

PROTOTYPE

Whitney
Independent
Study
Program
(ISP)

Studio
Program

2024-
2025

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Dahlia Bloomstone
Paige K. Bradley
Cheeny Celebrado-Royer
Rhea Dillon
Niloufar Emamifar
Chantal Peñalosa Fong
Valentina Jager
Ash Moniz
Daniel Melo Morales
Iulia Nistor
Pegah Pasalar
Alex Schmidt
Julia Taszycka
misra walker

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Editor’s Note

When thinking of a publication to honour the time we’ve spent in the ISP, nothing felt more natural than a series of conversations conducted with and by each other. The semi-nars, workshops, and studio visits each week created a persistently engaging discourse with visitors, and yet not as much scheduled time to turn to one another as just the studio fellows of the cohort. So, here, we engaged in a circle of interviews representing the persistent reality of why so many of us applied to the programme: to be in community, to be in a conversation.

We’ve endured many a “change of the guard” during these past nine months: a fascist US election and inauguration, a promise of a ceasefire in Gaza overturned by the wrath of Israel, the death of a Pope... the list could go on. What does it mean to be in community in these kinds of times? A voice is heard; a time is noted; and a knight’s move is made.

Conducted throughout February 2025, the interviews in this publication range from taking place in a casino club in Yonkers, to the classic one-on-one studio visit style of fellows past, present, and future. As much as I’m excited for this to be read today alongside the exhibition, or tomorrow at home, or this year somewhere in the world... what makes this collection most important is the ability to look back on 2024/25, like a time capsule or prototype, of the artists we may become.

—Rhea Dillon, Studio Program Fellow and Editor

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Dahlia
Bloomstone

by Paige K.
Bradley

in Dahlia's
studio

↓ Dahlia in her studio with her
strip club pandemic ephemera



PKB I've been wondering what you're up to since I noticed these "Little Darlings" images coming out of our printer here.

DB This image was part of how I started molding an archive of strip club signage and ephemera circa the early COVID-19 pandemic.

PKB Where is this one from?

DB This "Little Darlings" one is from Las Vegas. The woman on the club sign is holding a toilet paper roll and a surgical mask. I thought, "This is my favorite image I've ever seen." And I used it as the basis for other images that I edited. A very Paul Pfeiffer move. I started thinking about how, because this is an unregulated industry, there was just no way to know how many workers might have gotten sick or even died if they were exposed to COVID without employer sponsored coverage (a lot of clubs were secretly open and not "protecting" their workers during this time, including my own place of work.) There are little to no statistics on this, so for me this image was a starting point. It was a gesture towards representing workers getting sick or passing away during this time.

PKB Was this class of worker qualified for emergency unemployment, or the U.S. Pandemic Unemployment Assistance?

DB We definitely did not. We did try, but in the end I didn't have to because my club—I think it was closed for one single week, or something like that—was secretly running, so I was working unvaccinated.

This one's advertising FREE PROTECTIVE MASKS and FREE ANTI-VIRAL HAND SANITIZER at Déjà Vu Showgirls [Déjà Vu operates approximately two-hundred strip clubs internationally]. They had masks, free hand sanitizers, new restrictions, etc. This image is from a club in Canada. There's only one image of me working with a mask on. A lot of the images I've edited into the game I've been working on.

PKB So, they are source imagery for the game.

DB Yes. For a little bit of background about Roblox it's a user-generated, online game-making platform primarily for children. I've been interested in Roblox for a long time because of its issues surrounding sex clubs and strip clubs appearing in it despite it being a children's platform and despite moderators continuously getting them deleted. A lot of my work focuses on the technologies and economies around the social value and implications of sexual commerce; the paradigm shifts in these economies; and the fraught space between online digital gaming culture and the internet, online sexual commodification. I became interested in making games with it, and have a particular game in progress now. There are still lots of content restrictions, but the goal of my game is to find client "Zero." My game has the new Roblox avatar—do you know the older ones were kind of boxy looking? Part of [Roblox] leaning into their sex problem is that they're now making these more sexualized, realistic avatars.

PKB

So this slightly more curvaceous figure I see here was an option you could choose?

DB

It’s a new option, along with them allowing 17+ plus games, as long as you have an account set to that age. They’re dating games in a way because those games have a voice chat function enabled too. It’s really exciting, and really insidious. I’m interested in that binary.

PKB

Well, it’s like they say, *any app is a dating app if you try hard enough!* Any game is sexual if you want it to be. Where there’s a will, there’s a way, as it were. You have a piece of text swooping around the atmosphere here in the game’s scenario—that’s taken from this banner you have up on your studio wall, right?

DB

It’s the number one bachelor party banner sold on Amazon. “She said no strippers.” I think it holds a beautiful mythology in it: He, She, and Stripper. I was really loving the logic of that. It was like, *is there a possibility of a stripper as a wife embedded in that sign?*

PKB

The slight ambiguity of that statement takes on a little more of a charged quality when it’s ricocheting around in the sky of your game, over the clouds.

DB

It is part of the clouds.

PKB

They look like their own weather system.

DB

I love that. They’re also really struggling to move. They’re very jittery. I took out the letter “e” just in case the word “stripper” would be flagged [by the platform], but I’ve noticed that having uploaded the word as an image, the images aren’t easily flagged. But I’ve also recently discovered that if you type “lap dancing” in the in-game chat, that’s not flagged either. I find that interesting. If you type the word “adult” it gets flagged.

PKB

Your programming decisions are pushing or prodding what the rules, or limitations, are in this game’s underlying system as inconsistent or even hypocritical.

DB

Yes, and I was interested in the language that comes from that.

PKB

A big feature of your landscape here is an enormous type of fish... maybe a rainbow fish? It’s floating amongst the “Little Darlings” club billboards and these green luminescent bits—like fireflies, almost.

DB

I’m using adorable cute aesthetics to think through sickness. These are supposed to be adorable markers of sickness: bright green sparkly particles, and the fish are both transparent and sick.

PKB

It’s very grey. There’s heavy cloud cover and it’s night. Is it always night?

DB

The day-to-night cycle goes really quickly, which is typical for most of the games I make. You can also jump on the transparent fish.

PKB

Your character is holding what looks like a semi-automatic rifle the entire time.

DB

She doesn’t have to be holding it—she can actually put it away, but you’re going to need it! In a lot of spaces in the game you get stuck and can’t move. I’ll address that later. Then there are Police zombies! (Clients). Cli-ombies-ice! You can shoot them and they’ll fall apart. They can kill you if they touch you. But every time I shoot one of them I say, “Sorry.” Or the character’s voice says sorry after she kills them.

PKB

I can hear it in the mix with the music. There’s a kind of reverb to the “I’m sorry” every time you kill one.

DB

It’s about leaning into the stereotypes of this “amoral” work that I’ve done for nearly a decade, my entire adult life. I’m interested in thinking through the societal legitimacy of the sex sector as an ontological concern, and various negative moral universes. I can be feeling bad about what I’m doing so that’s why I’m apologizing.

PKB

There’s a kind of repentant stripper, or sex worker, trope right? Like, *I’m doing this, but I’m sorry I am this person?* Maybe socially that’s the desired position or stance of people who do that work.

DB

Have you noticed there were a lot of spaces where I just can’t move in the game?

PKB

Your character is also walking on their toes the entire time as if they were wearing heels, but she is barefoot. It’s the way a Barbie doll’s feet were molded to be arched.

DB

That’s true! I didn’t really even notice that because this is a new avatar I’m using.

PKB

You’ve been working on this game since the beginning of our program, or before? And you’ve been building out the look of the world, its functionality, or both?

DB

Since a little before and both. There’s also a stage in the game with this damask pattern. This type of pattern was found in some of the more famous brothels in the United States in the 19th century, since it was considered a very upscale look to draw in affluent clients. You’ll see that pattern in most of my video game work. It’s an important part of “whore” history.

PKB You have a roll of it in your studio here and it covers the floor of the world in the game.

DB Each game I make also ends up being its own island. Recently I was thinking about each island as a way to get closer to Puerto Rico (where my mom's family is from). I've always felt a little disconnected from it since I didn't get to grow up there.

PKB In other work I've seen of yours there does seem to be a wateriness to the worlds, like an aquarium. Or it's featuring some kind of aquatic creature suspended in the air.

DB Yes, I'm always thinking about fishes, aquariums, and affective labor spaces as mutual ecologies. Another thing: in my games the avatars are coded to sit in random places. It's like the avatar telling me that she's tired and doesn't want to work anymore. I have to force her back up. The seats, as it were, are pieces of code that I put in different areas of the floor or ground. At the very end of the game she and the boss client blow up and die together. Then you're brought back to the beginning of the game again.

PKB It's a recursive thing.

DB I didn't completely understand why I made it like that. I was thinking of it as moralizing myself and the client together. Something like, *no one is safe here*. I think the game will end up being displayed on this prison TV monitor.

PKB It's this older, analog monitor, one of those see-through plastic ones?

DB This hardware is completely new to me. I hadn't thought as much about hardware until this year and while I was thinking about this project. In addition to thinking about strip clubs during the pandemic, I also started considering how to think through what I've experienced during the police raids of clubs that occurred in those years between 2019 to about 2022. I bought these prison TVs on eBay. One is from 2007 and the other from 2013. They're tools for surveillance because you cannot hide anything inside of them. I didn't know before about how technology like this has to be clear in prisons, so when I first saw them on Facebook Marketplace I thought of them as adorable and girly.

I open these monitors up and I'm putting my "amoral contraband" inside. More specifically, I put inside things that I have a strong memory of. And not necessarily because I was wearing it, but because during every single police raid I was present for I was also, unfortunately, not clothed. And when this sort of thing happens, you're frozen in time and space—you can't move. I mentioned before that my avatar in the game freezes as I programmed it to, but that's a nod to my community and I's experiences of being frozen in place. A raid can go on for hours for various reasons. Every time one of these happened I would

be in the middle of a dance and my clothes would be on the floor. I'm also using the old shoes I can remember wearing.

PKB The TV then becomes a repository of evidence. Of memory. It's a collision or conflation of different points in a process of legal or forensic evidence gathering. And maybe it's an endpoint for the equipment in the prison that one lands in after everything's been determined. The landing there is what happens based on evidence. You're materially closing the loop, in a way.

DB I like that. There are little shreds or pieces of dresses shoved in here. There'll be another animation, too. Sometimes I think I need to make a new animation, but we'll see. *R-SHARK WOKE UP!* is the full title. I think I might show that animation, but it leads into this other live action video actually. A video game, an animation, and an IRL video. I like having all these modes together as a way to think through the commodification of the self (of all selves) and the exhaustion of that.

PKB There's character, there's caricature, and then there's the real self behind the character. But they're all characters in a representation.

DB I also have an artist's book that I've been working on while in the program. In a way it takes you through all of my work, like game instructions. If I have a studio visit that feels especially relevant, it'll go in. One in particular was with my new friend who came and said that we had a lot in common. I was confused. She said she had worked at a Little Darlings club in Baltimore, and that location closed after the pandemic and became "Little Darlings Childcare Learning Center".

PKB That says it all.

DB It was one of my favorite things that I've ever learned.

by Daniel
Melo Morales

in Paige’s
studio

↓ “L’s Poisonous Fruits”
digital photograph
dimensions variable
2025



DMM Having read about your work as well as the book you wrote, *Drive It All Over Me*, I wanted to know more about how you think about your process when making works?

PKB There’s a micro- and a macrocosm, I’d say. I’m always thinking through both. With this painting that I’m working on right now, I’m thinking about its form and composition: the micro. Then there’s the macro: which I’m not always thinking about consciously. With the most recent body of work that I finished, the macro idea was about creating an analog culture of the digital, or using hand-made things to address a digital condition of images, artworks, and the circulation of ideas. Among other things, I was thinking about Jean-Luc Nancy’s ideas around meaning (in an artwork, image, or text) via circulation. It’s about how it appears, where it goes, or what it relates to, interacts with...

People often ask, “How does your writing and your art relate to each other?” There’s a lot of text on my work, some of it from already-published writing—my own or others’—and there are ideas that are being generated from looking at other people’s work, but those ideas are also mine, too. There’s a reason why I was drawn to write about the subjects that I have published on—it has a relationship to what I’m thinking through and working on as an artist. And my work has a relationship to semiotics given the way I deal with images as texts. This comes from a particular kind of art history at this point, but I would say it’s not standard practice. My affiliation with those kinds of ideas is probably the most old fashioned thing about what I do. Maybe because I worked at *Artforum* and read *October* articles seriously—that was my youth, believe it or not. I thought that history was important to developing one’s thinking, building your work, building a practice, but joke’s on me since it’s abundantly clear we’re in an art world now where that’s totally not the case whatsoever! [LAUGHS] That stuff is opt-in. In fact, it may well be a hindrance to your work for it to be too informed because that density slows people down often dampening a viewer’s receptivity to what you’re doing. But at the same time, I’m also deliberately using things that relate to a fast, easily comprehensible way of reading images, like memes. Last fall, I showed gestural paintings with Impact font text on the top and bottom of the wall they were on in order to play with this convention. I was actually *gesturing* at social behavior outside the paintings though. Thinking about how people scan images for memetic potential, or would be at whichever art fair looking to make digital content from art. This has a predatory dimension, but that’s how images are treated. The most interesting or important images now are ones that different people can have different relationships with, and can use further. I was playing into this by reformulating found images as paintings. I had a more or less personal relationship to all of those images, too, but I don’t consider that the most important aspect of what I do. I also had a variety of textured surface qualities going on throughout that body of work, but wanted to put them into a situation where they would be flattened into a JPEG photograph. Compressed, lossy—it’s what the people want, ostensibly.

In looking at images of your exhibitions and installations, in addition to understanding more about your ideas through our conversation today, you have a compelling way of synthesizing your practice. I've seen images and descriptions of candy, balloons, and paintings, among many other things. How do you decide what different elements will be included when constructing an exhibition?

PKB For an individual work, part of that is having folders of images and sourced material ready. Similar to the way an essay might have a folder on your laptop with citations, references, or drafts—my art works the same way. Every work comes with an archive; every work has endnotes or footnotes. I titled a series of paintings in, *Of Course, You Realize, This Means War*, my 2023 solo show in New York, to reflect that. It's the same approach as when I was writing my book about Jay and Q's work. "Show your work," right? A painting, or installation, evolves out of sources that I return to repeatedly. For instance, there's a photograph of the shadow of my hand holding an origami crane and a lighter. I shot it at the installation of a solo project in 2022 and used the picture as the main reference image for the largest painting I exhibited two years later at The Armory Show. The repetition in my work is deliberate because I'm aware my practice is dense and so I want to extend a helping hand! I was always admonished when I was younger to "consider the viewer" and I'd like to think I'm doing so, perhaps facetiously, without abandoning my firm belief that that's a square-the-circle sort of demand placed on artists.

Then there's the how of the installation, aka how things are put together spatially. That's where a different logic comes in. When you're bringing seemingly disparate things together, whether images or texts, they're being isolated from their origins and instead brought together for new meanings. This is part of what interests me about the allegory and Craig Owens. I see my work as having that kind of allegorical structure, it does relate to the proliferation that the allegory is attempting to compress, as it were. So for me there is a through line from Owens' 1980s perception and theory of art to contemporary digital compression. That's just one point of connection.

