tipped his hat and greeted 1,074 passersby.

Photo by Paul Takeuchi



SARAFINA SARACINO, March 19, 2011, 1:00 pm
Performance at New York University's Brown Building,
Washington Place and Greene Street, site of the Triangle Shirtwaist
Factory. The artist as Sarafina Saracino at the moment when
she realizes that she and her little sister Tessie will perish in the
Triangle Factory fire.
Photo by Paul Takeuchi

MATTHEW MORROCCO

Matthew Morrocco received his BA from the New York University Gallatin School of Individualized Study, graduating *magna cum laude*, and also attended the Rhode Island School of Design. His work has been shown in New York; Providence, RI; and Berlin, Germany; it was featured at a one-person exhibition at the Gallatin Gallery in New York in 2011. He has received the Northeast National Scholarship Award from the Society

of Photographic Education and the Gallatin Review Award for Excellence in Visual Art. His work was recently featured in an exhibition entitled "Working On It," curated by Alex Ahn and Ari Lipkis at Temp in Manhattan.



DAVID, FEBRUARY 2013, 2013

Inkjet Print

11 x 14 in.



Matthew Morrocco's richly evocative photography records private moments between himself and his family, friends and prospective lovers. It provides a glimpse into the ways that relationships can contribute to the formation of identity, and suggests that **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, ONE AT A TIME, WORKS TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY** develop community.

Morrocco sets up intimate situations in which he photographs people in their homes. He explores the tension and closeness inherent in filial ties, and in particular the life cycle. His mother is a recurring character; in the work entitled *Front Hall*, she is placed in a carefully staged tableau, surrounded by old, formally posed studio portraits of people who are presumably family members. Among them, the artist's own living likeness is reflected in an oval mirror as though he were a part of the same past recorded in the photos. Notwithstanding the company of so many memories, it is the mother's loneliness and isolation that comes through, rather than any sense of affinity. Morrocco reprises this sense of transience and loss in another image in the series *Growing up and Getting Old*, in which he poses with her in a manner reminiscent of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, but with the roles reversed. This imagines the artist as the grieving survivor, while his mother, like Jesus in the original, is cast as the sacrificial victim.

FRONT HALL, DECEMBER 2012, 2012

Inkjet Print

14 x 11 in.

Echoes of this trope resonate throughout other bodies of work, including photographs of gay men in their homes (from the series *Men*). Often playing the nude himself, Morrocco metaphorically sacrifices his own body to show the vulnerability of the human need for intimacy with others. The portraits of, and self-portraits with, other men also delve into the mystery of the way that we all perform our own identities—a range of traits that can be revealed or hidden according to the roles we play in a given community. Morrocco uses the connection between the photographer and his subject to study how identities are formed in the negotiations between family, religion and sexual orientation. Further, he questions how identity informs relationships and, in turn, how relationships develop into community.

Morrocco meets his subjects online through social media and dating sites, and selects older men who are looking for younger companions. By photographing these men he strives to make visible communities of older men, to learn about and in some way connect to the history they represent. Morrocco, who is sometimes naked, half dressed, or in his underwear, poses himself intimately with his sitters, so that it appears as if some kind of sexual act has just occurred or is about to take place. Morrocco's pictures are about the relationship between himself and his subjects, each one building on the next to constitute the communities to which he belongs. These are conflicted relationships, and the occasional willful stiffness of the compositions reflects this confusion. The awkward sense of freedom and alienation that comes from being a

constant performer in his own work is a quality that Morrocco particularly strives for. In the end, the work is an expression of the artist's and subjects' loneliness within communities, and paradoxically creates a platform on which to build relationships through proximity, affiliation and identification. The artist offers his body as a tool to explore how performance is related to group dynamics, and combats isolation by communing through the photograph.

- KB, EG



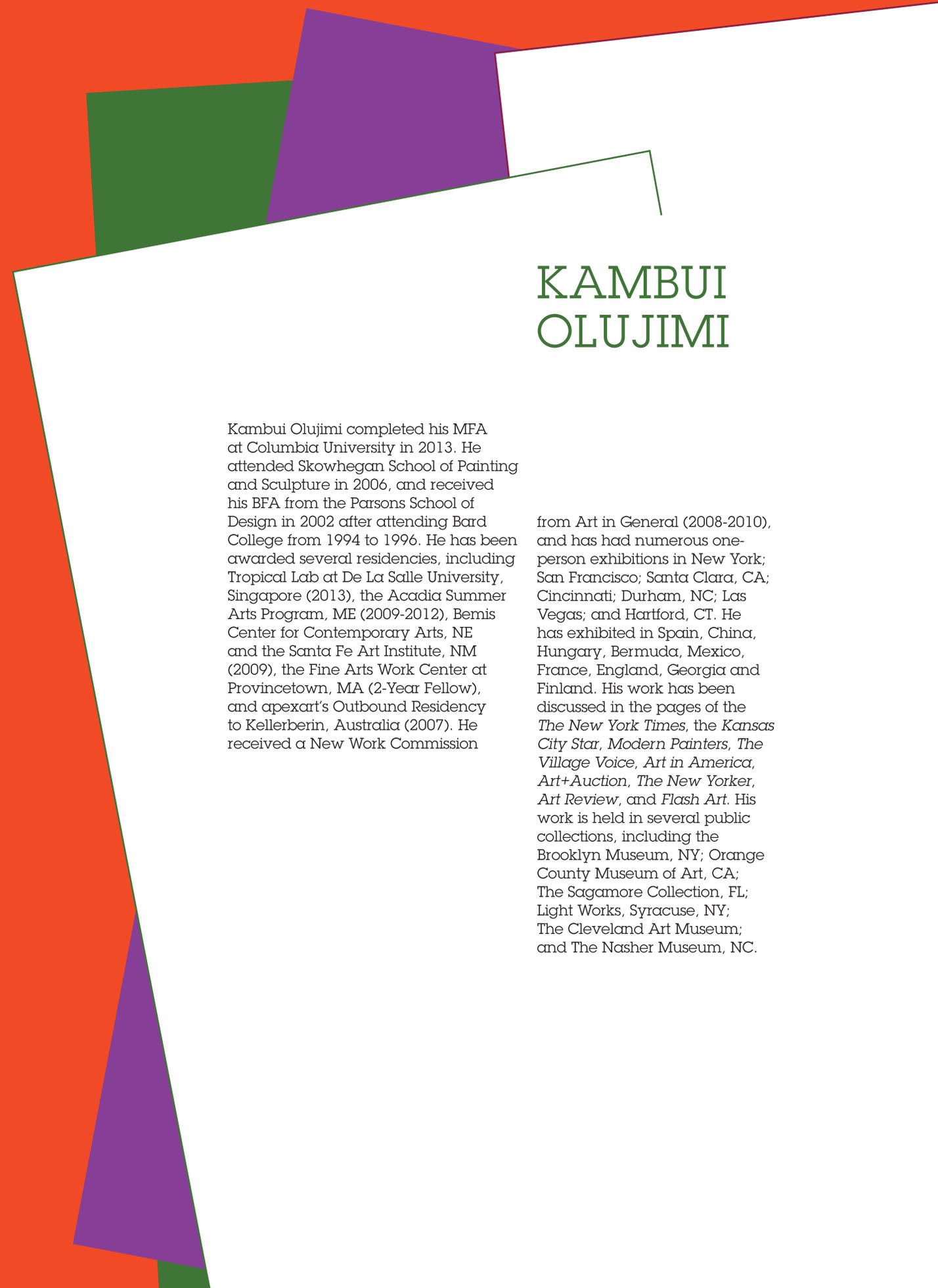
SCOTT, DECEMBER 2012, 2012

Inkjet Print

14 x 11 in.



VILLAGE PEOPLE, DECEMBER 2012, 2012
Inkjet Print
11 x 14 in.



KAMBUI OLUJIMI

Kambui Olujimi completed his MFA at Columbia University in 2013. He attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2006, and received his BFA from the Parsons School of Design in 2002 after attending Bard College from 1994 to 1996. He has been awarded several residencies, including Tropical Lab at De La Salle University, Singapore (2013), the Acadia Summer Arts Program, ME (2009-2012), Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, NE and the Santa Fe Art Institute, NM (2009), the Fine Arts Work Center at Provincetown, MA (2-Year Fellow), and apexart's Outbound Residency to Kellerberin, Australia (2007). He received a New Work Commission

from Art in General (2008-2010), and has had numerous one-person exhibitions in New York; San Francisco; Santa Clara, CA; Cincinnati; Durham, NC; Las Vegas; and Hartford, CT. He has exhibited in Spain, China, Hungary, Bermuda, Mexico, France, England, Georgia and Finland. His work has been discussed in the pages of the *The New York Times*, the *Kansas City Star*, *Modern Painters*, *The Village Voice*, *Art in America*, *Art+Auction*, *The New Yorker*, *Art Review*, and *Flash Art*. His work is held in several public collections, including the Brooklyn Museum, NY; Orange County Museum of Art, CA; The Sagamore Collection, FL; Light Works, Syracuse, NY; The Cleveland Art Museum; and The Nasher Museum, NC.

Kambui Olujimi invites his audience to engage in social customs like dream interpretation, penny wishing, and dance contests to make artwork that actualizes collectively imagined space. He works in varied mediums and presents the results in a wide range of venues, reaching broad and diverse audiences. Olujimi views his practice as a kind of abstract social engagement. *Fishing for Wishes* was an installation piece exhibited in a bank in Queens, New York. In it, the artist chronicled ten influential wishes he has made since childhood, recording

them on engraved brass plaques along with the date of the initial wish and the date the artist ceased to actively wish it (if applicable). The dreams—funny and poignant, achievable and absurd—invited viewers into an intimate conversation, where they could explore their own hopes and desires. The work was a table full of pennies sealed into place with resin, and many bank visitors felt moved to toss new coins onto the pile, adding their wishes to the artist's and creating

FINDING AND
FORGETTING,
2011-ongoing

Performance on
wood sculpture

Dimensions variable



a dialogue. Its presentation in a bank—the home of savings accounts, IRAs, mortgages and other forms of preparation for deferred wish fulfillment—highlighted the symbolic value of the copper-and-zinc objects as a form of currency (in its lowest denomination) and as a conduit for superstition, the collection of which, in both cases, represents the accumulation of good fortune.



THE LOST RIVER'S DREAM INDEX,
2007

Acrylic paint on wall
15 x 85 ft.

Continuing his exploration of dreams, Olujimi created *The Lost Rivers Dream Index*. In it, viewers' desires and aspirations are explored through the ways in which they choose to make sense of their own nightly wanderings. The work is an installation inspired by books on the interpretation of dreams that can be found in North America, the Caribbean and China, among other places. Olujimi is fascinated by the books not just as a way of making sense of subjective visions, but as records of cultural mythologies that are visualized in the mind during sleep. *The Lost Rivers Dream Index* is an 85-foot mural illustration of a dream book, accompanied by Olujimi's own 50-page dream book, which together encourage the audience to interpret the symbols that appear in such publications, deciding what to keep, believe, doubt or leave behind. Olujimi wants to facilitate a dialogue between the authors of the books and those who use them, as a way of investigating the intersection between cultural norms and personal perceptions of the world. By placing his own versions of such books in the bodegas and corner stores where so many of the original publications are sold, he reaches out to a broad cross-section of the population, ensuring that his work takes on additional layers of meaning by being used by the same

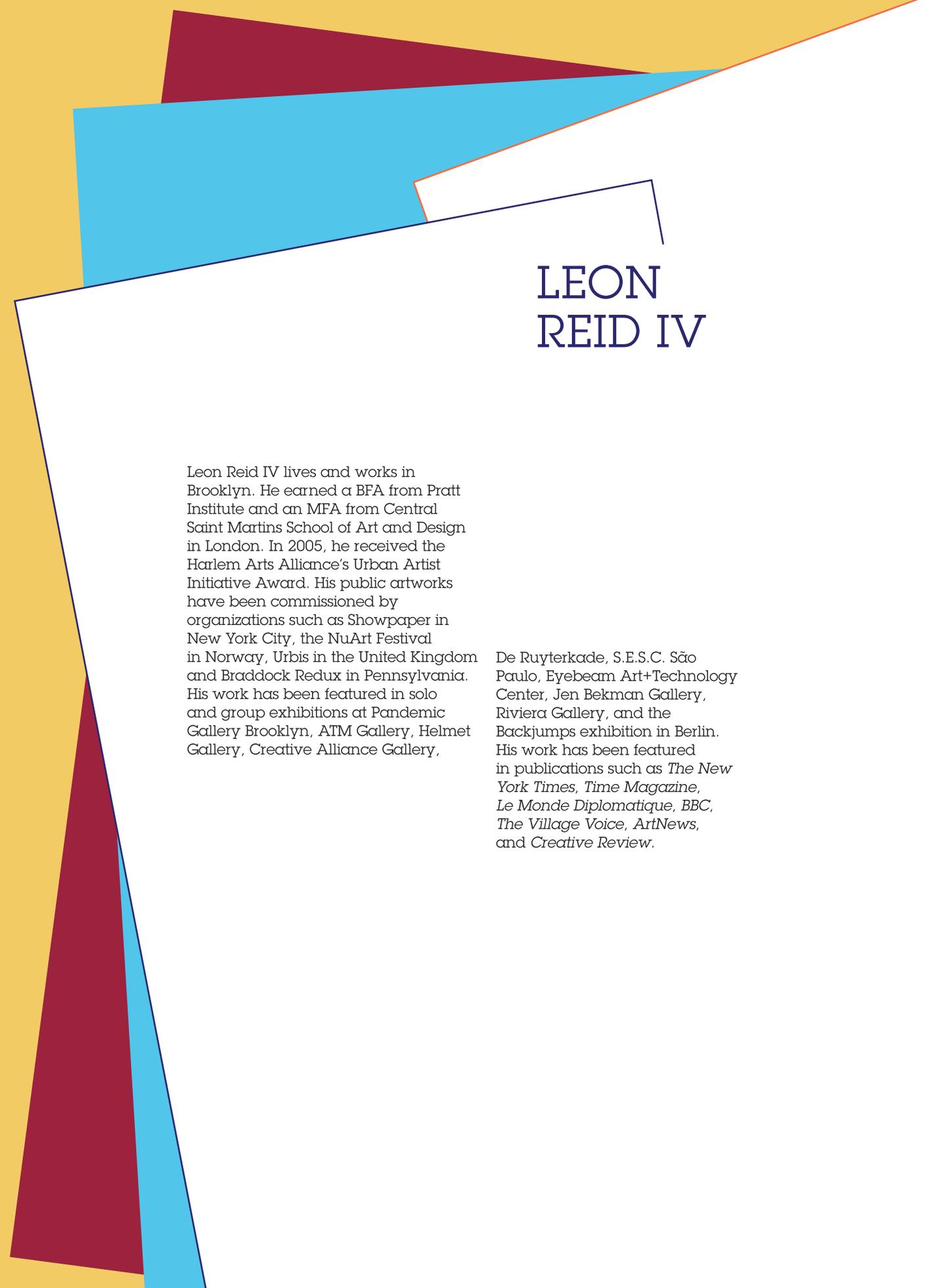
people who trust in the alchemy that dream interpretation books claim to hold. For Olujimi, this kind of work reflects an embodied practice, where viewers complete the structure of the work, or at least use it, creating a social dialogue that happens across mediums and over time. People who may never have the chance to meet may nonetheless share in the conceptualization of a cultural notion or worldview.

More recently, as the artist writes, the work *Finding and Forgetting* (2011 -ongoing) "investigates the gesture of dance as a symbol of persistence and resilience amidst the current economic downturn and global social upheaval. Inspired by dance marathons of the 1920s and 1930s, I created a series of platforms for performances that serve as the sites for various actions exploring the phenomenon. Viewers were invited to join me for a (single) dance, or as many as they can stand. The wood sculpture was designed in conversation with the enduring architecture of the Cyclone roller coaster, constructed in 1927." The remnant of the performance takes the form of a 10-channel video of the same name that reconstructs and disrupts the memory of the action. "*Finding and Forgetting* fragments and exhausts the body as the performers precariously oscillate between elevation and devastation."