As to how material comes together in my work, as in, *how or why are they like this?* Or *why are there those balloons?* and *why are these paintings installed in this way?* I could tell you that the balloons were a clock, they deflated over the course of the show and therefore registered time's passage. But we rarely think about or behold a clock, per se. A system of measurement itself is not an object of contemplation. Likewise, there is a structure in the work, but, like infrastructure, it's not really meant to be consciously thought about by the "users" of the work. It might seem arbitrary—like how the paintings in the show were spaced apart with a specific number of inches on the red-orange painted walls. That was simply a conceptual rule for me. The entire show was plotted out to have very specific distances between things, and to be syntactical. There were paintings that were shown at the gold standard of museum-wall hanging height (MoMA's standard). But you only make people aware that there's a rule when you break it.

So I thought you have to show the rule and the broken rule at the same time, in the same space. Other drawings or photographs (perhaps "minor" types of work in the traditional museological hierarchy) were hung at a lower level, which I called "dog's-eye level." But who is that really for? It's an open question in the experience of the work, but I have certain convictions about why I'm putting that in there in the first place. I'm interested in problems—some are given to me and some I create for myself. I use both, regardless. Even that phrase "the viewer" is a huge problem, but it's wielded in this bog standard way. "The viewer" implies a system of logic, a clear dynamic between producer and receiver, but systems aren't necessarily *reasonable*, and that is what interests me. Then there's this idea of the "personal reason," a reason which would not seem rational but it's a common phrase, e.g. "at this time for personal reasons I will be..." etc.

I'm drawn to observable, or at least colloquial, understandings or modes like that. The "personal reason" can be invoked as a way to avoid saying something, too. I used it in a resignation letter once! I thought it spoke volumes! [LAUGHS] So then, what is important is that there needs to be a *feeling* of logic. The viewer needs to have an impression of logic that—regardless of whatever sort of perceived chaos is happening in the images, in the materials, or in the references—gives an order to things. It's an affect. My work is very ordered, and that's very important because I feel you can't engage with things that are negated from the start. In other words, it's not so interesting to say "fuck you" right away! You have to lure people in first with something that might appeal to them, like with a color they might think feels nice, or balloons, the novelty value—"this is memorable," or with the Impact font—"this looks like something I recognize." A viewer might eventually realize, "Wait, this isn't helping me actually. There's something else going on here and this novelty is not helping me understand that!" And it won't. Or, it's not designed to. They're going to need to engage deeper if they want to get anywhere. That's how I design the work. It's devised for a kind of effect yet not an alienating one.

I think gimmicks are fine to use. I'm also influenced by writers and theorists like Sianne Ngai. She wrote the books *Theory of the Gimmick: Aesthetic Judgment* and *Capitalist Form and Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*. She's a Marxist so she's writing about things through the lens of labor, what labor the gimmick does, what cute does, and what a cute object's work does. The specialization is minor feelings or the anti-sublime. She writes about how the affection inspired by cute objects actually conceal latent feelings of aggression towards it. Using things that are cute, but it's a cover (in the disguising sense of the word) is also part of my work. I'm gift wrapping over something that is aggressive on my part, but that doesn't come from nowhere—it is a reciprocal stance. I'm meeting the aggression that has both implicitly and explicitly been expressed and enabled towards me. I'm dealing with that dynamic of projection and association by giving you something cute, yet I know you're actually going to hate this thing on some level. It's actually a

demanding thing that’s not emotionally warm or automatically available. It’s a real effect with personal dimensions.

I was talking to Olivia Kan-Sperling recently, who’s a writer and an editor at *The Paris Review*, and she said something along the lines of, “You look cute, but you’re not cute.” She said it in a very blunt and direct way, but there was no aggression in it. I took it as a total compliment!

PKB Yeah, she was saying that about me as a person. It was something like, “You look cute. But then you start talking and you’re not.” I love that, because it is true. It is a perceptual disjunction. But most people I find can’t get past that disjunction. Instead, they’re stuck at that moment when they realise, consciously or not, that I don’t activate or fulfill the implied promise of my appearance. It’s difficult to take advantage of that. They actually can’t carry out an unconscious or semiconscious operation of polite, even friendly-seeming aggression—it’s not going to work! This results in frustration, but I doubt many would articulate that because this is all very psychological—it’s projection. I’m interested in embedding that kind of dynamic into the works I make, because I find it so persistent and relevant.

For my installation in the ISP show, among other things, I have this “ark size” plush lamb. I showed Gregg Bordowitz this at the beginning of the first term. The object was marketed as “ark size” like Noah’s Ark! Seven inches. I thought that was a very interesting distinction! And the size just worked relative to the overall scale of the installation I want to place it in anyway. It’s a cute thing, but it also has other cultural connotations, like the black sheep of the family! [LAUGHS] So that’s an obvious and idiomatic meaning to just place within a larger installation. This object is just one hook, or lure, for people to get into it and focus for more than five seconds. That reminds me about how I liked Gregg’s writing on Hanne Darboven’s work as a “field of lures or hooks”.

The ISP Studio exhibition is going to be called “Prototype,” a word that I was using to help me think about my piece. It’s a version of a work that I’d like to make with a different production value at a later date. The basic element is a Prussian Blue rug. That color is a recurring motif in my work for various reasons, but not necessarily personal ones. The meeting rooms of the Shakers (a sectarian Christian group that mostly flourished in the nineteenth century) were Prussian Blue. On my rug there will be objects laid out in a mutable arrangement. Three iPhones will be included, for instance. I’ve previously made a painting shaped like an iPhone and shown a video on an iPhone amongst a lineup of paintings. Their appearance in this new work is a way to continue the facetiousness about art turning into circulating content. Artists are expected to send work into competitive arenas of platform physics, where the artwork succeeds or competes in an economy of images that has nothing to do with art as I, and many others, have been trained to historically situate it. It has nothing to do with the art history that I care about. That’s the disjunction I experience, then, of being compelled

to work across these different registers. You know the saying “you’re talking out of both sides of your mouth”? I’m doing that—talking to a history of ideas with Robert Smithson, Owens, Darboven, and so on, but also that endless scroll of the phone. This is absurd so I feel I have to seriously work with it. Speaking out of both sides of your mouth connotes insincerity, hypocrisy, and deception. I like that. It’s on the spectrum with dog whistling, which is often associated with political speech. This is a very measured and calculated way of speaking, or expressing. And that influences how I structure work.

DMM Was she referring to you as a person, not your artwork itself?

DMM Are you concerned about the negative connotations of the expression “to talk out of both sides of your mouth?”

PKB I am concerned with what reads as a sincere vs an insincere approach. A cute or similarly appealing object is associated with sincerity. It’s a kind of betrayal if a cute thing is not sincere. This is what interests me. I could cross-reference this with how animals are cute or charming to humans up until the moment they assert agency and don’t play along or lash out.

DMM How does meaning within your practice change over time through the repetition of motifs, materials, or concepts?

PKB It has a narrative function because something continually appears. It implies that whatever the thing is has an important role in the story of what your work is telling. It doesn’t have to be a story per se, but just by reappearing it becomes narrative. It may not necessarily have been important when I used it the first time, but, like in a conspiracy theory, it starts to take on significance regardless of intent. I’m prompting people to read into something. Someone should ask me why I keep referencing snakes or shed skins in my work! I’m foot-tapping-on-the-floor waiting! I’ve set the work up for such a question to be asked. So there’s the approach of putting something in the work, and there’s the approach of taking an object and writing about it. One’s creative, another’s critical, but both strategies are being utilized. In my last body of work, I had this pair of Nike Air Huarache shoes. They aren’t important, personally, but they were included in an essay I wrote for Jeppe Ugelvig’s *Viscose Journal* in the summer of 2021. It’s a trend report that collapses into a conspiracy theory, which then collapses into a personal essay. Think of it as if you had a house that was structurally unsound then first the attic collapses, and then the second floor goes, and then it’s all down. I wrote about this object and then a couple of years later I will show you the object. That’s about the internal coherence of my practice rather than being about me thinking someone is going to see that in my installation and think, “Ah, yes, that Viscose essay.” I don’t think that’s going to happen. That’s not how discourse functions anymore. But in the long arc, as I build out my work, I’d love to believe those things matter. That’s my good faith.

Cheeny Celebrado- Royer

by Julia
Taszycka

in Cheeny's
studio

↓ "Cinder blocks"



JT

Could you tell me what the key ideas or themes are that drive your practice?

CCR

I began working with materials that are often temporal. A few years ago, the main thing I was thinking about was how to communicate personal narratives through art-making. Over the past ten years, I've explored a lot of different things, but my work really began with a family photograph that my sister sent me when I was a junior in college. It's the only family photograph we have because most of our pictures from when I was a kid were destroyed by typhoons, or lost during moves.

When I received the photograph, it felt like it revealed so much about our histories and how we remember/ed things. It became a launching point for my work, and since then, I've been thinking a lot about the role of photographs in reflecting on memory and broader themes.

That single photograph led me to think more about the fragility of architecture. In the image: it's my siblings, my parents, and me all together, but the photo itself is kind of pixelated and fragmented. Looking at it made me reflect on how the architecture shown in the photo—our home—has been through so many storms and typhoons over the years. It's the place I knew from as early as I can remember until I left the Philippines at 13.

One of the things that shaped my way of processing the world is how devastation constantly affects my country and many others suffering through natural disasters, especially now with climate change making it even more intense. That got me thinking a lot about architecture because, as a kid, I actually wanted to be an architect. But I didn't end up becoming one because, honestly, I'm just terrible at math.

JT

Oh, so it's not related to your experience?

CCR

No, I mean it's related to my experience. Part of the desire to study architecture came from wanting to build better homes or rethink what kinds of materials could not necessarily resist, but work with the different types of climate we live in.

JT

That's really interesting. To clarify the timeline, you mentioned that family belongings, including souvenirs and photographs, were destroyed due to typhoons and storms. Were there multiple catastrophes you experienced while growing up?

CCR

Typhoons are pretty frequent in the Philippines—we get about two typhoons every month. When I went back to the Philippines this summer, there were four different typhoons predicted to hit the country at the same time, coming from different sides of the northern island. Thankfully, only two or three actually made landfall, and they ended up being much weaker than expected.

The house I grew up in, like much of the vernacular architecture in the Philippines, often couldn't withstand the strength of the winds. There was always destruction, but also rebuilding afterward. One of the

good things about growing up in a small town—and something Filipinos really value—is that strong sense of community. Whenever something gets destroyed or devastated by a typhoon, people come together to help rebuild. That communal spirit is something I’ve really come to value, both in my life and in my work.

That’s why so many of my materials are scavenged, donated, and constantly reused. My previous works with cardboard, for instance, reflect that mindset of resourcefulness and resilience.

JT I’d love to hear more about your experience with architecture as something temporary—something you can never fully trust, as it exists only until the next catastrophe. Right now, we’re looking at the photo documentation from your exhibition. The materials you use seem to play a crucial role. What specific materials are you drawn to, and what intrigues you about them?

CCR I think it makes sense to start from the very beginning. I talked about the photograph earlier—it’s a photo of the facade of our home. And in relation to the topics of home, museum, and architecture, essentially, it’s a dwelling place, but then there’s this external force that constantly challenges the integrity of that architecture. Temporality is definitely a major theme in my work, especially when it comes to materials and the concepts I want to explore. But I also see it tied to migration and movement. So much of my practice is about movement, right? In my earlier works, I used a lot of cardboard—cardboard boxes in particular, the kind used for shipping. I’d get them from recycling bins or from anyone I shared a studio with at the time. These boxes act as containers, and in thinking about materiality, those cardboard boxes, rope, and tape became some of the main materials I worked with. All of these materials are really malleable and, in a way, they show up in almost everything I create. They’re constantly being recycled or repurposed for a new piece, reimagined with every iteration.

JT So, let me get that straight—you create your works using certain materials, and once a piece is completed, you reuse those same materials to create something new. Is that right?

CCR Yes

JT That’s interesting. These materials are easily accessible, but what about concrete? It feels quite different—it’s not something we typically associate with instability or temporality. Instead, it’s meant to be solid, lasting, and to hold its form. How does concrete fit into your exploration of these ideas?

CCR So, some traditional Filipino architecture uses bamboo and weaving of different types of leaves/plants, and the flexibility of those natural

materials was really smart for the climate in the Philippines. Back in the day, you could actually move your house. It’s called bayanihan. Bayanihan is when a group of people, usually within the community, lift the house together to move it elsewhere. It’s a very nomadic way of living. It’s about constant movement, constantly adapting for different reasons.

I think about that in connection with these houses, which were more fragile, but still beautiful. The wind or air could easily pass through the walls, which was ideal because of the intense heat in the Philippines. You needed something practical. But over time, with the frequency of typhoons, people started adapting with other materials. Using concrete became more common because it made houses less vulnerable to the weather, but, at the same time, it traps the heat.

I worked with concrete blocks in grad school. I made them using a mix of different types of concrete and cement. Some of the blocks are smoother and stronger because they’re more condensed with a smoother type of cement, while others have a lot more sediment and sand. I’ve had one of these blocks for at least eight years, but now it’s starting to fall apart every time you touch it. I also made some with a fiber material mixed with sand and cement.

The idea of concrete as a “forever material” was something that people in the west idealized... People didn’t think about the environmental toll concrete takes—like how difficult it is to mine and transport. Essentially, they’re mining sand from rivers to create it, which requires a lot of energy. It’s much more complex than just being a sturdy material.

JT I’d like to connect this idea back to the concept of Bayanihan. As technology evolves, how is architecture in the Philippines changing?

CCR Concrete became a bit more affordable and common, but that also comes with the desire for a house that feels more permanent. And I think this idea of permanence is something that doesn’t really exist. To me, everything only lasts for a certain amount of time.

JT It’s fascinating because, in Polish, the word for real estate, “nieruchomości,” literally means “unmovable”. So, it’s the complete opposite of how we perceive it in my part of the world.

CCR The term “bayanihan” comes from the Filipino word “bayan,” which means town, community, or nation. The suffix “-han” indicates a place or collective activity. So, “bayanihan” refers to a collective, communal effort or working together for the common good.

JT So what are you working on right now?

CCR I’m currently working on painting my walls. I’m basically drawing on them, using gouache, but not just paint—any kind of water-soluble material like watercolor, graphite, charcoal, and colored pencil. I’m also using painter’s tape. I’m not sure what it’s going to be yet, but it feels right at the moment.

JT Looking at these paintings on the wall right now, they remind me of apartment floor plans. Has that connection ever crossed your mind before?

CCR Yeah, there’s definitely an echo of interior spaces or even maps. Maps, yeah. That’s something that has been recurring in my work over the years, just exploring different perspectives, but still focusing a lot on the flatness of those objects or shapes within the work. I think a lot about painting, but mostly about drawing. I like being able to create something that feels ambitious, yet still temporary. I mean, these are the studios we’re currently occupying, and in about two months, we’ll have to move out. To me, this feels like a record of time. Drawing on the wall, especially, feels temporary, while drawings on paper or other flat materials are easier to save. There’s a juxtaposition between these two things, and I’m not sure if that’s a question, but maybe my question would be: *How do you see this relating to your overall process? Is there something you want the viewer to pay attention to or something important for you in these works?*

I think my work has always been about drawing and its temporality. I got interested in art through drawing because you can find a pencil, paper, or anything to mark on anywhere. I love that quality of it. It also speaks to what I’ve been talking about all along—temporality. All the materials I use here are water-soluble. Even the tape I use to create certain edges, I also think of it as a line or a structure that becomes part of the work. Going back to fragility and impermanence, these materials speak to that. Once I’m done with a work, I usually reuse the tape or wipe the rag and take it to become something else, a new piece. So everything sort of starts from the previous work, and it informs the new one, and so on.

JT So, this piece of cloth—do you ever wash it?

CCR I haven’t washed it yet. I don’t intend to. It’s part of the work.