- KB, EG



LEAD TO LIGHT, 2012
Ready-made chandelier, two lead batteries,
rolling cart, mixed media
Dimensions variable
Lead to Light functions as a metaphor
for the artist's corporeal reality.



LEON REID IV

Leon Reid IV lives and works in Brooklyn. He earned a BFA from Pratt Institute and an MFA from Central Saint Martins School of Art and Design in London. In 2005, he received the Harlem Arts Alliance's Urban Artist Initiative Award. His public artworks have been commissioned by organizations such as Showpaper in New York City, the NuArt Festival in Norway, Urbis in the United Kingdom and Braddock Redux in Pennsylvania. His work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions at Pandemic Gallery Brooklyn, ATM Gallery, Helmet Gallery, Creative Alliance Gallery,

De Ruyterkade, S.E.S.C. São Paulo, Eyebeam Art+Technology Center, Jen Bekman Gallery, Riviera Gallery, and the Backjumps exhibition in Berlin. His work has been featured in publications such as *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *BBC*, *The Village Voice*, *ArtNews*, and *Creative Review*.

IT'S THE BOMB!, 2013

Mixed media

78 x 48 x 48 in.

Commissioned by
Howl Festival 2013



Leon Reid IV has a background in writing graffiti and street art that has influenced his work as a public installation artist. He is inspired by urban life, and his installations respond to and modify the social dynamics of the streets and other public spaces that make up a city. Early works like *Fleur D'acier #2* (Brooklyn, 2002) and *The Kiss* (London, 2004) urged the public to consider street art as more than a random act of vandalism. Both of these sculptures stood out as playful modifications of industrial materials such as steel and street signs. Reid often returns to the site of his installations to document the work and observe how it comes to life through public interaction. With *Fleur D'acier #2* he witnessed signs that the local community had begun taking care of the flower-shaped steel object, allowing for the work to remain at the site much

longer than anticipated. The piece's reception prompted Reid to secure permission to put his work in public space without risking its removal or its being labeled as vandalism. In his 2011 project *Tourist-in-Chief*, he was given permission from the New York City Parks Department and Community Board members to adorn the statue of George Washington in Union Square, for one day, with typical clothing and accessories of a New York City tourist, complete with MTA transit map, shopping bags,



AMERICAN DEBT, 2013
Steel, 23k gold leaf, plastic resin
3 x 4 x 5 in.
Edition of 5

camera and "I ♥ NY" baseball cap. A humorous alteration of an emblematic statue invites the audience to light-heartedly consider the possibilities for modifying the monuments in New York City. By turning George Washington, a national hero who is a long-standing symbol of New York City and the American people, into a caricature of New York City tourists, Reid also imagines the ways in which

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE UP THE CITY ARE EVOLVING

representations of the people who make up the city are evolving.

In the summer of 2012, Reid collaborated with Julia Marchesi to install *100 Story House*, a lending library designed as a miniature version of the brownstones surrounding its location, J J Byrne Park in Park Slope, Brooklyn. The project was designed as homage to the neighborhood's tradition of leaving books on stoops for neighbors to take. *100 Story House* allowed park visitors to take a book or leave one, and spend time reading in the park. This project created a space for casual interaction and exchange, endowing the park with a

new place for social interaction, relaxation and discovery.

Reid visualizes his works not simply as sculptures that remain stationed in public spaces. The people around them animate his artworks and enliven new ways of seeing and interacting with them. Passersby and participants investigate, climb on, photograph and engage with his sculptures and installations by adding their own reactions to his projects. These connections inspire Reid to create works that allow street art to maintain a level of playfulness while contributing to the vibrant energy of city life.

- KB, EG



A SPIDER LURKS IN BROOKLYN:
PREPARATORY MODEL, 2009

Mixed media

96 x 24 x 36 in.

SHANE ASLAN SELZER

Shane Aslan Selzer has exhibited at Yale University, Rush Arts Gallery in New York, the School of the Art Institute Sullivan Gallery in Chicago, and PS1 in New York, as well as in Miami; Manawa, WI; Johannesburg, South Africa; and San Francisco. She is co-founder and co-director of the *Global Crit Clinic* in Lagos, Nigeria and Accra, Ghana. Her numerous awards include the 2010 summer studio artist residency at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Jamaica Flux Artist Fellowship at JCAL, a residency at The Bag Factory in Johannesburg, South Africa (2008), and an Emerging Artist Fellowship at Socrates Sculpture Park in New York (2007). She has taught at several prestigious institutions, including Parsons,

The New School for Design, Tyler School of Art at Temple University, the State University of New York at Albany, and Stellenbosch University in South Africa. Her work has been featured on *Artnet*, in *The New York Times*, *Artforum*, and the *Miami Herald*, among others. Selzer received her MFA in Sculpture and MA in Visual and Critical Studies at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco. She received a BS in Fine Arts at the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 2000.

THE SADDLE FITTING
SEMINAR, 2009
Participatory performance



THE SADDLE FITTING
SEMINAR, 2009

Participatory performance



Shane Aslan Selzer creates socially engaged projects in which the **THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN HERSELF AS** dialogue between herself as artist/**ARTIST/ORGANIZER AND** organizer and participants is the main **PARTICIPANTS IS THE MAIN EVENT** event. She develops micro-communities where visual artists expand on larger social issues, and considers ideas such as generosity, exchange, and failure. For a 2009 project called *Saddle Fitting Seminar*, Selzer placed a hand-drawn advertisement in a local newspaper, then arranged for master saddle fitter Gina Perilla to be on hand to demonstrate the craft of fitting saddles. Using wool and other stuffing, Perilla taught

the audience how a saddle should fit for both rider and horse at the Inaugural Open House Weekend of The Poor Farm in Manawa, Wisconsin. People came from as far away as Minneapolis to attend the event, which for demonstration used two horses lent by nearby owners, in addition to twenty custom-built sawhorses. The seminar explored an area where ideas about art, craft, functionality and uselessness converge. Participants learned about a specialized skill, and the seminar also gave them a chance to come together with fellow horse aficionados, forging a community of far-flung enthusiasts.



THE SADDLE FITTING
SEMINAR, 2009
Participatory performance

Sharing skills and bringing people together around a common interest or activity also motivate the *Global Crit Clinic*. The primary vehicle of *GCC* is a two-week program offering an opportunity for rigorous, idea-based dialogue among artist participants. Co-founded by Selzer with Kiang Ford in 2011, *GCC* was first held in Lagos, Nigeria. The program consists of an international studio workshop that engages with artists in communities with limited access to MFA-style art critique. It encourages artists to work across disciplines, through intensive study sessions on topics such as project development, writing for artists, global opportunities and social networking platforms. In Lagos and Accra alike, the university system, which is derived from a colonial model, is perceived by some as ossified and limited. *GCC* offers local artists the tools and skills for building their own context for their work. Further, it fosters a strong peer network for artists, affiliating them through collaboration and the sharing of resources. The *Accra Clinic* in June 2013 was part of a month-long

residency program, "The Archive: Static, Embodied, Practiced," hosted by the Foundation for Contemporary Art, Ghana and conceived by the Center for Contemporary Art, Lagos. The clinics have proven so successful that *GCC* has been invited to adapt its clinics for Vietnam, India, Zimbabwe, Senegal and Mozambique.

In each of these projects, Selzer assembles spaces where people can learn through interaction with others by provoking discourse that is informed by circumstances that are too often held outside of art.

- KB, EG



Tom Long and Maya Gunderson relax after lunch outside The Coffee Klatsch, located in downtown Weyauwega.



Katherine, Kelsey, Maggie, Grace and Kierstan sell lemonade from their lemonade stand.
Photo courtesy of Julie Leaf

SADDLE FITTING Seminar
AUGUST 8
2pm at THE POOR FARM WITH Master Saddle Fitter Gina Perilla
66325 COUNTY HWY 488 LITTLE WOLF, WISCONSIN

PUZZLEMANIA

activity at Dragonwings Bookstore

Families who enjoy puzzles of all kinds are invited to try the Puzzlemania hands-on activities at Dragonwings Bookstore on Main Street in downtown Waupaca this week.

For younger children there are magnetic mazes, sound puzzles and pattern

block matching games. Older children can try a magnetic match game and two brain-teaser, pattern challenges from the award-winning games - On the Dot and Set.

The activities are free and set up to be played any time during Dragonwings open

hours of 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday.

Game cards and directions are available at the front desk. After carrying out the activities, players can turn in the game cards and receive small prizes. "We have been

playing the new game "On the Dot" all week with visiting friends and relatives, and I have to warn you that it is addictive," said Ellen Davis, owner of Dragonwings Bookstore. "Last night Tom Pease, the popular children's musician, played with us and he was amazing. On his first try he completely aced it and beat every challenge we gave him."

Other activities at Dragonwings Bookstore include free art activities at 3 p.m. Thursdays, Sidewalk Sales August 5 through 7, a Fancy Nancy party on August 12 (for reservations call 715-256-9186) and continuing weekly games throughout the summer.

Dragonwings Bookstore is a local, independent, children's bookstore located at 108 N. Main St. in Waupaca. For more information about activities and events, along with photos and book reviews, visit their website at www.dragonwings.com

Please send any photos or editorial ideas to:
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SIN KABEZA PRODUCTIONS

Lisette Olivares is an activist, artist and transmedia storyteller who emphasizes feminist epistemologies and draws from a diverse range of methodological approaches. She holds a PhD from the History of Consciousness Department at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her work investigates the realm of human, animal and ecological exploitation and liberation through creative writing, performance, video and multimedia installation. Olivares has been granted the Fulbright, Andrew Mellon, Jacob K. Javits and NYU Provost Transition Fellowships for her interdisciplinary work.

Cheto Castellano is an autodidact visual artist and filmmaker who was born in Chile and divides his time between the Americas and Asia. His work explores how colonial structures produce conditions of slavery and oppression for both human and non-human species. Castellano was raised under the Chilean dictatorship, and his work uncovers and forcefully critiques institutional state apparatuses and their technologies of oppression. He works in experimental video, animation, drawing, painting, engraving, corporeal modification, performance, and multimedia installation.

Coco Rico promotes feminist, anarchist and multispecies approaches to consciousness. Her name embodies the cry of the rooster and its call for awakening. Since 2002 she has been running for president even though she doesn't want to win. In 2008 her toy poodle, Luk Kahlo, joined her as a co-presidential candidate. Their trans-species anarchist political platform seeks to develop a worldview that articulates the basis for a just society. Her most recent performances are inspired by rituals performed by indigenous healers and shamans throughout the universe.

Sin Kabeza has worked with dOCUMENTA(13) (Germany), Donau Festival (Austria), Museum Sztuki (Poland), Institute for Cultural Inquiry (Berlin), Sarai Exhibition Reader, Devi Art Foundation (India), Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics (NY), Mix Experimental Queer Film Festival (NY), and Columbia University (NY), among many others.

SEED: VISUALSCAPES FROM
THE FUTURE, 2013

Experimental video still;
multimedia Installation

Seed: Visualscapes from the Future envisions a queer post-apocalyptic world where water is scarce and planting seeds harbors revolutionary potential. In this world animals are respected as gurus, elaborate rituals play a significant role in everyday life, and a new society of healers brings magic and hope to a present that they believe is worth fighting for.



Lissette Olivares and Cheto Castellano are the co-founders of Sin Kabeza Productions, who together with Coco Rico and invited guest artists comprise a collective of activist researchers working as a symbiotic team. Their name translates as “without a head” and reflects their insistence on the collaborative nature of their transmedia storytelling. Told from a postcolonial, feminist and ecological perspective, these tales of hybrid cultures are models of a world where political and cultural hierarchy, as well as rationality, are abandoned in favor of a new, creative capacity to respond to the complex environmental and cultural challenges facing our contemporary world. In *SEED*, a video documentary, Sin Kabeza envisions a queer post-apocalyptic world where animals are scarce and seeds are illegal, causing drastic transformations in human society. The artists seem to have traveled through time and space to document a futuristic community. From ritualistic performances to erotic multispecies encounters, the tension builds as the audience uncovers the aesthetics and erotics of coevolution in a not so distant future. The “evidence”

of the artists’ time travel is presented in a multimedia installation that includes video projection, televised transmission, photography and artifacts from the film shoot.

Sin Kabeza’s most recent project is a nomadic installation venue known as *SEEDBANK*, an archival site modeled after bacteria for the display and dissemination of posthumanistic research. The collective pursues the notion that the best solution for humanity is to envision a future where we are not the central players, but rather one species among many with an imperative to live in a symbiotic way with the rest of the world’s mineral, microbial, plant and animal inhabitants. *SEEDBANK*’s living architecture is inspired by the alien Oankali starships that appear in Octavia Butler’s



Xenogenesis trilogy. As a design fiction, this living structure tells stories about the Anthropocene, the human-centric age, and offers methods for critically enacting “response-ability,” so that visitors can envision a post-Anthropocene epoch. One proposed site doubles as a projection surface to which visitors are invited to bring their own knowledge for display. Photography and video submissions are continuously projected onto the walls of the temporary exhibition space, and the site is used as a symposium or concert venue to accommodate audience-generated proposals for public programming and other performance-based events.

Both of these projects come together to produce an environment where the artists invite the audience to contribute to the evolution of art and culture by focusing on an ecologically conscious future where traditional definitions of biology are in flux. Sin Kabeza’s nomadic, documentary and installation-based art projects are

guided by their idea of “symbiotic coevolution,” a combination of the terms symbiosis and coevolution. This concept is grounded in the proposition that unlike organisms living together play fundamental roles in each other’s development, creating the possibility for new forms of sociable life among human and non-human beings. The artists need the audience to contribute to the display and conversations generated by these ideas to activate the changes that can occur through the participatory environments. Sin Kabeza depicts a new world based on the combination of art and biology, where human beings are an integral part of the development and sustainability of the cultural and natural environment.

- KB, EG



SEED: VISUALSCAPES FROM THE FUTURE, 2013

Experimental video still; multimedia Installation

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BAYETÉ ROSS SMITH & WILL SYLVESTER

Bayeté Ross Smith earned a BS from Florida A&M University and an MFA from California College of the Arts. His work has been featured in exhibitions at galleries and institutions such as San Francisco Arts Commission, Oakland Museum of California, Rush Arts Gallery, Leica Gallery, MoMA P.S.1, Deutsche Bank, the Goethe Institute in Ghana, and Zacheta National Gallery of Art in Poland. His collaborative film with the Cause Collective screened at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. He has participated in residencies at The Laundromat Project, the McColl Center for Visual Art, the Kala Art Institute and Can Serrat Art Center in Spain. His work has been commissioned for public space by the Walker Art Center, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency and Oakland International Airport, among others.

Will Sylvester is a media artist, technician and musician. He received a BA from the University of Massachusetts. He has worked extensively in television and radio broadcasting, and he currently focuses on working as a technology consultant for various artists looking to shift their work towards new media technologies. He also gigs as a DJ and as a member of the band BLEW.

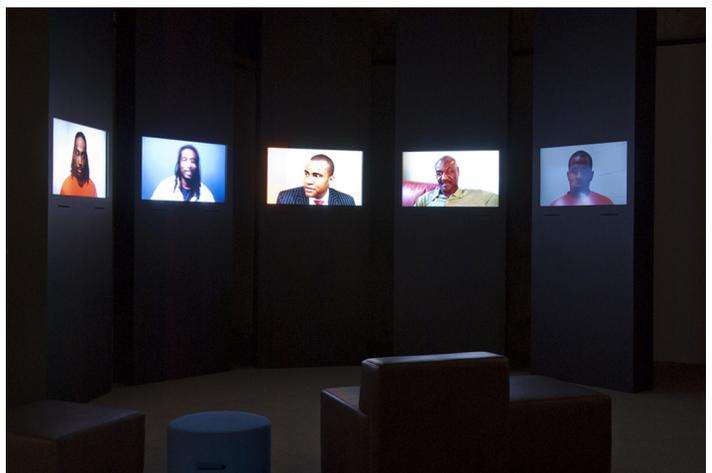
Bayeté Ross Smith and Will Sylvester
as part of the collaborative Question
Bridge team

QUESTION BRIDGE: BLACK
MALES, 2012

5-channel video installation
with wall text

2 hr. 54 min.