JT Do you plan to wash it later, or will you transfer the remaining paint onto another surface, like a wall or a different setting?

CCR So, these gestures, it’s like wiping—transferring and creating a new gesture at the same time. You’re erasing, yes. So, it’s like you’re creating a drawing or picture by erasing it at the same time.

JT You mentioned at the very beginning of the interview about the picture that opened up your art journey, and this picture is still here on the wall, but people in the photo are covered by colorful rectangles. Could you talk a bit about that? Our studios are pretty small, and this picture takes up almost half of the wall.

CCR So, the colors and abstract patterns. I made this work when I was in undergrad. When I received the photograph, I couldn’t really remember why we took the picture that day, but I do remember that I was wearing my favorite shirt and pants. As a kid, I liked having a uniform and would

wear it all the time. When it got dirty, I’d wash it, let it dry, and then wear it again. It was this purple shirt and blue jeans, and I just remember loving that shirt. So, I took pixels of the shirts we were wearing that day and reduced each figure to the color of the shirt. That’s why it looks like this.

JT So you made this piece when you were a junior in college, and now you’ve placed it in your ISP studio. Do you always keep it with you?

CCR No, I actually printed that in grad school. So yes, I’ve had that in my studio, in every studio that I’ve ever used, even at home.

JT Is there a particular reason you always carry this photograph with you? It seems like it has a strong influence on you.

CCR Yeah, I guess you could say it’s the oldest thing I’ve ever owned. And I draw a lot of inspiration from it for my next work. When I get stuck, I look at the photograph, and it helps me decide where to start. Maybe I start from a corner, or pick an object from it and begin drawing that, and then things just start unfolding. It’s been a source of inspiration for me in recent years.

JT So, do you think, in 60 years, you’ll still be using the same cardboard and tape? [LAUGHS]

CCR [LAUGHS] I don’t know. Some of these things will eventually turn to dust, or some might be repurposed for something else. It’s a very slow process, so it’s not like they disappear right away. The value in these things for me lies in capturing a moment or a specific time that I’m in, and then seeing how they evolve or change as time goes on.

04 / 14

Rhea Dillon

by Niloufar Emamifar

in Gregg's office

↓ soil, from Jamaica



NE

I've learned after becoming friends with you that we both came to our practices from different fields: I come from an architectural background, and you come from film. I find it interesting to hear about your journey, how you pivoted, and what led you to lean more towards sculpture.

There's also something about both architecture and filmmaking. They're often collaborative involving collectives and/or groups. One of the challenges I've found in working with sculpture is that it can sometimes feel isolating. I'm curious to hear your thoughts on that—how you navigate working in sculpture now, and whether you still bring ideas from film into your practice. I know I continue to draw a lot from architecture, and I'd love to hear how it is for you with film.

RD

That's a great question. It already gets wilder in terms of my trajectory, because I studied fashion at Central Saint Martins. It was called Fashion Communication, and I was more of a lens-based practitioner. Film was my most prominent medium, in terms of what work came out publicly. But in the sense of photography and film, the arrival to those two mediums was because I noticed that when I was younger (I was a super sporty kid) I was better at team sports. I did loads of sports. I was a gymnast, diver, hockey player, netball player etc. all at varying levels. But the sports that I enjoyed and focused on the most were the team sports. I had a scholarship for art and was a sporty kid; I was a weird kid that did both. Later I found out many interesting artists had done both. I think it's a mindset. We're talking about having done something before and doing something after—being able to apply that space and mindset to an "other" brings an extra set of tools that you wouldn't even know you could use. So, then I thought that group-oriented artistic endeavors could make sense. That's where the lens-based working came in.

In uni, we just had a classroom that didn't even belong to us. It was shared across all of the different years: everyone roaming. We had no lockers, and there was all this noise. I think noise is good: the good noise of people around. When I graduated uni, I got my first ever studio. I went to Cass Art (like a British version of Blick) and bought eight pots of paint, five paintbrushes, and a sculpting tool. It all cost so much money. I just sat there by myself in the empty studio with the bag and the receipt and I called my best friend Kusheda (who is brilliant) and I was like, *What have I done? This is too expensive. This is absolutely wrong.* And she was like, *no, this is absolutely right.* It was the beginning of understanding how I existed in art practice, and how it developed into thinking about what it means to be in my body.

NE

Even though I've never experienced your work in person, I have a strong feeling that standing before it would alter my breathing—like the air itself shifts in response to the presence of the forms you create. Your use of negative space seems as intentional as the material itself, as if the absence is shaped into something palpable, something that demands recognition. Can you talk more about that negative space in your work?

RD Firstly, thank you. Secondly, yes “negative space”. Or, prior to negative space: “space itself”. I’m hyperaware of space, especially in the base-line reality of entering a space as a person, or being invited to enter space as an artist and place some objects there. What does that do, but change the state of a space, architecturally-speaking? I really do think of architecture in that way, without having the training to do that, which is maybe more the subset of spatial design. I’m very affected by fixed spaces as well as the space that surrounds the building: vicinity. Sociology is then involved: they [the spaces] are affected by you, are set prior to you, and will be set after you. I think about that as the first way to land, and how to turn that into an arrival.

Going into the works themselves follows from that. How do I want people to move around the works? That’s really important to me. I’m not necessarily wanting to choreograph for a viewer or an audience, but I am conscious of the realities of that study of movement, that study of interaction. Specifically for example, I had a show at Sweetwater in Berlin (2023) and there was a work on the floor as you came in. The orientation I set out was that you could move around the space in a circle. Some people will go right, but most people go left because, although there were works on both the left and right of the room, as I’m navigating the space with my body the work on the left feels heavier. Even if it’s not necessarily (I mean technically, I as the artist know that it is), but the visual weight of it feels heavier, so most people go left. I’m aware that that’s what I would like them to look at after being disturbed by this work on the floor. “Disturbed” as in you’re affected by something being in your way, and you’re potentially disturbed by what you learn about that work. It’s a baby’s casket made from mahogany, filled with seeds, for Pecola’s (the protagonist in *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison, 1970) premature baby who died. I’m very aware of its position and tone.

I’m also interested in others’ readings of my work. I talk about this in a way to frame how I edit what work can/should leave the studio. Works that don’t engage with a conversation aren’t “good” (I’m staying with that clunky word) artworks.

NE You mentioned being hyperaware of space, which brings me back to the question of site. If we understand a site-specific practice as work that refuses to see its site as neutral—as something that listens for echoes and ghosts held within the walls—I see your work as deeply attuned to place, memory, and the histories that space carries.

I’m using the word ghost here, even though I know you prefer souls, but in the context of institutions, I’m going to use the word ghost. I’m thinking of the way your work is pressed against, whispered to, and unsettled the architecture of Tate Britain for example—how they seemed to touch the building itself. It brings me to questions of land, site, and walls—how they hold presence and memory.

RD What is a permanent site? What does bringing sociology back into it do? What is a site that doesn’t get affected by the beings that are in it? New York (where we are now) is always vibrating, because there are too many bodies running through it, going in and out, versus being in

smaller villages or towns where there’s less of that activity (less people coming in and leaving). That coming and going disturbs the ground. It disturbs the site. That makes New York almost a volatile site in that way.

I’ve not heard site-specific being explained or defined in that way. What you said was really beautiful. Site-specific is better situated in the reality of an untethered site, that is the globe, which is also innately moving. I think that is so beautiful.

NE There is also the body as a site. How do you conceptualize the body—both singular and collective—within the structural and philosophical contours and architecture of Black feminist thought? And how do you perceive the role of rituals in that context?

RD That’s an opportunity to talk about the Tate show. I keep looking up at the [Whitney ISP] ceiling because it does a similar thing that the Art Now room did (where the exhibition was). They both have these semi-concavesque moments. When I came to see the space in preparation for the exhibition (as opposed to having been a visitor before), I noticed that the ceiling looks like the hull of a ship. At the same time, it looks like someone’s back. That is the black body, right? What can I only do with that? Complete the body. So, the whole premise for that show came from the site itself. I always go and visit any exhibition space or location before I have the show. It’s not necessary to make something that’s as attached as that show was, but it is a carbon footprint and interrupts the way that artists get invited to have a location/city/show and then they just leave. I’ve always found that to be very visceral and potentially harmful. So I’m like, *let me introduce myself to the geographic space*, outside of the space of whatever gallery’s name is attempting to be inserted in the street. Do I feel in my soul and energy that I’m being welcomed by the space? “Welcoming” can be via a spectrum of means: from a genuine welcome to *do I need to disturb this space and therefore the show is being welcomed?*, for example. That’s a very personal quiet doing that I’m not sharing with the curator or the gallerist. It comes out through the conversations I have with those people and through being in the place in that time. It doesn’t have to be a long time. I’m interested in the site as a geographic and as an architecture. Sometimes that architecture holds [space or time] and I don’t know what the show is.

An “alterable terrain” comes directly from Katherine McKittrick’s *Demonic Grounds*, which is a study of black feminist geographies. I asked a poetic call (to my mom, a lover, a best friend of mine, and a brotha) three questions about the body: What is a body? What does a woman’s body look like or entail? What does a black woman’s body look like? They had to be asked in that order because I wanted to get into the reality of the profile that one makes in relation to race, and allow that perception difficulty of, *Oh, I’ve just been asked about a woman’s body and now I’m asked about the black woman’s body, so what is the difference that I’m making to answer that question?* I got the body parts that I was going to put in that show from those questions.

My mom is always my first audience, then friends and lovers as well. I think you need to bring in the public at different points within

your practice, not just at the end. The public can be, you know, your community, your closest people. There's this fight in me, with never wanting to have a solipsistic practice of just being in a studio by myself, thinking for myself, thinking about myself. That's insane. I know the body I have, but we're always being perceived and weighed by the vibrations around us.

NE You just mentioned that your mom is your first audience—could you tell me more about that? I only talked to my mom about my work for the first time last year when I saw her after eight years, and I realized I had made a huge mistake by not sharing it with her sooner. It felt like uncovering a language I didn't know we already spoke. So when you said that, it really struck me—please, tell me more.

RD I mean, even without all the Western psychological analysis, that's your first receiver. It really should be. There is so much noise and people around so they can make money out of giving birth in this country, but that [she] is innately and emotionally your first receiver. There are all the higher education and academic class spaces which so much stays within. If I can't describe the work to my mum, then I'm not making any sense. That is an embarrassing practice to do, also! My family aren't artists. My mom works for her local council within health. Everyone in my immediate family has worked in the post office. My mom has cleaned, my grandma cleaned. It's all these realities of a very standard working class lifestyle. For me, and for everyone, I think it should be affecting to talk to your mum about your work, because you're put in all these spaces, you go and have all these experiences and that's important, that's what your mum wants for you. But then if you can't retell it to whom I have as a parent in the sense of a very public-facing and local work, then I'm punching above what I care about. You know when people say "punching above their weight"? I would be punching above the people I care about.

NE Your titles seem to echo across time. There are fragments of voices past and present, creating a space where meaning bends and shifts. Given this, how do you think about the materiality of language in relation to the materiality of your sculptures and installations? Do you see this as a collaboration with the souls of past and present? How do you think about the materiality of the location in relation to the material of your sculptures? Do the titles themselves become another form of texture, a weight of significance that interacts with the physicality of the work, or even resistance within the work (and by that I mean a kind of resistance that speaks beyond the visible)?

RD I think it goes beyond the portal. I have not thought of them as portals, but I think the way you asked the question was already a poetics. The question is the doing. The materials I use for my sculptures often, if not always, have their own hold and their own knowledge. The mahogany that I work with is part of that carriage.

You and I are both in a place of engaging with conceptualism within our work. I don't think that has to be the whole quantifier of what we do, but it's a place that these works have sat in and people have placed them, whether that was the intention or not. Conceptualism has its own art history that I've been learning post-uni, of things that have their own ability to be perceived for themselves, and then there's a title. I'm very interested in that first and second. The work is going to be the loudest, and then there's a title. The title is almost for document-keeping. How could you use that other to maybe do an othering with that? Like working with that space. I have this work that has a longer title, *As Wata to Wine, Wine to Blood, Blood to Dirt, Dirt to Sand, Sand to Water; Wata (Bit)* (2023). It's these two water bottles and this iron tongue coming out of the wall, representative of a bit, which is what was used as punishment during slavery. When I'm editing in the studio, I know how I feel about it [artworks], but sometimes you don't have access to the knowledge of what it's going to do to someone else, right? You're just working with all of this intense material. Then it goes into space and that's where you learn.

There is an attendant at Tate who's also called Marcia, which is my mum's name and why we became close immediately. Chatting to her she'll tell you what she thinks with no filter—my kind of person. I kept going to the gallery because I was doing walkthroughs. Whenever I got there, Marcia would be around and she'd tell me what she thinks about this work or that work, or she'd tell me what some kid did when they were doing the school tours on Tuesday mornings (which is my favorite time to go to a museum). A second space (like the white cube gallery) for clarity of sight and removal of intuition is also its own tool, and is a public site of conversation that's thus best apt for a dialogue across lives [many museums in the UK are free, for context on their sociodemographic]. If the artworks were just in the studio we'd only invite our friends. We'd only be speaking to ourselves. Nothing important comes from that.

by Dahlia
Bloomstone

at Empire City
Casino, Yonkers

↓ Lily & Charlie at Empire
City Casino



It is a cold day—March 7th, to be exact. A Friday afternoon. Empire City Casino is busy as ever. There are horses on the racetrack.

3:25 PM

CHARLIE

How do you play this one? We’ve never played it before. Do you know?

LILY

Yeah, we were just pressing stuff and hoping for divine intervention. Or at least a pineapple.

PEARL

It’s easy. Minimum bet’s 75 cents. Just hit “Spin” and pray to the god of lemons. Or cherries. Or something juicy.

CHARLIE

Okay. I’ve got one lonely dollar. Want to go for it?

LILY

Let’s make this one spin count—who knows, maybe we’ll get lucky!

PEARL

You just got \$2.95. That’s more spins, baby. Hit it again—ride the pixelated lightning. Make some money!

CHARLIE

Wait—what just happened? Spin again? We got 5 spins? Or some free spins?

PEARL

You got free spins! That’s a double fruit spin. Let’s go big!

LILY

This is surprisingly fun... Alright, let’s see some diamonds! Do your thing sparkly stuff! Diamonds!

CHARLIE

We won \$23.25? Whoa! This is the best.

PEARL

That’s right. I think the machine likes you. Or feared you. Hard to say.

3:40 PM

CHARLIE
Thanks! What’s your name? You were such good luck!

PEARL
Pearl. Good luck to you both!

MEHRI
This one’s great! You light up that little lamp every time you win. And when it explodes—bonus round. It’s like gambling with fireworks. I’ll show you.

CHARLIE
Let’s toss in \$20 and see what the gods of lamps do for us. Or should we put just \$1?

LILY
Oh my god, we just won \$880?! Or is this spins? What did we win?

CHARLIE
Wait... no. No, no. Eight. Dollars. It’s... it’s just missing the zeroes. What’s a double swing?

MEHRI
Now press the lamp. It resets the spins every time something lands. It’s like meditation, but louder and more expensive. Lamp, lamp, lamp!

LILY
Nice! Diamonds?!

MEHRI
See? And it doubles sometimes too. I’ve been coming here for years. I could be here all day.

CHARLIE
How much have you won in one go? And... How long have you actually been playing? It’s a lot of fun.

MEHRI
Once I won \$500 but I stayed for eight hours.

LILY
Alright, let’s call it at \$11. We are losing too fast! Ooh, an elephant.