Installation view,
Oakland Museum of California



Bayeté Ross Smith and Will Sylvester as part of the collaborative Question Bridge team

QUESTION BRIDGE: BLACK MALES, 2012

5-channel video installation with wall text

2 hr. 54 min.

Installation view, Oakland Museum of California



Bayeté Ross Smith and William Sylvester are two of the collaborators on *Question Bridge: Black Males*, a transmedia art project that aims to represent and redefine black male identity in America. The project addresses the economic, political, geographic and generational divisions among black men. The artists involved use the camera as a listening device to compile over 1,600 question and answer exchanges from approximately 160 men across the United States. *Question Bridge* illuminates the intricacy of character that is often flattened by racial and gender categories. In so doing, it grants agency to the individual in authoring the complexity of being a black male in America. It also illustrates and generates community through the use of media in education, and builds dialogue around the subject of identity.

This innovative five-channel multimedia video installation was

launched at five venues simultaneously: The Brooklyn Museum, The Sundance Film Festival, Utah MOCA, Oakland Museum of California and the Chastain Art Center in Atlanta, GA. *Question Bridge* also exists in a theatrical version for movie theaters and will eventually have a broadcast version. The installation is organized as a series of screens displaying call and response videos: one man asks a question and several others respond, each question and answer flowing into the next one. The presentations of these questions and answers go beyond documentation or an interview format, simulating a dialogue in real time amongst the participants. Geographic and social barriers are broken down, **THE DISCUSSIONS RAISED AND DEVELOPED BY EACH PARTICIPANT** developed by each participant **SPAN DIVISIONS IN AGE, LOCATION, ECONOMIC STATUS AND POLITICAL BELIEFS** span divisions in age, location, economic status and political beliefs.



Bayeté Ross Smith
GOT THE POWER: MINNESOTA, 2011
Mixed media and audio recordings
180 x 72 x 24 in.



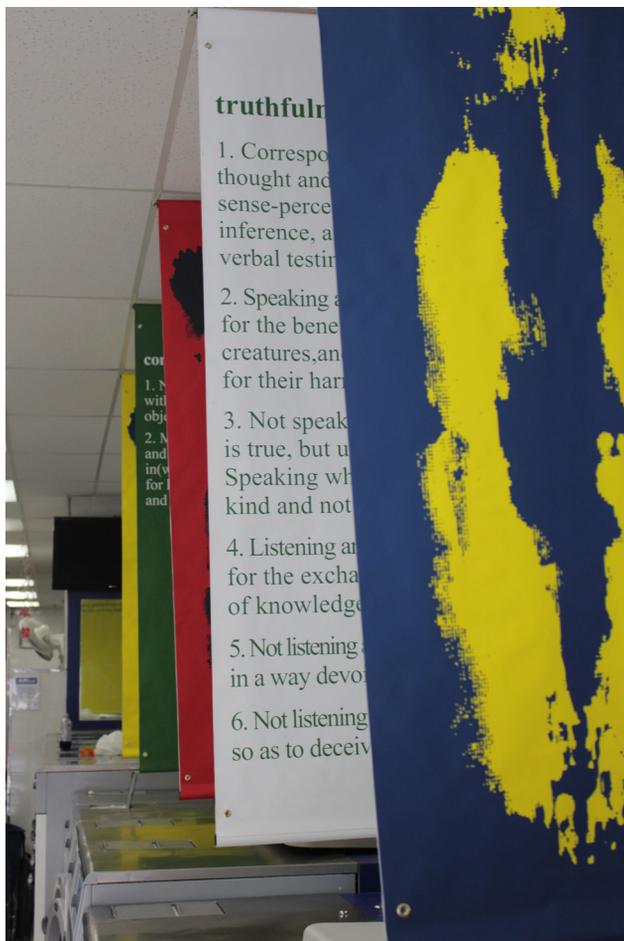
RISE WILSON

Risë Wilson is the Founder and Board Chair of The Laundromat Project. She recently joined the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation as the inaugural Philanthropy Program Director to help shape the Foundation's grant-making priorities and prove its belief that art can change the world. Previously, Wilson served as the Program Director for Leveraging Investments in Creativity, a ten-year initiative created to strengthen the support structure for artists as a workforce. She currently serves on the national advisory board for the Asian Arts Initiative's Artplace-funded Social Practice Lab. In the field of arts management, her work has included strategic planning, fundraising, community outreach and art education, and she has served as a consultant in these areas to clients including the Ford Foundation, New

York University and the Romare Bearden Foundation. Wilson has taught product design at Parsons The New School for Design. Recognized as one of the "World's Best Emerging Social Entrepreneurs" by Echoing Green in 2004, Wilson is a 2008 Douglas Redd Fellow in art and community development and a 2012 participant in Coro Leadership NY. She holds a BA from Columbia University, where she was a Kluge Scholar, and an MA from New York University, where she was a MacCracken Fellow. As an artist, Wilson is a printmaker and social sculptor.

In communities historically disenfranchised from the power of their imaginations, Risè Wilson brings the experience of making and participating in art to everyday spaces where people gather. She focuses on the laundromat, the ideal space in which to find a true cross section of any given neighborhood. Laundromats offer a special opportunity to see a full picture of who lives nearby, and a window onto the ways in which people see their communities.

Wilson views artists as catalysts for making neighborhoods better places to live. Working in areas like Bedford-Stuyvesant, Harlem and the South Bronx, she founded The Laundromat Project, which mounts art workshops and public art projects in and around local laundromats. These programs are designed to build community **POSITION ARTISTS AS CREATIVE** and position artists as creative **PROBLEM SOLVERS** problem solvers. The Laundromat Project commissions site-specific



works by which artists respond to the unique context of the neighborhoods where they live, addressing issues that range from gentrification to environmental justice and housing rights. A professional development program connects these artists to each other, and introduces them to skill sets, such as community organizing, that can enhance the success of their projects. Training artists is a key activity for the organization, intended to ensure consistency in the quality and benefits of programming.

ART WORKSHOPS:

Free Workshop at The Laundry Room
with Teaching Artist Alice Mizrachi,
Harlem, 2011



The name of the organization suggests a powerful idea with a transient character. Applied to artworks, “project” connotes something temporary and experimental that concentrates on process. While this commitment to constant improvement and iterative learning is embedded into the organization’s design, it is anything but temporary. Investing in the infrastructure to sustain the possibilities available through this model, Wilson describes founding the organization as creating a social sculpture, with the goal of “facilitating relationships, creating a larger metaphoric space in which creativity and inspiration can happen” (Interview with Kalia Brooks, 2012). This structure serves as a platform for an ongoing cycle of public works by other artists.

Once The Laundromat Project’s basic structure was laid out, Wilson worked for various arts organizations in order to study their strategies. She kept notebooks and journals as if each job were a graduate seminar. She also focused on her creative practice, becoming a relief printmaker working in linoleum, silkscreen and other non-toxic methods that could be executed at a kitchen table. Wilson was committed to finding ways to easily share creativity, regardless of economic or educational privilege.

Wilson is concerned with process over procedure, access rather than outreach, and quality over quantity. In the end, it is her hope that the framework she has built will serve as a catalyst for social change and an improved civic sensibility and sense of ownership in the communities served by The Laundromat Project.