4:10 PM

CHARLIE
There’s like ten buttons and one of them says “Excavate?” How do you play this game? Do you use \$1?

MIRELLE
Do you have a player card? You should get a player card. They give you a bonus if it’s your first time!

LILY
A player card? Do you have to pay for it?

MIRELLE
No, no. Go to the little booth by the fake Roman columns. Show them your ID. If it’s your first time, they give you \$20 in credit just for existing.

CHARLIE
Wow wow, thank you! Thank you so much! We’re definitely coming back. I saw a sign that said there are horse races here too.

LILY
OMG, I love her.

CHARLIE
I love her!! We have to find the horses! We should ask someone where we could find the horses.

4:50 PM

CHARLIE
Hi! We’re new here—how do we get one of those cards? How do we sign up for a rewards card? We are confused.

CASINO PAUL
Go to that kiosk. Enter your info and you’ll get two cards—same account, just a backup in case you lose one. These cards are not accepted at any table games. Slot machines only. I’ll just need your ID’s and telephone numbers. Do you have any family members that work at the Casino?

LILY
No... Do you accept work authorization? No?

CHARLIE
But it won't take work authorization? That's so
f
rustrating.

CASINO PAUL
Yeah, it has to be a full government-issued ID. We
don't make the rules.

CHARLIE
Ahhhh. Frustrating.

LILY
I have an ID card for immigrants. Work authorization.
May I ask—why two cards?

CASINO PAUL
Yeah no, legal work authorization doesn't count for
gambling. Sometimes people play together. Makes
it easier to share. All right ladies, go to the kiosk and
make some money, okay?

CHARLIE
Okay, thank you! Thanks for explaining...

MIRABEL
I come here a lot. It helps with my depression. My
family doesn't get it. People don't understand.

CHARLIE
I'm depressed too.

MIRABEL
Exactly. It gives you something else to focus on.
People say "fix your mindset," but it's not that simple.
You guys live nearby?

LILY
Oh, yeah, yeah. Brooklyn. We both live in Brooklyn.

MIRABEL
Right. So I just play, and it helps for a little while. Oh
they have a casino at JFK near you!

5:20 PM

5:50 PM

CHARLIE
Where do you live?

MIRABEL
Connecticut—30 minutes away. I saw a girl win \$60k
on bingo once. For college. But you have to remem-
ber about taxes! They take most of the money. There
is a big one in Connecticut.

LILY
Wow. That's actually beautiful!

CHARLIE
I didn't even think about taxes. Okay well, you are
amazing. Thank you!!

CHARLIE
We've never played this game before—do you know it?

LISA
My sister plays. It's a Chinese-themed one. The fire-
crackers and gongs mean bonuses. The maximum
is \$30. If you play six dollars and you get the grand
prize, they take most of the money, but you get a
printed receipt of how much you lost in taxes. They
might give you some credit for it.

LILY
Let's try it! Starting with 88 credits... Rockets!

CHARLIE
We won rockets! That seems good? More rockets,
more rockets!

06 / 14

Chantal
Peñalosa
Fong

by Rhea
Dillon

in Chantal’s
studio

↓ “Open Letter, Invocations”
Polaroids and Carnations
2025



RD “Peñalosa’s research based practice stems from small gestures and interventions in everyday life, which are meant to expound upon notions of labour, waiting and delay” was a quote I found about your work online, so in thinking about our time here, was or is there a small gesture that you do for yourself (whether outside of your practice or within it) to contend with the everyday life that we’ve been living during the fellowship?

CPF I’ve been trying to learn how to navigate this place, so I would say that part of my daily routine is walking as much as I can. That’s also something that I do when I’m working on a specific project, because it’s a way to connect ideas and to see how the concepts are related to what is around me.

RD That could be an intervention too, because perhaps you could take a train or taxis everywhere.

CPF Yeah, I could, but I like to think about walking like processing. I usually don’t work in studio spaces. A lot of my work happens in different environments, and I’m used to that. To go to places, to take photos, to film, to talk to people, to collaborate... So I think that walking helps me to not make a bubble around certain ideas. It’s very helpful to be thinking about how some ideas that I’m working on right now, like migration or time, are related to what I see.

RD That makes sense.

CPF Yeah, that’s so it’s not an isolated process.

RD I relate to that. Repetition is a crucial element in your practice and I wanted to hear you say more about that.

CPF That’s probably a statement that’s around the internet. It’s maybe related to my early work.

RD How early is early?

CPF Like 2013.

RD I feel like, and for explanation purposes I’ll call them “the border clouds” [e.g. *Untitled.*, 2017], are a peak example of repetition.

CPF I’m not sure if I think about that project in terms of repetition, maybe it’s more related to transitions. I would say a lot of my work is between worlds. Coming from the border, I like to think that there’s space where I’m able to think or do some projects. I’m in-between Mexico and the United States. I like this in-between space because it gives me more freedom to think. Sometimes it’s like a different universe than

the rest of Mexico. The north of Mexico is so different from central Mexico and the south of Mexico. And sometimes we are closer to the United States in terms of cultural exchange, language, economy... a lot of aspects, but I'm not from the U.S. and sometimes I feel I'm almost not part of that Mexico. So for me, it's more helpful to think about this in-between. So that allows me to be inside a place and then go out.

RD More like an amorphicity.

CPF Yes!

RD Because that series is ongoing, how do you extend that “in-between” into making a project that is ongoing?

CPF A lot of my projects are like long-term research and I just like to leave the door open to more possibilities. For example, right now the project about photographing clouds in different countries across the border is a procedure that I'm going to start doing at some other borders, not simply the Mexican border. So that's why sometimes I like to continue processes in my work.

RD I really like that series. Would you call it a series?

CPF Yeah.

RD Also, and I feel like I have an understanding, but I want to let you say why you want(ed) to leave the works titled as “Untitled”? Does that have a theoretical hold or does that have a personal sentiment?

CPF Sometimes I just like to leave some things open to interpretation. Even if, for example in this series the images are not obvious, yet I think it's a work that I don't have to explain that much because the information is there. It's the image, but then I add the location and time of each cloud [below the image].

RD I thought so, but it's important to hear it from you. The border is the lacuna that you're in and a term you resonate with. How would you define “border art”? Does it make sense to you for it to exist as a version of art?

CPF This term has been used in and around the border for a decade, or maybe even more than that. And then I actually started this project called *Unfinished Business Garage* in 2019 about border art in the context of Baja, California. I invited students from the art department at Wabese, Universidad de Tónoma de Oja California in Tijuana to curate a garage, and that's also an ongoing project! It was basically a way to study the forms that artists had been working on around the border since the 60s. The strategy was to remake and/or to reappropriate from works that have become emblematic but also other lesser known works/symbols.

The idea behind collaborating with younger students is to rethink history and the way in which we learn about our own look. This was my main reference as an artist being from the border and the artworks that I was most interested in.

RD What are some of those artworks?

CPF Artists working in the same context that I was living in and thinking about how to approach these ideas around borders. Another aspect of this project was that Mexico is a very centralized country and this history of border art has always been removed from the official art history of the country. So I remember that I was visiting a private collection in Mexico City and then we went to the storage of the collection and I thought, “I've seen this place before!” It's just a place with a bunch of boxes and names on tags and I knew I'd seen this image before, that I needed to think of where I'd seen it. Then I remembered, of course, this place is very similar to my aunt's garage in San Diego.

RD ...which I read is what you based the framework for the display from?

CPF Yes! Storage and garage are not the same term, but I was more interested in this notion of the garage as a part of the architecture of houses in the States, but also houses across the border. The architecture in Baja is very similar. I was thinking that this is also an analogy of what you keep inside the house. Objects have a place inside the house but you also keep some other objects that you don't consider trash but you simply “keep there” to see if maybe in the future you will need them. I think about whether art has the same place. There is this group of artists, artworks and moments that remain in a standby moment [within the work]. I was interested in proposing a space, like a garage, on standby.

RD A standby architecture.

CPF Exactly, but also these objects and artworks are waiting to see what will happen with them in the future. Whether they're going to be part of the art history in Mexico or they're going to be completely dumped!

RD If we were going to take the architecture (that is these semi-industrial shelves in a very American-esque garage) as a proposal for “Border Art 101”, we'd have to place one of your artworks there. Are there other artworks you feel could really speak to the definitions of border art?

CPF All of the artists that I've been revisiting in this project, for me they're border art. For example the works by Heriberto Yépez, Leslie García, and John Baldessari.

RD I watched your artist talk at the Asia Society and you spoke about not knowing what your art is about as you rounded off the lecture, yet knowing that it engages with borders and ghosts. At one point in the Q&A, in

relation to the gaps in the archives, you talked about migrations as a ghost story, which I found to be a really beautiful phrasing. I was wondering if you have engaged with spirits or ancestors, do you feel like they perhaps return to you in your work, or do you feel like there’s a way that you’re able to speak to the ghosts? Three different versions of what could be true or untrue for you. The first one could be: do you feel spoken to by ghosts (ghosts being spirits or ancestors depending on who you’re talking to)? The second: do you feel like you can conjure that discursiveness through the work? And the third: do you feel like once it goes into space that it has the ability to be in conversation?

CPF

I think that aspects of the three versions are there. Since I was a kid, ghost stories were the things that we used to talk about at my grandma’s. At coffee time they’d sit at the table and talk about our lives and suddenly they were talking about ghost stories. It was part of the quotidian to talk about ghosts. I was around 10 or 12 years old and I also wanted to drink coffee with my mom, grandmother and the rest of the adults, instead of playing with the other kids, because I was fascinated by the fact that it’s part of what is happening to us.

RD

Being younger and wanting to be at that table it’s almost an aspirational discourse level. It’s like a rite of passage.

CPF

Yeah! I remember feeling like, *okay it’s time!* [BOTH LAUGH] Now that I’m thinking about it, it was the first approach to storytelling that I can remember, and that I was fascinated by. When I started working on this project about the Chinese diaspora in Mexico, of course I had a collection of books about ghost stories from different places and I was fascinated by this literary genre called “records of the strange”. It’s a genre from China and it’s basically a compilation of ghost stories. I was doing research about this period of time between 1910 until the 1930s (when my family arrived in Mexico) and during that time there was a huge campaign against Asian communities. So these groups were writing a lot of like statements and letters to the government. In these letters these people called the Asians different words like “the apocalypse”, “non-human beings”, “yellows”, “people carrying diseases” and I was like *whoa*, these documents are using words that these ghost stories are using to refer to basically ghosts e.g. non-humans, monsters, etc. Nobody in Mexico talks about the story of the Chinese migration because it was one of the most racist periods in the country. They kept that history as a ghost story itself.

RD

The whole thing’s wrapped in ghostly layering.

CPF

That was one of the starting points of this research.

RD

That’s really interesting, especially in the sense of the letters project you’re working on. There’s so many relations with that obviously with how Black people have been treated when they were displaced, but

also Caribbean folklore and the spirits. Sylvia Wynter, a Jamaican philosopher, talks mainly about the eurocentric idea of Man, but she also has this argument of the human itself as rather, both bios (matter) and logos (spirit or system), which is essentially man as its being and then man as spirit, and how does this “Man” have to encounter and exist in space.
We’ve existed in this space for months now, what are one or two things that you’ve learnt during the fellowship that you’d like to continue thinking about, post May?

CPF

Formalism! No, I’m kidding.

RD

Well form has been a topic of discussion for a lot of people. Différance also!

CPF

I think of course something related to form I hadn’t thought about that much in relation to my practice before, so that’s really interesting to me. But also, thinking on how to think about different categories within my practice, or to rethink my categories. Also, thinking about something that was already there but I can just reframe it in another way. I don’t know in which way yet, but I would say that that has been really helpful.
Now that I’m thinking, I would like to return to our first question about gestures! I’ve been going to the MET every week.

RD

It’s so big! Okay, so how have you been breaking it down for yourself?

CPF

I just go there, wear my headphones and then like to get lost inside without looking at the map. I think, besides the seminars, this is the place where I like to go and think about art in general.

07 / 14

Valentina
Jager

by Alex
Schmidt

in Valentina’s
studio

↓ pareidolia (4)
2025



AS

Tell me about *11 poems*...

VJ

My friend Santiago da Silva designed and printed it using a font by Jean Baptiste Normande. Santiago designs for big [and small] publishers, and there is always a leftover space on the parent sheet where the book layout is imposed for offset printing: a parasite book goes there.

AS

The parasite book.

[ALEX TURNS 11 POEMS OVER IN THEIR HANDS, PUTS IT DOWN, AND PICKS UP V’S ARTIST BOOK/DISSERTATION]

This other one floats between English and Spanish...

VJ

Certain things come easier for me in one language than another. But I don’t want my professional life to be only in English. And I don’t want my English to be professional either.
This you see [in your hands] is a double book you can walk through in any direction. I think about the book as a territory, as I would with land. There’s this first page where it says copyright. There are laws and rules that cross throughout the book: a specific hierarchy of what comes first and what comes last. For example, the acknowledgments section comes at the beginning and has a way to it. Well, I wanted to have it in the middle because it is central; it should be at the core. How could we play with the rules of reading?
I was taking into account that natural space (in Texas, but also everywhere) is crossed by all kinds of rules and legislation, visible and invisible infrastructure, and customary habits..., things that are not necessarily legally established, but that people follow. Like how and where you walk or don’t walk. You know things when you live there, but don’t necessarily know when you’re not from that place. So, I decided to think about the space I was walking in the same way as within a book. Well, it does have a top and bottom [the book], but still.

AS

I’m not looking for proof.

BOTH

[HAHAHA]

AS

I walk by your studio and see a figure repeated across monitors, stuttering midair. What led to this suspended fall?

VJ

This is not a project or a piece yet—it’s an experiment I’m trying. So this guy here that you see, his name is Charly Garcia, a famous musician from Argentina; an icon of music in Latin America. There was a time in his life when he was staying at a hotel, and he jumped from the 7th floor into a pool.

[WATCHING THE VIDEO]

AS He’s fine.

 VJ Yeah, he’s alive.

 CHARLY *¿Me alcanzás una Coca Cola? Está alto la verdad.*

AS Oh, his nose is bleeding.

 VJ No, that’s his mustache. He has a funny mustache. It’s brown and white. He has a mole underneath, and his hair there grows white.

 CHARLY *No, vacío, y después el agua mojada. Es un deporte. Esta es la primera cosa deportiva que realmente estoy disfrutando.*

 VJ Why was there a camera pointing at his room window? I do not know, but it’s very miraculous. Only one jump truly encapsulates that feeling of letting go and uncertainty [not those of Bas Jan Ader or Yves Klein]. And that’s Charly’s.

 CHARLY *Mirá, esto fue lo último.*

AS I’ll give my own references for this image: when the World Trade Centers were hit, people were jumping out because they knew they were going to fall. Somebody recently told me that when that happened, a cat they knew could see it, and it jumped out.

 VJ The cat not being in the same building?

AS Yeah, but seeing it. Something about it created a frenzy, and maybe this cat was like, “This is what we’re doing right now – jumping!”
 Are you summoning ghosts? Is there a method to your magic?
The glitch [in another video] is very successful.

 VJ I have not seen ghosts all my life.

BOTH [HAHAHA]

 VJ But there might be ways to leave those [doors] open. I also think about this when I translate. Maybe I’m not the ideal translator for something now, but that doesn’t mean that I won’t ever be, or that whatever result can’t lead me to something else. Even if I’m not a suitable medium, that does not mean I cannot have tea with my ghosts.
 When I decided to use writing boards for contacting the dead, whose books I was translating, I talked to some psychics about how to do this, and I was informed... not to do it.