SURAN SONG'S RESIDENCY PROJECT,
Jackson Heights, 2012

ED WOODHAM

Ed Woodham is a Brooklyn-based artist, performer, activist, curator and producer. He moved to New York in 1980 to pursue a career in theater. In the 80s, he dressed in experimental, self-designed costumes and took to the streets in a series of impromptu performances. At that time, he also became involved in the East Village art scene. In 1988 he returned to his native Atlanta where he founded and directed the interdisciplinary arts space 800 East, which produced over 250 visual and performance art events. Following this success, in 1998 he moved back to New York and created large-scale puppet theater, which played at such respected

venues as St. Ann's Warehouse. The observation that both theater and art seem to attract a limited audience, including many who are in a position of privilege, motivated Woodham, who was inspired to create an inclusive environment for a broader audience. The post-9/11 erosion of civil liberties compelled him to respond, which led to the founding of *Art in Odd Places*. It was inaugurated as part of the Howl festival in 2005, and became independent the next year. In 2008, 14th Street was adopted as the laboratory for AiOP.

STRANGE MAKINGS, 2012

Public performance in Arts Prospect
in Saint Petersburg, Russia

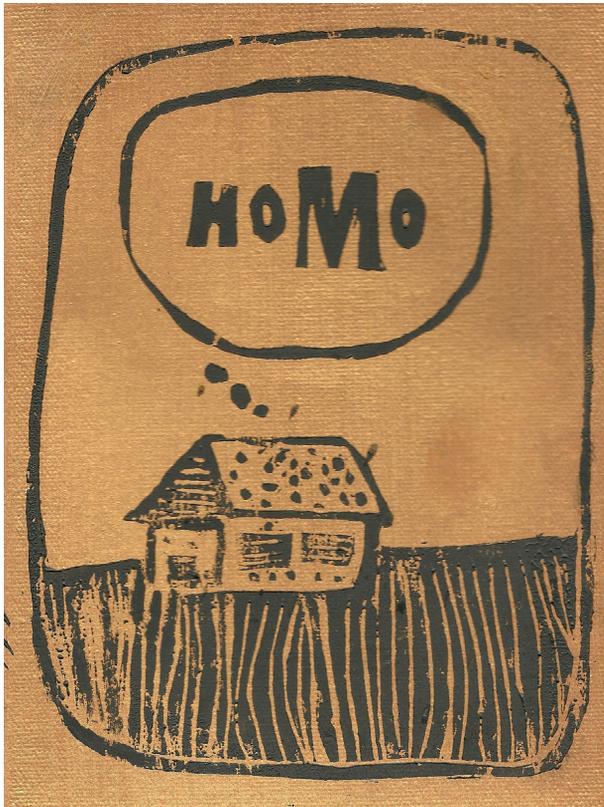
Photo by Victor Yuliev



Art in Odd Places (AiOP) is a multifaceted, ten-day-long performance piece created by a number of curators, artists and designers that happens along the length of 14th Street in Manhattan every October. It includes performances and installations by artists from all over the world. Although *Art in Odd Places* may appear to have the trappings of an institution (a founder, a website, an organizational focus and mission), in practice it operates firmly outside the bounds of established organizations, instead relying on relationships of mutual cooperation and collaboration to realize an annual festival.

In order to preserve his freedom, founder Ed Woodham made a decision not to incorporate as a nonprofit. This means that his project does not receive funding from governmental agencies or foundations, and operates without a budget. It is a striking example of his commitment to artistic freedom—his own and that of those who work with him—that he has refused to allow market forces of any kind to influence his work, except in the sense that everyone involved must work without benefit of direct funding.

Art in Odd Places thus avoids the usual funding constraints, as well as government regulatory mechanisms (like public assembly permits) that typically dictate the limits of art in public spaces. Woodham has thereby created a structure that allows for maximum creative control, but also in effect fosters the formation of an annual, temporary microtopia. Under the *Art in Odd Places* aegis, artists work with one another and the surrounding community to plan, schedule and perform artworks over a period of ten days.



HOMO, 2011
From the *Homopropaganda* series.
Linoleum print on canvas
8 x 10 in.



STRANGE MAKINGS, 2012
 Public performance in Arts Prospect in Saint
 Petersburg, Russia
 Photo by Evgeny Luchinskiy

In a city like New York, where economic forces as well as the regulation of public space are so clearly on display, Woodham's project reclaims a space for individual humanity. He helps to build affinity groups of like-minded participants to foster and facilitate achievement, and to promote the creative use of public walkways, thoroughfares and parks. In this **A PARTICULARLY JOYOUS FORM OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE** way, the annual convening is a particularly joyous form of passive resistance (civil disobedience?) to inertia, the status quo and the general state of affairs. Indeed, he disdains the usual process of acquiring permits to perform, refusing to work with city officials in an effort to engender freedom from rules and regulations. This creates the most flexible possible environment for his collaborators as they respond to the site. The AiOP mission states:

"*Art in Odd Places* aims to stretch the boundaries of communication in the public realm by presenting artworks in all disciplines outside the confines of traditional public space regulations. AiOP reminds us that public spaces function as the epicenter for diverse social interactions and the unfettered exchange of ideas."

He views 14th Street as the studio in which the ever-changing group of collaborators works, so the preservation of this freedom is crucial to his project. A key feature of Woodham's art practice is managing the work of many collaborators; his work only succeeds if these collaborators trust the process. To build that trust, Woodham must approach his work with a generous spirit, creating, enriching and incubating key relationships. Intangible yet social, perhaps the most important legacy of *Art in Odd Places* is to serve as a truly alternative model for artistic practice in the public sphere.

- KB, EG



USEFUL TABLES, 2003
Performance at St Ann's Warehouse
Photo by Richard Termine



CONVERSATION WITH GRANTEES

ELIZABETH GRADY
NOBUTAKA AOZAKI
RACHEL FALCONE
KAMBUI OLUJIMI
MICHAEL PREMO

A Blade of Grass conceived of Artist Files as a research experiment as well as a grant-making strategy, and arranged for an interview with the grantees to honor their voices in this publication. A key aim was to use the interview as a tool for assessing the results of Artist Files. A Blade of Grass values the opportunity to take a moment to step back and consider the impact of each project it pursues. Since socially engaged art is uniquely attuned to the way it is perceived by its audience, we as an organization that supports such art endeavor to be as accountable as possible in understanding the effects of all we undertake. We are indebted to the artists for the insight this interview has provided into the way that the Artist Files process was perceived by its participants, and are grateful for their generosity and candor.

EG: I'd like to start by asking about your participation in the Artist Files process. What was your initial impression of what artists' roles would be, and how did your experience differ?

MP: I had no idea what Artists Files was and what to expect from the beginning.

KO: I remember thinking it was kind of like cataloguing. Later I realized that you were making a database that you were going to use to decide on funding. I was surprised by how involved we artists were. Kalia Brooks and Anne Goodfriend came to my space for an interview, more like a studio visit that was recorded for a database.

EG: What do you feel was beneficial, or what perspective do you feel it reflected?

KO: I like the idea that the interview offered an alternative description of the work. I think in terms of my work that's much more interesting [than reading about it in a conventional application].

MP: I think that...the stated intention was to explore the so-called social practice of the work. It's as important as any other sort of definition to let the work speak for itself, so it was exciting and interesting to have this record. To be able to have the artist in conversation is really important.

I didn't expect the level of conversation that would happen, and that was a little hard, scheduling-wise. But I think it's positive because the nature of social project work is that it happens in relationship to community, so I think the approach of celebrating it and being able to nurture it must also happen in the same way. To bring people together in community [as Artist Files did is a reflection of] the same process that the artists engaged in to make their work.

RF: I think it was a beautiful thing to have the opportunity to participate, knowing that we didn't have to put together a long proposal. We had the opportunity to just talk about the work. The opportunity to see the growing archive online, and have the opportunity for interchange [was valuable]. We were just chatting about the practice of our work, and philosophical issues came up across the twenty interviews. There were a lot of shared things, but also divergent topics that showed the breadth of the work.

MP: It's nice to set up the structure of understanding for your work, and then engage in dialogue with visitors. I think that's really important, because when you get an application it asks you to pick up a vocabulary and a set of parameters that are not necessarily the way you describe or interact with your work.

NA: Being in the community of A Blade of Grass was a learning process for me. When I was in graduate school I was just focusing on developing my work. After being nominated by A Blade of Grass, I had become aware of the conversation about socially engaged art, and how important it is to be in the conversation and be able to talk about the work. I've been learning a lot, and I'm still learning it.

EG: How did you all view the process of engaging with A Blade of Grass for Artist Files? A Blade of Grass was trying to learn how artists view the grant-making process, and to be a better funder. In terms of being asked for your opinion about how a grant should work, was there information you didn't feel like you had an opportunity to share or process, or something you felt you wanted to see happen that didn't happen?

KO: It was a discovery that this was a pilot process, new for the first year. I didn't realize that there would be a forum about how funds would be distributed, and... I felt like that was a lot to ask because it was time that I hadn't necessarily prepared for. And in some ways I felt that I missed out on dialogue because I didn't have that time allotted, because I didn't see it coming. One of the problems was that there was a kind of competition... Since it was not clear in advance how the grant was to be decided, this became part of a sort of de facto application process, which could have been problematic.

MP: I didn't know it wasn't as filled out as it was until later on in the process. What would have been helpful for me personally, is to hold a forum earlier on, with the goal of assembling the community and putting everything on the table. [More information] between conference calls could have been helpful, because it took me a while to figure out how things were being figured out.

EG: It may interest you to know that we're taking what we learned from Artist Files, and rolling it into a new fellowship program. At each stage it will be clear what the expectations are, and there will be opportunity for dialogue as well. We're striving to maintain the accessibility and transparency of the Artist Files process in the new program.

RF: I know that there were lots of little events, like there was a panel, and there were networking opportunities that started to bring us together. There was [also] interest in having us write online and offer feedback based on the website. I think at a certain point there was pushback from the group. I didn't have a sense of the expectations, and all of a sudden they were mounting. You would wonder, "Is this going to determine whether or not I get this grant?" or, "How much am I expected to participate in?"... Folks said, "Okay, this is taking a certain amount of time, and as a part of the grant process it makes sense to actually compensate people for that time." I think the most positive thing for me was the opportunity to meet like-minded artists in the process.

NA: It would be great to maintain this kind of community and then have a symposium. I'm excited about the book, too—to see everyone's work. For the future, it might be great to see the work physically, too, because it seems that most of the Artist Files stuff happened through documentation, or in talking about the work. Seeing the work physically would be something different from the slide projection, which is characteristic of socially engaged work.

EG: I understand that there was a session, I wasn't there for it, where you got together to talk about the selection process for the grantees and how you wanted that to work. What was said? What was your opinion of the discussion? What was that like for you? Usually you're just told, "This is how it works," right? How was it to say, "We want it to work like this," to turn it around?

RF: It was definitely a crazy prospect as an artist, sitting around with people whose work you admire, and yet you're wrestling together with who will get funding. If we decided [for example] that there would be one \$40,000 grant [as opposed to several smaller grants] that would have dramatically changed the situation. But that's how the book idea came out; there was an interest in people having a venue for their work. Finally, a decision was made to allocate the majority of the grant to artists, in multiple groups.

NA: Yeah it was great to be able to share some ideas. It reminded me of the movie *Twelve Angry Men*.

RF: It was so hard, it was like the hardest thing to ever put at the table. I think everybody at the table knew it was impossible to try to come up with what we had to deal with as the decision.

KO: Looking at the notes and then talking to people afterwards, there was an unclear structure of evaluation. I felt, and other people I know also felt anxiety because it was a prolonged period of application. We're in a race and you're asking us to decide the rules while we're running it.

EG: To follow up, if at the beginning of the process *A Blade of Grass* had come to you and said, "We like the work of you twenty folks, how do you think a grant should run?" do you think it would have felt different? Or would it still have been weird because you were in competition?

KO: The problem is, then what if they say, "You like us twenty, we think it should be one \$40,000 grant," then the competition continues. I think it should be clear how it's going to break down. I'm not clear on what the perk of having it completely wide open is. I see some advantages of having some flex, but I guess the question I would ask is, "What's a better structure?"

EG: The organization was trying to learn what artists view as the most advantageous approach. Going forward, it will be set in advance: the number of fellowships, the amount of money, the services included, a specific kind of documentation, assessment services.

KO: I would recommend holding on to the interview process and publication, in whatever form it takes. [It's a thing] that lives for years and has a lot of flexibility; and also [the idea of an] exhibition. I think all three of those ideas are really strong, and I would hope that they stay in.

MP: I think the strongest part of the experience was the feedback, both with *A Blade of Grass* and others I was able to connect with. I see other artists at shows but don't necessarily get to talk to about the deeper issues in my work, and having that sort of conversation was really important. I think that's what made it strong.

EG: What kinds of feedback did you find most helpful? What are examples of where you had "wow" moments?

MP: I wasn't there, but I read the notes, and I think that conversation [about the grant-making structure] was productive

in a lot of ways, because in a more comfortable situation you probably wouldn't have gotten those responses. If there wasn't a degree of anxiety—not that you always need the anxiety to get things done [general laughter]—but I think because the stakes were a little bit higher, people like me who were just reading the notes saw that people were real about their frustrations with navigating finding funding for their art in general.

KO: Do you think part of that had to do with the fact that there was no way to go forward, it was like we have to figure out what to do with this money...

MP: Yeah, and that's what I'm saying: that the anxiety forced that out, because if it was polite conversation it would not have been as meaningful. You know [how it usually goes], they invite you in, they give you free muffins and ask your opinion, but they don't really care what you think. I don't want to speak for anyone else, but I can imagine that [knowing we had to figure it out] played a role in how candid people were, and how invested they were in the process. So when it became clear that the future of this thing required their investment, that's when people brought their horses to the race.

RF: I think it was a weird thing to have that conversation, but it forced people to really think about personal interest, and also collective interest. The best question, which has changed the way I think about work, was asking what we would spend the money on. It became what I spent it on, but also how much debt [I had to carry]... We had a whole conversation around how much most of the artists around the table give to actually create their art. That made me think about how we're creating the art, and what we're doing in order to make it.

MP: Yeah, the fact that people just need to eat. And you could never have that conversation with a lot of funders

who just want you to claim direct expenses related to the project, and narrowly define that to be paperclips or whatever. My survival, my sustenance is not part of it.

EG: You can do whatever you want as long as we're not paying for your coffee in the morning, right? Our grants are set up to be a lot looser than that. We're going to want to see budgets, but living expenses are definitely allowable.

MP: In general, there are not a lot of fellowships that just recognize practice. What was interesting about Artist Files, it really did recognize people with a particular practice, and not for a particular project. Or maybe it was a particular project, but a sustained project that was ongoing. I think it's interesting to do project-based funding in a way that still recognizes ongoing work, and work that is slow and contemplative and takes many years to develop. Social engagement requires slow, deep development. Time-based, project-based granting doesn't necessarily allow for that level of flexibility and that sort of incubation.

EG: I think it's fair to say that we don't necessarily expect that a project will begin on the day the check is written or end at the finish of the fellowship year. We're interested in maintaining dialogue, because that's the nature of socially engaged art. It's about building relationships, it's about process.

One question that came up in the notes from your meeting about how to spend the grant money, is an interest in creating

a community aspect to the fellowship program over time, where artists would invite their successors or otherwise play an active role in growing the community. Given your experience, how would you proceed in helping to grow the community? Would you bring other artists into the process?

MP: Intersectionality's my jam. I think it would help artists to bring people from other sectors who often aren't part of the conversations that artists are having, and vice versa. Since we're talking about socially engaged art, it would be really interesting to figure out how to bring folks from the NGO, non-profit, public sector, government world into the space [of social practice art making]. It would be good to reach out to what they call grass-top leaders, people who run different organizations, and facilitate conversations with artists. Being in conversation with those sorts of civic groups helps artists understand how to translate to them what we want to do, to learn how to speak their jargon and language.

KO: To piggyback on that, it goes right to resources for me—having those conversations is a resource. You're doing socially engaged work, you might need a football field, and you might need a hundred needles for sewing. Not only do you need different physical things, but different skill sets, like you might need to make a budget, you might need to make a proposal to a senator, you might need to be able to pitch it to a fifth grade teacher, or a school of kindergarteners, so what you're talking about falls under resources. Just having that kind of accessibility really helps to bolster the work, and also the possibility of what can happen for the organization and for the grantees.