BOTH [HAHAHA]

 VJ They were like, “No, don’t be stupid. Don’t play with this!” And I was thinking, but this is not play. And every time I read something, I feel like I’m summoning. Even though the author might be alive—it doesn’t matter.

AS This is not play.

 VJ This is not a game.

AS You’re taking it seriously.

 VJ And it had its unfortunate consequences. Later, I realized I was trying to contact an author when the séance should have been for and with the text. Because whoever has the answers to my questions is not the author, but the text itself.

AS [When preparing my questions for you] I didn’t feel inclined to write, “How do you make your work?” I think the word experiment works well. It all feels like a laboratory, which is a kind of magic, a thing that you’re trying to conjure. It doesn’t feel like your practice is drudging, or it’s not...

 VJ I do think it takes work to have a practice exist. But the borders of it are so fuzzy. What’s drudging?

AS I maybe made that word up.

BOTH [HAHAHA]

 VJ Not knowing what is going to happen is something that I enjoy.
 I do like prompts and reacting to them. Researching this [the parasite book] is a very different research from this [the dissertation]. Researching [for the dissertation] meant actually talking to people. And dressing up.

AS What did you want to pass as?

 VJ I needed to look less like a university person. I wore this pink T-shirt that said SWEET and had little rhinestones [for high visibility]. Just by walking in certain areas, I seem foreign. I was just trying to be less foreign. I feel a ghostly pressure to profit from code-switching.

 [ALEX WHISPERS SOMETHING TO THE RECORDER]

 I think there is another layer I would have to figure out how to access, to get access—

AS

Maybe it's because this building is a ghost... Structures hold the ghosts. Do you find yourself digging for something here, ever? Or does it not feel like the place to dig for secrets?

VJ

[0o0o0]

BOTH

[HAHAHA]

VJ

I love secrets.

AS

If you could uncover secrets, would you be more interested in the personal secrets of the building, the institutional secrets of the whole umbrella, or something else? Are you digging for obscurity or non-personal institutional secrets? You might not be digging yet because knowing what secret(s) to look for takes a lifetime. If being here opened a portal for you to find a secret, do you think the secret would be personal or institutional?

VJ

I don't know what I would look for, so I think I need to stumble onto something. I would only care if it's a personal secret within the institution. I don't care for institutions without people.

Ash Moniz

by Pegah
Pasalar

on the ISP
Roof Garden



PP How did you arrive at art?

AM I guess when I was younger it became a way to do and say things that didn't have much of a context elsewhere. Or at least, it was a valid space for it. I could protest, but that would be "invalid." But if I did something as a protest in art class, then it met the criteria. It felt like the only place where the things I wanted to say and do in my life had a valid possibility—at least within the outlets available to me when I was young, like in school.

There was a heavy moment in my personal life that changed everything and I needed a new friend. I thought more about my own life, death, and what it means to be alive. That somehow led me to obsess over art. Maybe it was just about being really fucking depressed and art being a way to deal. That's kind of always been the answer—art making life easier, and more meaningful, in such a cold and depressing world.

PP What drives your work?

AM A lot of things. People often ask, "Does art change anything?" And to me, that's not even a fucking question. Trump wouldn't be able to do half the shit he does if it weren't for narrative tactics—how stories are told, linguistic phrasing, use of allegory, simile, hyperbole, fallacy, performativity, tonality, etc. The most violent tactics, entire genocides, happen because of narrative manipulation. Hundreds of thousands of people are dead because people in the West have a narrative problem. It's not about math, science, or technology—it's entirely about narrative, and perception (things in the general category of creative arts).

If art is already the most violent thing—if it's responsible for people being killed—then of course art has power. With that kind of power, it's hard not to see art as tactically useful, and as a site for rethinking how we know things, and communicate, and enact things. That drives my work. The way we think about the world *produces* the world. The very idea that it's possible to create a narrative that says Palestinians don't deserve to live enables their murder. It's not that Palestinian deaths normalize the narrative—it's the narrative that leads to the deaths. So, that's something that drives me.

PP I often think about the apparatus—who holds control and how they construct narratives. In moments like these, when genocide is happening, when America is going through something fascistic, I think about ways to infiltrate. We make the art, but who will access it? What kind of change is possible? Where can we engage? What experimental methods exist?

AM I don't think there's one answer, and I don't abide by just one method. I believe in a diversity of tactics, both in organizing and in art. For example, I managed to get \$30,000 from a museum to get a family out of Gaza. Infiltration wasn't the goal, but access to money was. I literally pretended it was art to take the money, knowing art is a system of

validation. It's an institution of legitimacy—if you have legitimacy, you can get access. It's a very material resource.

What happens when you put a found object in a gallery? It becomes art. Not because of the object itself, but because of the institution's legitimization. Accessing that legitimization lets you do things like redirect resources or “steal” money for strategic purposes, all while meeting the criteria of being “creative” or “outside-the-box.” Legitimacy becomes the material itself.

But that's just one method. Public intervention is another. That's actually how I started (15 years ago), and the only reason I ever got into video. I'm not a fan of working digitally (computers, etc.), but not in any way on an ideological level, I'm just not as mentally/emotionally equipped for it. But my practice was all about public intervention, and I needed documentation. That eventually led me to creating video, beyond just documentation.

Public intervention also shifts how authorities react. If an action is perceived as blatantly creative, they're less likely to send in the Terrorism Unit. If there's humor or clear artistic framing, it camouflages itself.

PP That reminds me of the night we talked about Trojan horses—how transforming the form can prevent it from being categorized in a way that shuts it down. In such gaps in time, before the form is revealed, change can actually happen outside the linear flow of events. Speaking of the museum funding, can you tell me more about the production money that you used to evacuate people from Gaza?

AM It started because I run a mutual aid network for people who evacuated from Gaza, but I also support people still there. I've been raising a lot of money for basic needs: tents, food, survival. People kept asking if I could raise enough to get families out. The cost is insane. At least \$30,000 for a family of six. I didn't have access to that kind of money, and I don't have a massive following on IG. But then, I was working on this museum show. The budget was only for production, not an artist fee. It was money I could access if it was for art. I was sitting there with two tabs open—one calculating hundreds of dollars for Gaza, the other calculating thousands for the exhibition. And I thought, “Why don't I just move the money from here to there?” So I proposed it. It was ambitious just in the sense that I had to convince the museum. But they agreed, and it's happening. Now the problem is that the rest of the show has no budget. I have to figure out how to cover those costs. But I like that—it makes every artwork in the show exist under the same condition. That condition becomes more important than the individual pieces.

The whole thing depends on if/when the Rafah Border Crossing opens. Initially, we thought it would open before May, but now, we have no idea. If it doesn't, the money will go toward something else, like evacuation or rebuilding. Either way, the need is there. The cost of rebuilding is just as high as evacuation. This is the reality for millions of people now.

PP Can you describe the exhibition's form and how the space is structured?

AM When you walk into the museum, half the space is empty. There's an outline on the ground marking where an installation *would* be, but isn't. A plaque on the wall states that instead of producing the installation, the money was used to evacuate a family from Gaza.

So, the viewer's experience is standing in an empty space where the absence itself is the installation. That emptiness is something you feel physically, materially. It connects to the rest of the show, which is about negation, absence, and gaps. The other half of the museum is connected through circular holes in wallpapered walls that align holed sculptures from one end of the room to other. Each are material documents of negative spaces in speech within logistical labour struggles: a factory worker biting a pickle on a conveyor belt; a film made with port-workers' testimonies that we deleted (thus doesn't exist); and a telecom channel at sea that was interrupted by someone playing a song on repeat for 4 hrs straight. Most of the other floors are all past work, which is 10 years worth of research about the role of lack and loss within shipping logistics.

PP One of the things that resonates with me in your entire show, which is going to be your first institutional solo show, is that you are exploring this lack, or negative space, in many different material ways. If I think about that floor as an opera, the confluence of all these things comes together in your music video, which is at the end of the hall. It is a very direct way of bringing forth the absence— not just someone not being present, but you not being present in parts while creating this video. I'm curious about how you collaborated on it. What was that experience like, and what does that collaboration mean to you?

AM Just to describe, this is a video in collaboration with the Gazan rock band Osprey V (half of whose members evacuated to Cairo, with the other half still trapped in Gaza today) that I have been playing drums for since June. Filmed between those two cities, the film focuses on vocal acts, from narrating to beatboxing to the attempt at singing for a music video, while under bombardment.

I guess it'd be a very long story, so I'll try to make it as short as possible because I could go on forever. But it started with the mutual aid effort—I was helping with evacuation processes, while also trying to figure out how I could be more specifically useful. I don't come from an aid background, or have experience working with humanitarian organizations, so I didn't really know how that world functioned. But I realized I'm ingrained in arts and culture, so maybe I could find a way to be more useful in that space.

I started looking for artists and musicians from Gaza who had evacuated to Egypt and worked with a few different groups, one being PMX [Palestine Music EXPO], which is run by someone from Gaza, from Khan Younis, who is himself an evacuee. His way of dealing with the trauma has been to help others. So he and I worked closely together trying to: bring Gazan musicians together; build a network so they knew

each other; and create events to connect them with the music scene in Egypt. We organized jam nights where musicians from Egypt and Gaza could come together and play. That has actually grown into something much bigger.

But that's just how I got to meet the guys in the band Osprey V, because I was originally just helping them with things, then it came up that I was a drummer so I joined. And then we just became best friends. Playing music is such an important part of my life and what it means to be alive. So it's very easy for me to just throw myself into it 100%. Being in a band is one of my favorite types of relationships because it's kind of like a family, but it's also kind of like a romantic relationship. You have to negotiate what it means to have a willing partnership.

They wanted a music video, and so they asked if I would shoot one. And what's the process of collaboration been like for that? It's been very interesting because of the difference of not being in Gaza. Originally, the guys – largely, Raji, the singer of the band – really wanted me to direct, and I was like, “Okay, but how do I do that if I'm not there?” And they were like, “No, like, write the script, draw everything, and we'll just shoot it.” But I was kind of like, “Yeah, I get that, but my question is more how do I choose what you represent yourself through?” Like, I'm not experiencing this genocide. You are. They had to convince me to play a more directorial role that I was really insecure about in the beginning. But then it got better the more we just talked and got to know each other. And in general, I felt a lot of pressure.

Yeah, there are so many interesting differences. Like, with my frame of thinking in relation to contemporary art, I think of things like Susan Sontag's book called *Regarding the Pain of Others*, which is really looking at the image regime of violence and what it means to perpetuate the repertoire of violence through the document, the representation of it in art, and the roles that aestheticizing plays within violence. And then even Susan, the other Susan [Buck-Morss] has a text called *Aesthetics and Anaesthetics*, about the way that aesthetics play a role in anaesthetizing people to numb them to this type of violence, and how imaging violence is a violence. I do not want to make an artwork where the value of the work is benefiting from the atrocities that are made representable. That's something that I find difficult. If I have a work that has rubble and shows catastrophe and very visually apparent, spectacular acts of horror, then that would kind of automatically make the artwork valuable because it's impressive. And that scares me. The guys in the band were like, “You're a fucking idiot. What are you talking about?” They were like, “What? You wanna fucking make a film in Gaza without any rubble? Like, what do you want us to do, just put the camera in our pants and walk around? That doesn't make any sense. It's the dumbest thing we've ever heard.” So I think that was a really interesting conversation that I learned so much from. Like, wow, a lot of my rubrics of what it even means to make things representable kind of don't mean shit right now. Like, if they want to represent violence because they fucking need people to see how they are being murdered, then I can't be like, “No, no, no. Contemporary art says representing violence is bad.”

PPAny final words of hope?

AMHope—I feel my problem with hope is that it guides a lot of the aesthetic decisions I make because I only see hope as something that exists post-hopelessness. If you're not hopeless, then you're not hopeful. And if you are hopeless, then you're closer to hope than people who aren't—if that makes any sense.

Obviously, there is nothing good about this genocide, and I would never insinuate that, but at the same time, this is the moment in Palestinian history with the largest international support for Palestine ever. I want to be careful with my words because there's definitely not a logical equation of, “Oh, well, let's be hopeful and say the genocide is good because—” Not that. But that's an example of how only in that fucking darkness is there the hole that could lead to hope. I feel that's also something the Palestinian resistance knows. And the dialectics of light and dark are an important way to frame what hope can even mean.

PPBeautiful. Thank you, Ash. I hope that we see Palestine free within our lifetime.

09 / 14

Daniel
Melo
Morales

by Iulia
Nistor

in the
Curatorial
Room



IN

So...

DMM

Can we start with “so”?

[BOTH LAUGHING]

IN

So, I’m thinking a lot about the noise in the city. I’m on the train everyday, and I suppose you are too. As you work with sound, I’m wondering how you deal with that, or how you relate to it?

DMM

That’s a good question. In a practical way, once I go down into the subway station I put earbud headphones in my ears even if I’m not listening to music. So, just as a matter of protecting my ears I leave them in. I think about the subway a lot because I agree that the decibel level is too intense. So the other thing that I’ve found that helps me is reading on the subway platform and reading on the train. And that way I get into the text.

IN

And you don’t hear the noise so much anymore?

DMM

I don’t absorb it as much if I’m reading. And then I have felt lucky too, because they are doing construction work across the street from where I live and sometimes literally 8am on the dot a jackhammer is right outside my window. Even on weekends. Which is hilarious that I’m pointing that out because we’re in New York and...

IN

...and as artists we don’t have weekends.

DMM

Right, we’re 24/7. So, sometimes if that’s happening, I come here (to the studio). I feel so fortunate that we have access to this building. So I come here to work and that’s the other way I deal with it. My street isn’t too noisy, so I haven’t had issues at night for example. I hear people, bikes, and cars, but it’s nothing that really bothers me. For me that’s mostly the train. I find the subway so loud, really loud.

IN

I’m wondering to what extent this might also inform things. Like in a structural way, because we are used to it, the rhythm of it. Do you think it enters your work in any way?

DMM

I think so. I’m one of those people who in a space will ask someone, “Did you hear that?” And most people are like, “What are you talking about?” For me it’s just city-sound. I go to see a lot of performances. I check out a lot of music. It’s also in the way that people speak so I’m listening to that. The work in progress that I played for you, the second one, is from parts where people are speaking.

IN

On the radio?

DMM Yes, and that’s a direct decision. So I’m just always listening to people speak. People’s tones. I think for me, it’s directly impacting me: what I’m making and how I’m making. I also feel very much in the middle of that, so it’s not clear to me what the impact is, if that makes sense. I don’t think I’ll come to understand that for a while, maybe even a few months from now.

IN When you’re out of the noise?

DMM At least when, let’s say, I’m away from this program. When I can sit back and use the time as a bookend to examine some work that I’ve been making.

IN I’m also asking because I feel like there is something related to margins in your work. That what is around, or before and after, is not the main thing that we usually pay attention to. You seem to be focusing on that margin space. So maybe this is why I thought of the city noise that is accompanying us all the time, like a layer that is always there.

DMM It’s interesting, something that I’ve mentioned in other conversations about my work in sound is having an interest in a sense of the sonic world that is kind of there, or not there, or available depending on lots of factors... But I’m interested in an activity that always exists, that’s always present.

IN Something available... would you call that a given?

DMM I feel as if that’s part of the question. I don’t know, I don’t assume that it’s a given. Maybe the work isn’t the total focus, but instead part of the interest of the work is to beg that question that it’s not given. I think for me there are other implications that I think through. Do you mean to take it for granted?

IN Yes, it could be. There are different ways. I was thinking of the tables, for example, that were there in your studio, no? Someone is meant to do something on them. But then you do something with them. Just what you find in the studio could be a given. Or, what you are exposed to in the city. I have the sense that you try to focus on that.

DMM I think what you are pointing to is having this sensation that many times we have what we need in front of us. To be frank, I feel as if this is how I operate in the world. There is also something relational implied in my approach to making, which is again this idea that these materials, these tools or instruments, are immediately available. I also feel overwhelmed by the structures, demands and the different forms of labour. But I also feel as if part of the solutions are in front of us. So maybe that’s similar to having a sense of looking at everything or listening to everything. Because for me, frankly, it’s just a mode. It’s my mode. I don’t have to train myself to do that. That’s just who I am.

IN You mentioned that something appears and you related that to your music practice: that you don’t set out to do something, but instead take what is there and then something appears.

DMM Yeah, I am interested in that. In a musical context, when talking about my experience with music; my experience talking with other musicians; and collaborating with other people in a sonic-musical context, it has always been based on very brief conversations. No deep investigations in our initial conversations, but a mutual interest of wanting to try something together to create another thing that we’re part of, but that none of us has conceived before. We have a commitment to whatever that is with a want to see how that evolves, together. Sometimes that sounds great, sometimes that sounds bad—but that’s inconsequential to the commitment, the interest, and the understanding that that process reveals. At least for me, it creates a really generative way to relate to the rest of the world and my life. It’s this back-and-forth, give-and-take. That’s also how I think about a lot of what I do. There is something very human in my working as an artist and as a musician.

IN I was interested in what you said about process. How you take what is available, and how your behavior towards and resonance with it informs your life, or the other way around... So, what would you do if something is interesting to you and when something becomes a sound? Can you say that, that something becomes a sound? You hear something, and then you hear it as a sound. What would you do, would you record it? Or note it down somehow?

DMM I love your questions. You know, it depends. Sometimes I would hear something and a lot of times I just want to be with it, meaning be present with it. So, if I feel as if I have time and the sensation that I can be with it, then that’s the number one thing. Just being able to sit, stop where I am, listen, and be—that is the best case scenario.

IN What does this do, the being with it?

DMM I think it does a lot of things. It teaches me a lot. I feel as if I learn a lot about possibility. Because it’s also the sensation that it appeared: “here it is”. And here it is for anyone to be with, or listen to. So, on some level it’s this opportunity, which is a gift. Hopefully I have time to sit with it when I’m fortunate enough. And I just try to absorb it. Sometimes I know what the source is, and other times I don’t, and...

IN ...probably it doesn’t matter.

DMM It doesn’t! It does not matter at all. Sometimes I write something down about it. Sometimes I record it. Other times I don’t, even if I have the opportunity like with my phone. I don’t know what the criteria is, it’s not defined criteria that I have, but sometimes I just feel that was for now, that was for then in that moment. I don’t need to record that. I do make

IN

a lot of recordings and I hold them. But I don't have this urge to collect sounds. I have many sounds, but I don't have an urge to contain things.

IN

So it's more about it is a space that affords you to think about something. A being present to a sound. This space affords you this possibility.

DMM

Yeah, it's a chance to be with it. It depends where I'm at. Sometimes I take my notebook out and start writing, utilizing language as instructions or referencing things I've been reading, or something someone said, questions someone asked me, and relate it to that.

IN

Is this related to how the text-scores evolve, or do you set out to do them?

DMM

I do have to say that one of the things I've loved at the ISP is the writing/poetry workshops that we've had. Writing has definitely always been an important part of my practice. I've just never had access to so many writing workshops in my life, consecutively. This experience having so many writing workshops has been so generative for me. And to get closer to answering your question: these text-scores that I've been writing happened after. So I construct these sound pieces and then I sit down and write. And I don't know that I'm.... I love this word that you used. I feel as if I'm writing almost in parallel. I don't feel as if I'm describing the sounds. I'm writing with the sounds.

IN

That's interesting. So it's not a score in a typical sense. It's not an instruction.

DMM

Definitively not an instruction.

IN

Maybe it works more like a paratext. I'm trying to think of a better word...

DMM

Maybe. I'm using the word score just in the tradition of the score.

IN

Yes, I like that it is confusing exactly these expectations of the score being some kind of instruction on how to play something.

DMM

I was wondering if I can use that word, because I'm not writing it beforehand. Still, many times the score happens afterwards. I'm self-taught in music, so I wasn't trained in score notation. I learned through listening. So that's why I use the word score, but you called it paratext and I'm open to that.

IN

I don't know, I'm just thinking about it—

DMM

No, I love it! I'm open to it.

BY IULIA NISTOR

IN THE CURATORIAL ROOM

IN

But it might be a different kind of instruction, maybe for a process. A process, not an instruction, to perform the/a piece that relates to it. Since we were talking about processes and presence.

DMM

I like this. I haven't thought about this.

IN

It's not being representative of the piece.

DMM

Definitely not representative. But something that needed to be written, you know? Like, "this needs to happen."

59

by Misra
Walker

on
Zoom

↓ “[fake exit doors added]”
drywall, exit signs, door
handles, metal corner beads,
plaster, white wall paint
various dimensions
2024
Plan B, Berlin



IN I was thinking, I'll tell you something about the works that are not so apparent. I'm making interventions in exhibition spaces that manipulate some element of the space, they mimic something that is already there. And in this way are disguised in the surroundings. The presence of other objects is also important, like paintings or sculptures. It doesn't have to be my work. These further hide the intervention, because they direct our attention. In this case, I added three fake exit doors to the space. In these white cube spaces, they try to hide the doors. The doors become like a line on the wall. At the same time, they have to put a big exit sign over it. That's such a contradiction, so I wanted to make more of them. It also was the only thing you saw through the window.

MW I'm curious about audience interactions with this. I especially love that there's humor to it. Especially with the window: it's your name and then it's the piece. But it's hidden or it's just architecture that's taken for granted. You are putting it in our face. So I'm just curious about how the audience interacts with that, or thought of that, or if it took them a minute.

IN I try to make it as obvious as possible. Still, most of the time, it goes unnoticed. It's an interesting phenomenon. The moment there is something that registers as an artwork, you allow yourself to ignore everything else. Sometimes people wonder what it is, and they try to look it up on the floor plan. But part of the concept is that these interventions are not mentioned on the floor plan or the list of works. This continues the doubt.

MW I really appreciate hearing about this. A question that appears to me is that this door and the line in the wall... I guess I'm curious because I saw your paintings and then you see a relation.

IN In the context of the exhibition the paintings help to disguise the intervention, so there is an interesting relation between them. But the paintings are also a discourse in themselves. I'm definitely also a painter.

MW I would love to hear more about your paintings. And if you see a connection, or if there's questions that overlap?

IN In the paintings I was following a very particular question over the last few years: "if it is possible to depict accidental properties?" When you want to represent something in a painting, you choose the aspects that are necessary in order to recognize that thing. Every painting is an abstraction to some degree because you leave out a lot of information that's not relevant. If you reduce that to the most essential properties, you have a pictogram. Say, a certain shape is essential to recognize a glass. I'm trying to ask the opposite: if it is possible to focus on an accidental property instead? Something the glass looks like in a particular moment. In this case, the object has to fall away. That which is usually necessary becomes unnecessary. This is why I

came to describe them as properties without objects. I'm trying to focus on something accidental at that moment and not the object that it pertains to. It is also a process of abstraction, but the other way around. What is usually left out is focused on. It's not about establishing some kind of formal language in all the paintings, but in each painting I have to figure out anew how to represent a particular property. This is why the paintings all look so different.

MW They all look different! I really appreciate that. Some of them are called “evidence” and I feel like philosophy can be very scientific in the investigation of understanding. So I was curious about that influence in your practice. With that body of work or with the interventions.

IN For me they are parallel processes, because they use such different methodologies. They are parallel processes with collateral effects. They can influence each other, but I don't intend this necessarily. There are similar questions, but they develop independently in the way that is particular to each practice. I first studied philosophy and started a PhD, but then I decided to study painting. After finishing art school I went back to finish the PhD.

MW That's amazing! How do you deal with the tension between representation and abstraction? Where do you find that middle ground, that push and pull between the two? Because, I feel like there's moments where it looks familiar but it's not exactly distinct: it brings out these layers.

IN On a practical level I start with painting what I see, but there are still too many things that distract from the property I try to focus on. So I use different negative procedures, like sanding the painting, for example, and then paint over it again. The image emerges from the interrelation of these layers, so the paintings often take a lot of time until I find a solution.

MW I also have questions about site specific histories and how you go into a space. It's interesting, I feel like these are some of the questions in my practice that I want to deal with.

IN I don't necessarily look into the history of the place. It's more about spending time in the space and seeing what's particular about it, asking how I could insert some doubt. It's like trying to ask a question, but not by writing it down and showing it to someone. Rather, trying to make that question emerge in the viewer. For example, I tried to make a shadow invisible. My attention was drawn to this dark shadow and I thought that if I could find the color of that shadow, and if I would paint the rest of the wall that color, then the shadow would become invisible. It remained an attempt because the additive and subtractive color mixture is different. I developed this system of getting closer to that color. I would take the two colors on the wall and put them on different samples of paper. Then I would try to find the third color, which is the color of the shadow in

relation to these two. Then I would apply the third color to one of the walls, and start the whole procedure again and so on. It was a performance I did for six days. I got really close, still it had a different materiality. But then something else happened: when you were standing below that staircase, you would put your hand up, and your own shadow would disappear. This is because shadow and shadow add up, so your shadow on the shadow would not be visible. But your shadow on the wall would be. This image is so strange, you cannot wrap your mind around what's happening.

MW I believe it. It is a strange image that brings phenomena and I'm questioning that also. It just feels so surreal. I have a question about documentation as, because I'm experiencing your work through a digital space, I wonder if you think of the digital adding another layer to the work?

IN Also online the paintings disguise the interventions. Singular representations of paintings are quite dominant online, and even if you see an installation view it registers like a painting show. And of course it is a painting show, but in this format the interventions are maybe even more invisible than when you're in the space. So the digital is a way of continuing this disguise.

MW I really love the idea of the paintings creating this distraction. I understand that you're not specifically interested in the history of the spaces, but that you can go into all these spaces in the same way and you're there for a main reason. I think it's interesting, these connections of our perception and understanding, as I've been thinking about this, even in my own practice. I feel like it comes up in more institutions now, like ADA practices or accessibility. Even though it's not so directly linked, those rules are somehow challenged in the interventions.

IN It is definitely related, because our perception is formed by the concepts we have. You mentioned humor before. What makes it funny is that it's going against a norm, somehow disrupting it, or confusing some function or convention. My brother is deaf, so I always had a different sensibility towards these things. To question norms and standards is extremely important. We should become more aware to what extent our perception is actually determined by conventions and expectations. Hopefully everything that is outside of the norm comes into consideration. So it's about undoing these concepts. Making them visible first to open the possibility to change them—to change our mind.
What made it humorous for you?

MW Yeah, I think just how the door appeared. I think it was funny because I was so focused on your paintings. And then there's more to this work that I'm not even seeing. Like, I would laugh a genuine giggle. I kind of appreciate how that messes with my perception or understanding.

IN I think that’s the ideal case, if it’s funny. It’s difficult to achieve. I don’t think I always do.

MW Honestly, I feel like it helped me really understand your practice more. Because even if I’m familiar with your practice now, it’s still like a riddle. It’s going to take time. It’s based on how long we’re in that space too. So, I think that’s something that intrigues me how the audience participates in the work.

IN I wouldn’t want people to start looking out for it. This makes it difficult to talk about the work. The moment you disclose it, it’s a spoiler. Ideally it’s just invisible and you’re looking at the other artworks. And maybe it happens that you have this doubt, but maybe not and that’s fine, you know. It’s fine if it’s never seen. More like a rumor. Someone once came up to me at an opening and was like “there is this rumor [POINTING UP], that this is part of the work”. And pointing this out, everybody looked up. They were comfortable looking at the small paintings, but the biggest piece (the sprinkler system) was hanging above them. These works are not supposed to be presented by the institution or gallery, they work better as a rumor.

MW What I really just appreciate about the way you work is how you deal with everything as part of art making. How much information you include or exclude; the documentation; the way you work in the space; and how you’re bringing these questions in. I just feel like it’s intriguing because it’s questioning everything. I find it really interesting because it’s just all these formats and how we understand them, or what we are seeing or not seeing, and how it’s all interconnected.

IN In a way it’s always just a process of my own questions. Like the questions that preoccupy me becoming a practice. A painting practice, or bringing them in the space with the interventions. I also want to do something with the space because this is relating to the spectator in a very different way than showing him a representation. It’s like communicating on a different level. I love making these interventions, it is so much fun. Also, working with the people who help me doing them, they are excited that something happens to the space of which they know so well. It’s interesting to find the line where it’s as absurd and big as possible, but still kind of hidden. It has to be very exact. Like the slit below the doors. So it’s just fun to do that. And I never know if it works out or not. There’s an idea, but really it has to work on a perceptual level. Not accessed through a concept, but through perception accessing the concepts that are already there. As if falling back on the concepts you already have. It’s a fine line to create this doubt.

MW Yeah, I could see all the work and the intricacies that kind of go with it. Just like finding that exact tone of the shadow.

IN That was maybe the only one that didn’t really work out. It’ll remain an attempt, some kind of poetic attempt. It’s just not possible to match that color, light just adds up differently. Yeah, it’s not always working out but then something else happens.

MW I like that you bring these questions though, even if the result is not the exact thing. I still feel like the question is important and it makes a lot of sense whether it worked out or not. But even when you’re saying that it’s okay that people don’t realize, it’s something about the question. I mean, I still felt like it was a successful piece.

IN Yes, it’s a way to spend time with the question.

Pegah Pasalar

by Nooshin Askari

in Pegah's studio



NA

We have often talked about the possibilities that imagination offers. This is also something that has been brought up in conversations in ISP, and you have shared some criticism about it, especially in the context of art, as it avoids or postpones certain realities to the future. Can you talk more about this?

PP

I think when somebody is incarcerated and surrounded by walls, imagine solitary confinement where they physically cannot leave the oppressive geometry of the space. They have limitations on their corporeal bodies and movement. For them, imagining another world, imagining what is outside of those walls, is a form of resistance to the infinite suspense of losing track of day and night. Imagining light, does not light up the space, but reminds them that it exists. It's a survival mechanism.

I understand that there are different forms of captivity and the word can be attributed symbolically as well. But I want to anchor conversations around the fact that we are not surrounded by walls that limit our actions. Our possibility of movement, our possibility of organizing, our possibility to create trouble for the cogs of this machine are ever present.

Every single one of us come from different positions. Every single one of us comes from different privileges of agency and mobility. What I am critical about is how just relying on imagination as a tool for resistance can be pacifying. It's one of many many tools that we need to survive. Action feeds imagination and imagination feeds action, and these parameters are always in flux.

As we are speaking a genocide is happening.

NA

I'm also thinking about how imagination is designated to one space, i.e., an art exhibition. That has been a big problem in Germany and, in general, in post-World War II contemporary art discourse, which portrays art as having a moral duty and a civil function in a "peaceful" society. This has led to a moment of extreme censorship and stigmatization of artists who are outspoken about the Israeli genocide of Palestinian people.

PP

I agree. Maybe actually what we are suffering from is limited imagination? We can think of imagination and world-building in wider contexts, where they can be hiding places as well. Worlds of fantasy, worlds of spirits and shadows, worlds of labyrinths, whimsy and poetry... They can create a liminal space that, you know, can potentially offer a space of floating. The present tense. So I think to your question—I am critical about just relying on one tool for resistance. I wish for a better world, a better economy of art, where art is empathetic. Do we sometimes interchangeably use wish and imagining?