EG: I'm going to come back to your work, and ask what was it like to be part of this group in artistic terms.

Once you saw the other artists who had been selected, after you had gone to the website and clicked through the list of twenty, did you feel your work had an affinity with theirs, that there were similar interests or concerns?

MP: I did. I mean, I thought it was great to see all the other artists. It was humbling to be in company with other artists—there were a couple of people I had never met, but knew their work or I'd seen their stuff around, so I think that had a positive impact on my work.

NA: Yes, I felt affinity with some artists, but some people [do work] completely differently from what I'm doing, so I appreciate the diversity in this fellowship. It would be great to keep this diversity and the question of what socially engaged art is going forward. In hearing about the project-based grant, I feel that *A Blade of Grass* is... focusing on art that's engaged in a specific community, but I feel some socially engaged art is not necessarily engaged in the community. Embracing a wide range of different approaches and making questions complicated is something that I appreciate in this Artist Files grant.

KO: I thought that there was a lot of diversity, and I think that what you're saying is really important to leave open because I think in New York in the art market and the museum world there are certain precedents and expectations of what it is to have work that's socially engaged. It happens in certain places, within a certain time frame, and has a look...I'm interested in having a really

expansive notion of what socially engaged work is, and communicating that to people who are applying, because I think that it butts against expectations established by museums and non-profits over the last maybe thirty or forty years.

RF: I think often an institution or funder says, "This is what this is, do you fit? Apply." And I think that is why we all keep talking about the interview. It said you're doing something in this realm, how do you define it? So no matter what the forum is, I think that somehow not having a definition of social practice is actually really important. I think giving examples and maybe models of it [is alright], but if you define it people will automatically make assumptions. A lot of times when I looked at clips people were saying things that I might have said or that I found interesting...I think there was a real diversity in the responses and answers, because it was so personal going to someone's [an artist's] specific space...And then what was interesting was that every artist touched on [the idea of socially engaged art] to give this holistic picture. I definitely saw myself and my artwork in the art of other folks, and I was humbled to be part of this collection of artists.

MP: What's exciting about this style of work, is that sometimes it's a return to something more innate in the way societies are organized. I think the reason why we have the fine art market that we do is because of consumer capitalism and industrialization. But what's exciting about this particular form is that it's embracing the holistic nature of the way communities act, the way that communities are constructed, the essential role of ritual and creativity and art production. So...it relates to the diversity that everyone has mentioned, and the importance to resist the temptation to define narrowly.

EG: How do you each see your work in relation to the organization's mission to support socially engaged art? Would you describe your work as socially engaged? Or what do you think it does to put your work in that category?

KO: I think all art is socially engaged. Sometimes projects are dealing with people socially engaging with a market, sometimes they're socially engaging with people skipping rocks, or [sometimes I'm engaging with] people I'm not going to see again, or people I'm never going to meet, like with a book project. So it was great that during the [Artist Files] process I had space to express the way I'm thinking about it.

NA: It's not a question of whether my work fits into socially engaged art or not, that's kind of up to the audience. But I really appreciate seeing it described, because I feel like I am contributing my work to the discussion.

RF: When we were selected to be part of this cohort, I thought yes, this is us, it's exactly spot-on. I don't use the term [socially engaged] a ton, because sometimes we don't call what we do art. We call it multimedia, transmedia, etc. I think that a lot of the other artists might feel similarly because they're doing cross-platform art that doesn't necessarily fit into one category. That's a big part of the field, because the work is often done in communities, so we're using different methodologies and approaches to try to engage with different communities. I'm always wrestling with how to describe the work. You're always working with people who are

different, and you're always trying to communicate with them about the process.

MP: Yeah, I don't call it social engagement, but that's one hundred percent what it is. Part of my creative practice and my journey is through performance, and in that world there's a school of thought and debate around civic practice, which is cut from the same cloth as social engagement. I think that all art is socially engaged, whether you recognize it or not, and all art is political whether you choose it to be or not.

RF: One thing that came out of the interviews... was to see how artists were thinking about the process of working with communities. Whereas there are artists who create their own work and the dialogue is with themselves, it's really different to think about... social practice, which has a thread about what is audience, what does the engagement look like.

KO: So is it like socially engaged is being created in real time with an audience, or with a community, and then the "studio artist" is in their head or in their studio and then the audience is brought in? I'm wondering if that is a time of engagement for you?

RF: I guess, but I don't know if it's superficial.

KO: I challenge that position because I have friends who say things like, "I'm doing this all day, I'm not engaged." And I [respond], "Where'd you get this, where did you think of the thing that you're doing? How did you understand perspective? All of these things at their base don't exist without [a reference point in the broader world]"... What is the level, and what is the type of engagement? I think it goes back to leaving that notion of social engagement wide open.

EG: Any last comments before we wrap up?

MP: No, just an exclamation point on

the conversation, the dialogue... I think it's great because there has to be leadership in this style of practice and I think it's exciting that there's someone, some group of folks who are taking leadership...

My final comment is, I think it is really great and really smart not to engage in the exhibition, that whole black hole. But it would be of use to artists to figure out as A Blade of Grass moves forward and Artist Files moves forward, how to engage in conversation, because often the terms "social" or "community" are like the kiss of death for your aesthetic, how people view you. Like, if you're socially engaged, "Oh your work's probably not that good." Like it's probably low-rent and blah blah blah. Don't leave the exhibitors and gallery folks out of that conversation, and make sure it's directed at them in some way.

EG: We intend to be a serious contributor to the discourse and to be an active participant in the conversation around this. That's actually one of the reasons we focus so heavily on assessment, because the voices that you hear at the panel discussions and symposia and the artists' talks and in the academic journals are the curators and the critics and the artists who already value this kind of work. What you're not hearing are the voices from the audience for the work, right? So it's about bringing those voices into the dialogue and to understand not just the intent of the work and pieces of what happens, but the diversity of impacts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Artist Files was a yearlong process that was initiated in ABOG's first Advisory Committee meetings, brought twenty artists to the internet, became a public dialogue and a more private negotiation between the grantees and the grantor, and culminated in a series of professional development services and this publication. There are a lot of people to thank!

Above all, I am grateful to the twenty Artist Files artists, who took a risk and dove into an experimental process without much information. They gave much more than they expected to give. We would not have learned anything about how to fund socially engaged artists without their patience, openness, candor and curiosity.

I am equally indebted to Curatorial Fellow Kalia Brooks, who proposed and modeled this dialogical grant based on artists' processes and the notion of generosity. This was no ordinary curatorial project! There were a lot of twists and turns, and it was a lot of work, and through it all Kalia's thoughtfulness made the project possible.

I would also like to single out the leadership of Board Chair Shelley Rubin. Shelley and I worked very closely on Artist Files, and I relied heavily on her insistence that we were working toward finding and exercising our organizational values by conducting this experiment. Shelley's creative mind and capacity for risk inspires me—she is a fantastic collaborator!

Artist Files was conceived the moment Tom Finkelppearl suggested that we curate a grant to individual artists. I want to thank Tom for taking that first step in an experimental direction because it's often the most difficult step to take.

A Blade of Grass' Board of Directors provided fantastic support throughout Artist Files, balancing openness and experimentation with their responsibility to effectively govern the organization. In addition to Shelley and Tom, I deeply appreciate Kim Brizzolara, Eva Haller, Basha Frost Rubin, Eileen Caulfield Schwab and Daniel Schwartz.

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The community of participants who tweeted and commented provided a valuable service to A Blade of Grass. Your thoughts about socially engaged art informed the criteria for these grants, and your feedback about the process informed our process moving forward.

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Deborah Fisher
Executive Director,
A Blade of Grass

OUR MISSION

A BLADE OF GRASS NUTURES
SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART

We provide resources to artists who demonstrate artistic excellence and serve as innovative conduits for social change. We evaluate the quality of work in this evolving field by fostering an inclusive, practical discourse about the aesthetics, function, ethics and meaning of socially engaged art that resonates within and outside the contemporary art dialogue.

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