There are so many parameters outside of our control. In fact, I think we are lucky that we are not in control of everything—things happen without us knowing. I did not grow up in a peaceful society, and I think I don't have a frame of reference for it, but I believe that one of the many miracles that art can do is asking again and again for the meaning of things. If peace is shutting people down then that's not the right word.

NA I think what happens in the discourse of art is applying imagination to linear time. While we're talking about imagination or the future, the future can exist as alternative realities. It kind of renders such realities as nonexistent, existing only in the realm of imagination and postponed to a future linear time. So I can understand your criticism, but how do you deal with this problem in your work?

PP Treating time as linear imposes so many limitations on us. Life is not linear—we experience so many things at once. When I first encountered José Muñoz and the concept of futurity I was really struck by it. I think he wrote about this in the late '90s. Twenty-five years have passed, and people have written about it, analyzed it, and engaged in closer readings of what it means.

So, in no way do I think that when someone like Muñoz introduces a term—he wasn't the first to talk about the future as potentiality. Many people have engaged in the practice of imagination. I just think that when we come up with ideas, it takes time to actually bring them back to the reality of the time—to the material reality and politics of the moment. And this is a practice of thinking about what does this term, this text mean now? What functions does it serve? For me, politics is the politics of blood, flesh, and sweat.

In my latest project, I've been thinking a lot about imagining other worlds. I'm working with maps from the 12th century, created by Al-Idrisi. His map is a commission of an Italian king and one of the first detailed depictions of Euroasia. It's in an attempt at accuracy through collaborating with many travelers and astronomers to draw land. After nearly a thousand years, I look at these maps and they seem like illustrations to me. Because Al-Idrisi was Muslim, and in old cartography the South was placed at the top as the compass, the entire map is rotated. So when I look at it, it's not the familiar shape of continents we have become accustomed to today. It takes me a minute to orient myself. This made me think about how cartography and maps are not fixed images, and how orientation has changed over time. These maps seem to me like maps of another world. Can we imagine things outside the realm of reality?

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about where we are actually from (my family's origins) and there are just so many hyphenated identities there that show many patterns of forced displacement, one of which is slavery. Every family has an archivist, the one who knows all the genealogy and foggy histories, and we're usually too late to write everything down. Right before my family archivist (my great aunt) passed away she recognized that we were enslaved at least 4 generations ago. And this was in the context of Iran. So I started finding images. I started finding earlier representations of Black people in different places—miniatures from that time, photography, and so on. But I couldn't pinpoint exactly where we were from. (Beeta Baghoolizadeh's writings on this history have been one of my blessings.)

Things started appearing in my dreams. Cues and symbols that lead me through this project. That was when I began thinking—there are many realities. There's the reality that takes place in my dreams,

which I have no way of representing. And there's the reality that we are probably from Habasha, or somewhere else, but I can't pinpoint when or how we were brought to Iran. I can't lay out a plot, so I dance with my pen in the attempt.

At first, engaging with these maps was just a way to grapple with haunting questions that I had such as what was the name of my maternal ancestor, and what was her real language before she lost it. "Ancestor" might sound like a far figure in time, but I remember my mother's grandfather, and I wanted to know the name of his mother. Ancestors are closer to us than we think. The right question became more about where home was for me. Home is towards the south. South of a body or south of Iran or "global south" does not matter. We are all going south.

NA I want to know this though: you made a distinction between narrative time and story time regarding one of your works. Can you explain that to me?

PP Yeah. Narrative time and story time are terms that are derived from narrative theory, and I learned them through film studies. There is a chronological course of events happening in a story. Let's say the story covers 20 years of one's life: that's the story time. Narrative time is how time is represented within the story telling. Flash backs, ellipsis, slow motion and other techniques shape this. A single day in one character's life can be described over many chapters, or 20 years could be as short as a paragraph. Sometimes the story time is bigger than narrative time, and vice versa.

I refer to this because the works you are referring to, specifically *Lost in Her Hair* (Monday) (2019), I made from home movies. I usually say that the year it was made is between 2000 and 2019 because it shows a very long story time, which covers from the day I was preparing to attend school, which is the day that gender was imposed on me as an AFAB person, until the moment I left Iran. The film is seven minutes, but the story time holds more than 20 years. So I'm interested in this terminology because it allows me to think about the relationship between duration, and what we are representing as the actual time. The other work is *Phenomenology* and is a video of me taking off more than 200 items of clothing, played in reverse. So the reverse shot turns the act of taking clothes off into an endless cycle of bodily concealment. The story time for this work is in a way a course of history represented in nine minutes. Both works were made when I was in Iran.

How one deals with a timeline is my daily question of life.

NA I know you've been working with glass lately. In describing some of your recent works, you mentioned that your goal was to transform an object from a shape to a condition. What does "shape" mean to you, and how is it positioned in relation to "condition"?

PP I believe each work should be treated not through one poetics, but through many poetics. Materials don't have to always adhere to historical conditions and modes of production or the connotations that we are familiar with. They just need to be articulated or maybe be poetic enough, so that other viewers want to spend a duration of time with the work before they step back into "real time".

I've always been interested in breath as a material. Working with balloons and inflatables was an extension of the same desire, because I've always thought of air (something shapeless) as close to the divine. As a child, I thought it could take any shape. Later, I discover I can trap air: balloons. They create a shape around something unseen. An outline. A map. For me, using balloons was an archiving method. I'm fascinated by ephemeral materiality, like breath, and how blowing up balloons is an extension of bodies in space.

When I encountered glass during a residency, I was fascinated by how shapes are formed by managing heat and breath. It was around the same time as October 7th [2023]. I began thinking about fragility and heat management. In Farsi, the old word for glass translates to "like water": *aabgine*. I have lived through variations of instability in the Middle East. Glass, for me, became a way to explore breath, but also create a more rigid form of archiving, which is different from balloons. My interest in light and projection came from my background in cinema, and I began to think about how glass could reflect, diffract and refract light in various ways. It's about creating a stage where light fluctuates and alters perception as the body moves. Images are not fixed.

NA Are you transforming a shape into a condition?

PP Yes, for the first series of blown glass that I made, I was trying to preserve tension and threshold. These pieces were fragile. As we were blowing glass we were pressing stones over them. It's about archiving the moment just before destruction.

NA You're capturing the moment, the fragment of time before destruction, which also changes the perception of time, right?

PP Exactly. The moment before something shatters feels different. What do we do when there is nothing to hold on to? In treating these works I think about a system of relations and navigation. I only use transparent glass or very opaque colors, and the lighting brings more visibility to the representation of the shape on the wall as opposed to the object. The lighting for these objects in part are given to the hand of the viewer through a flashlight. I like creating ephemeral images, unfixing fixed images and narratives, and fragmenting them. Plato's cave, the homie.

NA That's a powerful way to think about it. You're creating a space for fluctuation and uncertainty.

PP And volatility. In my current prototypes of glass, I'm exploring more architectural glass. They are suspended in places where the viewer needs to move their body around to try to see the object in a more legible angle. The work at first looks seductive. It invites proximity only to offer precarity. The works are suspended in space, like they are close to falling or losing their shape. This way of presenting brings more attention to the materiality of glass. The piece becomes about being entrapped in spaces that are prone to violence that we did not necessarily create, but are forced to participate in because we are in it. I think a lot about complicity and agency. Refusing to accept these spaces and finding agency in small acts—domino effect of trouble making.

NA What are the points of orientation that you build the cartography of your practice on? I also want to throw in something personal here to maybe make it related to your experience of perhaps disorientation, misorientation regarding your love for literature and poetry, which I imagine has been very influential in your decision of making art.

PP Nothing other than poetry has ever been able to encapsulate all of my feelings at once, swinging between Eros and Thanatos, life drive and death drive. In Iran many forms of poetry exist that each serve a function. I have studied many of these forms—Rubai, Qasida, etc. As I get older, I am more drawn to ghazal, a form for lyricism. It teaches me how to talk about my work, and how to think about materials. Poetry doesn't tell you what to do. It's between the lines where reading happens. In Iran, due to historical fears of repercussion, we often speak obliquely, and we respond with poetry in day to day responses. From a young age, I was encouraged to memorize poetry, and every time I feel lost, I hum the poems I memorized as a teenager. Ghazal does not point toward a specific direction. It's like love—fluid and unrestricted. It's a trickster form. It moves without gravity, wherever your field of association desires. In my work, I aim to offer a field where people can get lost and play. I believe playing is one of the purest forms of desire.

by Chantal
Peñalosa Fong

in Chantal’s
studio

↓ “Embodiment Session V/VI”
Performed by Alex Schmidt on
March 12, 2025 at The Whitney
Museum of American Art.
Photo credit Filip Wolak



Disclaimer: There is an abundant quantity of laughter throughout the interview.

CPF You work with performance, painting, and text. How do you decide when a piece should take the form of a live performance, versus a painting or script?

AS Usually, I start with text or performance. It’s a lot of repetition around a similar idea. I’m trying to get at it in these different forms. Live performance allows me to be with people and access a particular moment, whereas a painting could exist for hundreds of years, and a song has this potential to be listened to over and over. They could start a repetition process. They each have different powers.

CPF Even if you’re working on a painting, would you start from text as well?

AS I’d start from performance, which includes text: songs, scripts, monologues. Often text comes first, then performance, then a painting. But it isn’t like I write a script, act it out, and paint a photorealistic painting of the documentation. It’s more abstract than that.

CPF You use the concept of “utopian parasitism” in your work, suggesting a tension between dependency and regeneration. How do you navigate this paradox in your practice, and how do audiences respond to it?

AS I was thinking about these relationships—for example, between an artist and a patron—where you’re authentically connected, authentically inspired by each other, but also transactionally intertwined. Somebody has more power to drive an artist’s career, or maybe an artist has the power to agree to do something, and there’s potential money that will be exchanged. There’s a kind of parasitic relationship, but both agents are benefiting from it. There’s potentially even love present in addition to the transaction—or not love, but other things. I see those relationships everywhere, especially if you’re in the art world or if you’re a gig worker and you’re constantly hustling.

I was tutoring wealthy toddlers, and I authentically love these children, but I was getting paid to love them. One time, one of my students, who was maybe five, literally asked me, “Would you spend time with me if you weren’t paid?” And the answer is probably no.

I think we’re all enmeshed in these kinds of relationships. It’s in my practice, but it’s in my life too. I think it’s in a lot of people’s lives, whether or not we want to admit that we stand to gain from the relationships we build, even if we also love the people we build them with.

I see this happening between the paintings and the performance. I see how the paintings often emerge from the performance—maybe they get used during the performance—and they kind of generate themselves, like a cycle of regurgitation. I see how they can’t really happen without each other. They don’t really exist without each other. They’re benefiting from each other, but they’re also leeching from each

AS

CPF

other. They come with different histories and potential power, whether as social capital or financial capital. Historically, painting is an object with capital power, and performance is underfunded, but comes with social capital.

AS

CPF

Would you say that your awareness of different capitals is part of your work process?

AS

Part of what interests me about figure modeling is that it's a form of performance that has always fostered painting. I like to think of them as siblings.

AS

CPF

You describe your performances as modular and iterative, with no final form. Can you share an example of a piece that has significantly transformed through repetition and audience participation?

AS

The modules are songs by Not Yet Titled (my band) and monologues or scripts, which come from my publications *Diary of a Monitor* (2023) or *[13] Acts of Time* (2025).

AS

CPF

Delulu was the first song I listened to and I loved it...

AS

That song has been performed, for example, at the end of *Performance Rehearsal: Understudies* (as a finale) and towards the beginning of *Not Yet Titled: SUB* (as an opener). It's kind of a way to take all the air out of the balloon by being like, "I'm just guided by my own delusions." It puts a question mark on a lot of it.

AS

CPF

But that's what artists do all the time, I think: deal with some sort of delusions and illusions.

AS

Maybe it will feel like I've tried every angle. I've never presented the work as a closed thing. I like to keep it open.

AS

CPF

In your process, you treat each gesture as a rehearsal for ongoing work. Do you view your entire practice as one continuous piece, or do certain works mark distinct moments or conclusions?

AS

It feels like one big work. It feels like one of those balls that's rolling and picking up stuff along the way.

AS

CPF

Like a snowball?

AS

More like there's something sticky and it's picking up stuff. So eventually you wouldn't be able to see the next layer, it's very well covered up—but it's all in there. It's really hard to talk about it without trying to at least explain the origin... figure modeling.

AS

CPF

I just thought of this piece by Gabriel Orozco *Yielding Stone*, which is a plasticine ball that he rolls in the street and collects all the imprints from the rolling. This one's more about traces, while the other image you're talking about is more about creating a ball with accumulated objects as it rolls. It's more about collecting.

AS

Part of the premise is to say that a play or a performance isn't the whole thing—the power of time-based work is that it is literally never the same. So even if I did the exact same thing two days in a row, I would say it's always different. What I try to maintain is the audience's awareness of that. I'm interested in painting traces—wires, feet, blurs—because that's the material that shapes how something might feel different from one day to the next. It's like, what happened in the world that day, what the weather was like, who was in the audience, how I was feeling, the thing I forgot to do, the mistake I made—that can completely shift a work.

AS

Rehearsal works the same way. It's like a ball or a sphere that's picking things up. And maybe, through rehearsal, there are things that happen that the audience doesn't see, but they're embedded in the work. I know it's the same for painting too.

AS

There are things under the layers, or things edited out of video. But something about performance is often about suspending disbelief—that this is the final form, the superior form. I'm more interested in the traces that didn't make it in, or in finding a way to keep them present.

AS

CPF

Citation and homage play a role in your work—what thinkers, artists, or historical references have been most influential in shaping your approach?

AS

I love Cicciolina—muse, porn star, and politician. I love Pippa Garner, who just passed away. Pippa and Cicciolina feel especially helpful for me right now in terms of the power of nudity, eroticism, and humor at this time. I've gotten to work with Autumn Knight—her attention to group dynamics has been really helpful for me. I've also worked a lot with Dave McKenzie—he has really modeled how to resist answers.

AS

Also, Maria Lassnig's paintings—she only paints what she says she feels. Aki Sasamoto's sets, and Josh Smith's set pieces...

AS

CPF

I like how Josh Smith has been doing different series with the word "emo," which is a word I love. There's this exhibition called *Finding Emo*, which is supposed to sound like *Finding Nemo*, and another one called *Emo Jungle*. I just like when artists deal openly with emotions. I like emotion.

AS

Me too.

AS

CPF

You said that text is important across your entire practice. Could you talk more about how that process works, particularly when it comes to writing songs?

AS Writing happens in a lot of different ways. I don't play any musical instruments, so for a while it was just me singing on my bike. And then [in August 2023], I started playing with Karewith Casas (a guitarist), who has come by to ISP with Anthony Torrano (a drummer) a bunch.

A big part of our method is improv, but the improv isn't just coming out of nowhere. Sometimes I'm using my iPhone notes as material, like a sketchbook. Sometimes, I write us a song and just say, "Let's play this." Sometimes, Karewith plays a sound, and I respond to it. There's just enough trust that there's time to be bad and find it, or keep repeating it until it works.

Some people approach painting by first building a structure, stretching it, and priming it. Then, maybe they create a series of drawings, honing them down into a more developed set, which eventually becomes the foundation for their paintings. There's a precision to that process that can be broken down into identifiable steps. It's not the way I've been working. I admire that approach because I can see its utility, but my method is more like putting something in a kiln and not knowing what will come out. There's an element of unpredictability, and that means I create a lot, and edit later.

CPF So, my last question is: what has been the most meaningful aspect of being at the ISP?

AS I'm realizing how vulnerable this experience has made me feel because, honestly, I don't usually like friend groups. They irk me. But here, I've felt more willing to let myself fall into it. At the same time, I feel mortified trying to create amidst these really intense, critical, and powerful conversations.

I was reflecting on the tarot reading we had with Denise Ferreira de Silva and Valentina Desideri. Intelligence often comes with a lot of self-criticality. That's useful for making with integrity, but making itself is a form of thinking. I hope we don't accumulate shame. Making is a form of thinking. I hope we keep trying.

During the last part of the interview, we talked and shared about some reality TV shows we watch—kind of embarrassing and mostly competition shows. We laughed and ended the conversation with a big, lovely hug in my studio.

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Julia
Taszycka

by Ash
Moniz

in Julia's
studio

↓ "studio view"
2025
Whitney ISP,
New York, NY



AM

What am I looking at?

JT

You're looking at found objects—damaged ready-mades. These objects are deprived of their original function, becoming abstract in that way. That's what I think makes them perfectly serve the idea of art. I try not to aestheticize the objects I work with. I choose them, pick them up, and place them in a studio or gallery without altering their form. I want to preserve their inherent shape because I see them as witnesses to the social and economic system we're living in.

I don't want my work to be about me. Instead, I want to point out the stories embedded in these objects—the ones that get discarded, replaced, and become part of the ongoing gentrification process.

AM

I see it. These objects are exactly how they're supposed to be in terms of their functionality? Like this [POINTING TO THE DRYWALL INSTALLATION LEANING AGAINST THE WALL.]

JT

These pieces of drywall come from either building distortions or leftovers from constructing new apartments. Some of my work leans more toward installation, but some I place as singular pieces on the wall. I like to preserve the little architectural workers' drawings on them because they contain additional information. I get a bit flirty and ironic with the two-dimensional aspects of my work. It's a commentary on the relationship between the economic and artistic value of art, especially because in the U.S. the link between the art world and market is so strong.

AM

Do you feel like that was a turn in your practice because of your own turn in your life?

JT

I came to the U.S. because I wanted to study art theory, which I previously didn't have much access to. The school system mirrored many of the dynamics outside of it, and through this I realized that working aesthetically was not the direction I wanted to take. In fact, I wanted to challenge that approach, particularly in relation to how I had engaged with aesthetics in my previous work.

This led me to a turning point. I wanted to engage with what already exists in the world—using what's out there rather than focusing inward.

AM

Where did that come from? Like, I got the context and the difference in being here and shit like that, right? But what happens is...you don't want to because—

JT

In a way, I understand that any piece placed in a gallery inevitably carries aesthetic qualities, whether intentional or not. That realization was an important part of my journey. Initially, I was trying to eliminate aesthetics altogether, but over time, I came to understand that the viewer's experience also matters. An object has to be shown in a way that allows for it

to be received and perceived in alignment with the idea it’s meant to convey.

Previously, my work was more focused on linearity—it was still somewhat conceptual, but it involved a lot of exploration around drawing, the perception of time, duration, and similar ideas. Over time, I became interested in different concerns and started developing them.

AM So how long has it been since that shift in your practice?

JT If you look at my work from when I was living in Poland compared to my time at Hunter College, you can see the evolution—but it happened over time. I was still working with similar issues and subjects, but on a different scale and within new contexts.

AM How has your relationship to the outside world changed, just like walking down the street vibes?

[ONE OF THE METAL OBJECTS FALLS.]

JT We should include this to the interview. I love it.

AM You don’t mind if I touch it?

JT Not at all. They can’t get worse, so you don’t have to worry.

When I moved to New York, I was struck by how different the city’s landscape was from what I had experienced in Europe. One of the biggest shocks was the sheer scale of consumption in the U.S. and how much waste fills this city. This cycle of consumption and disposal was something I couldn’t ignore.

AM I’m curious, in the process since you’ve been doing this, has that (in the act of going out and finding things or looking for things) made you see things differently than when you started?

JT I started collecting industrial materials while noticing how many buildings were being demolished to make way for luxury apartments and skyscrapers. That shift in the city’s landscape made these materials more interesting to me than, say, a broken TV or a discarded fridge door—which you can see here.

So it did change. I also spent the past year in Poland, and because of the full scale Russian invasion on Ukraine, the Polish landscape has changed significantly. Millions of Ukrainians have moved to Poland, which dramatically impacted the economy and, consequently, transformed the physical landscape. When I first left Poland for Fulbright and MFA studies here, it was rare to see people discarding functional household items—things like furniture, laundry machines etc. The mindset I grew up with was that if something breaks, you repair it. I see it as a very European way of thinking. Interestingly, the objects you find discarded in New York are different from those in Poland.

AM I’m also very curious how on one hand, there’s a rubric system specifically for evaluating. So, if I say something is good or bad, then it depends on what the rubric is—

JT Can you explain “rubric” more?

AM Okay so according to this rubric, if it’s tall and it has pants and it does this, then it’s “good”? Like, rubric just means, “what are the categories that tell you that something is good or bad?” So, because I’m actually very curious about rubrics, and I feel like you have rules that you set up for yourself—you don’t just take any random trash, it’s this specific thing. That’s something really interesting to be able to see what passes your test.

JT If you saw me on the street, you’d probably notice me stopping and staring at an object for a while, trying to decide whether to take it or not. It’s always a real-time process of consideration rather than a strict set of rules.

AM That is even a part of my question of how the outside world has changed for you. I don’t exactly even know how to put it, but where does the role of aesthetics lie exactly? Because, on the one hand, you take something that you’ve decided meets the criteria of what your mind can bring into the studio or not. But also then, when it’s here there are very formal qualities. Like, [POINTS TO MATERIALS IN THE STUDIO] this looks like a crazy drawing! So, are the aesthetics parts already in it?

JT That’s true, and it’s something I’ve struggled with for a while. Aesthetics are part of the content too—the way it’s bent is radical. You can see the power used by workers or machines to fit it into a container. The rawness of that gesture is something that interests me. I don’t choose objects just because they’re beautiful—I don’t even like using that word. What matters to me is the curiosity I feel when I see them. And when I’m in the studio, because they’re discarded objects, I want to find the best way to present them to the viewer. It has to be both intriguing and efficient, while fulfilling the conceptual intentions behind it.

This balance between the conceptual and the formal is something I constantly think about. It’s easy for the aesthetics to overpower the concept, but on the other hand, if the aesthetics are completely ignored, no one will engage with it. It’s a fragile balance. This is the constant dialogue I have in my head when working with these objects. It’s about getting the viewer to look at the objects for a moment; what happens in their mind after that is up to them. I deliver the content, and then it belongs to the viewer. That’s what artists do, right?

AM What do you make of the fact that this [gesturing to the objects in the studio] could be like a storage of materials?

JT If you're familiar with these materials and their dimensions, you'd know that they aren't typically reused.

AM You do reuse them sometimes, though. Like if there's a hole in a wall, it's easier to just fill it.

JT Okay, fair enough. But how often does that actually happen? Usually, you just discard these materials.

AM But even stuff like that [pointing to the wall] there's no point getting a whole thing. We can just grab a piece like that, but put it right here. I feel like I've done that sometimes.

JT But you are also a very ecologically aware person.

AM Yeah that's true.

There's a difference between the object that you're bringing in and the way in which it's being installed. Because no matter what, there's no neutral context. There's always an installation, and like this right here, is an installation of stackedness. The way things would be set up to be stored almost has a type of temporality to it. Because, the mere concept of a stack is something's waiting. These materials are waiting to be used in the future, or to be transported. I find the temporal aspect interesting because this could easily just be a stack of materials that you're going to use in the future, but it's also the installation. In the gallery space, would you exhibit it exactly like this?

JT Yes and no. With this particular setup [pointing to the drywall installation], I'd like the scale to be larger as I think that would better serve the point I'm trying to make in my practice overall. I want it to be seen not just as an object but as an installation.

AM What feelings do you think guide you more as an artist? For example, by curiosity or fear or catharsis or obsession or comfort or anger...?

JT I'd say anger, but also hope. The anger comes from my disappointment and disagreement with the reality I'm living in, but there's also hope that art, including my work, can bring attention to certain issues.

AM Do you feel that there's a degree of coldness or warmth in your work?

JT I never really thought about it, but if I had to choose now, coldness would definitely dominate. Working with industrial materials, they are cold: they are dead. They've finished their journey and don't serve any function anymore.

AM But then, if you give them a function by turning them into art, to you, is that an act of reincarnation?

JT For sure! [LAUGHS]

AM You've said that you are a conceptual artist. What does that mean to you?

JT I think a “conceptual artist” is just a convenient way for me to say that I don’t see myself as a material-focused artist. Often, when people ask what kind of artist you are, especially in the U.S., they’ll ask, “Do you paint?” or, “What kind of art do you make?” If I try to explain in terms of material, I get very confused. It’s hard to describe because I don’t consider myself a sculptor. I don’t necessarily make objects—I create ideas and set limitations around how I want to work. Then I gather objects as they’re a reflection of the concepts I’m exploring.

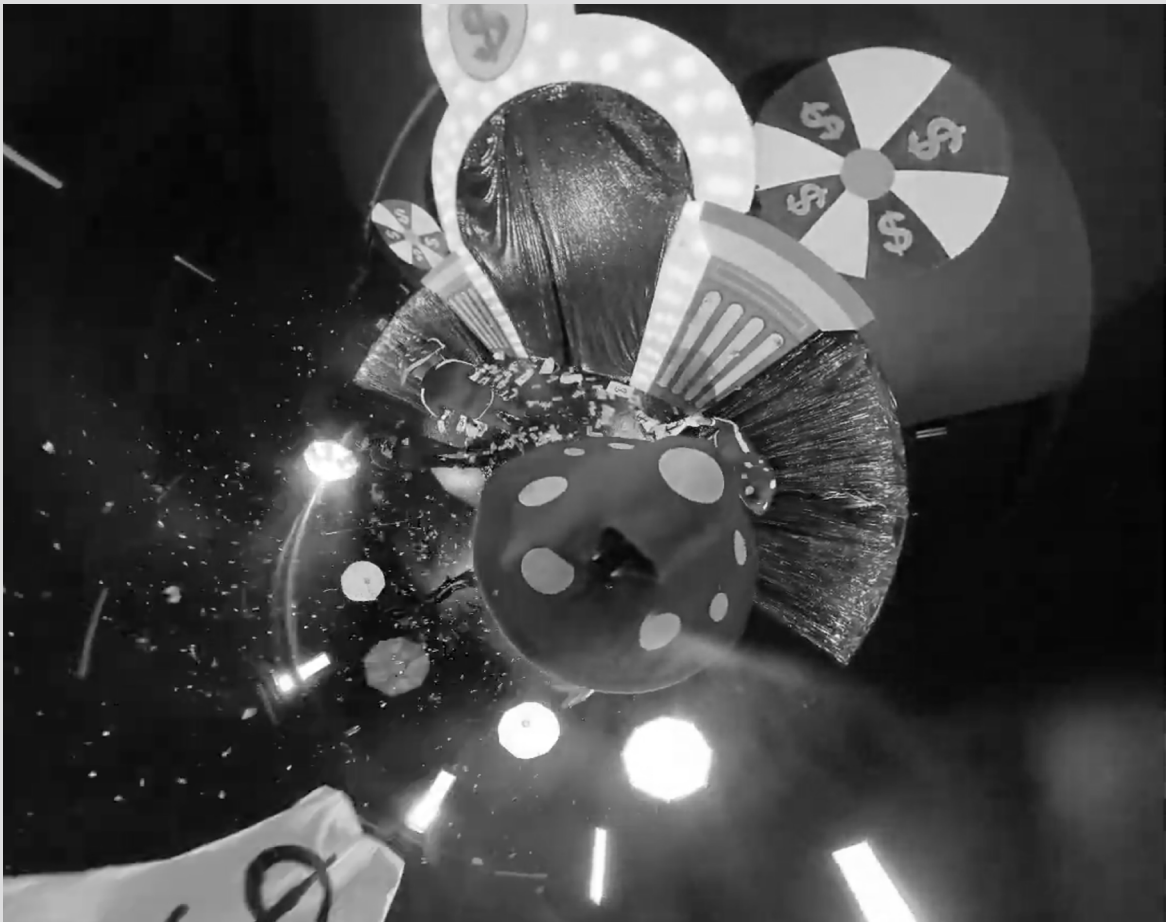
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Misra Walker

by Valentina Jager

in Misra’s studio

↓ Video still from “What is to be Done?”



MW It’s always been about social justice for me.

VJ You mentioned that social and political organizing is part of your practice. Are there methodologies that you share between these worlds? In your videos, one can see the anti-capitalist ideas that come from organizing playing a role in your art-making. Does it also go the other way around, that there is something that art brings to the table for social and political mobilization?

MW What I’ve been trying to do is bring in a lot of theory into my art practice; the theory that I’ve engaged with in my community organizing for understanding class struggle through foundational texts of Marx, Engels, and Lenin—what we call scientific socialism, we see these processes of dialectical and historical materialism as science. One has to observe and understand the material conditions of what’s happening to create observations and then possible ideas for outcomes. It is about applying philosophy and history, and the material conditions of workers through a scientific framework. I’m bringing that into my work, thinking of it on a scientific approach, on how I get to a conclusion. A lot of my work is also trying to understand my responsibility as an artist of what possible worlds I want to create.

As an organizer who believes in socialism and communism, I look at the material conditions, interpret them, and bring them into my practice. I’m also looking at horror to dissect those ideas and concepts. A lot of the narratives are based on Marx’s economic theory and colonial theory, such as Frantz Fanon’s contextualisation of this. I’m also interested in what we’re building towards. What are those possible worlds? Or with socialism, what would such a society look like? What are the contradictions that would take us from one stage to another? And that’s what they try to talk about in history, that because of how capitalism developed, it will inevitably fall and that there’s going to be a new mode of production after. Our hope is to socialism, because of how fucked shit is right now, the contradictions and antagonisms. So I’m bringing that to my work to reflect all that theory of where we are, where we can move to, or how we can go there.

Even now, I’m trying to bring some of those organizing methodologies of how we struggle things out, how we work together with collective ideas over individualism. On the other hand, art definitely has a whole space in organizing. We use it all the time in propaganda, as visuals for example. There’s a whole history of organizers, like the Black Panthers, that used visuals. I can aid the community because not everyone always reads, so we need visuals to bring these concepts. I was like, how do I bring it back to the community and make these concepts, you know, accessible, understandable, and relatable to the people?

VJ Speaking about the material conditions, how do you understand labor and work in relation to your art-making?

MW I definitely see it as inseparable, being an artist as a labor. I'm in the gig economy and I won't have job security. I'm always a 1099 independent contractor, or something. It's like no worker protection, which is really unfortunate. Art is a form of labor, and we do have to sell our artistic, intellectual, and labor power back to the capitalists, so I still feel like those class struggles are here because we need to survive, right? And we're trying to survive. I come from a working class community, and I have an MFA and higher education so I understand the doors and spaces that I'm able to get in and be in. But then antagonism is still there. Like, I'm still a laborer. I'm still a worker and I still have to survive at the end of the day.

I see the class struggle because I'm also teaching right now as an artist. And I'm glad to be able to teach art and give back to the working-class communities that I came from. We are so alienated from each other, sometimes there's individualism with artists. I appreciate spaces that challenge that. Like even with this cohort, there's more unity, not like competition. We have common struggles, you know, like we're all laborers and trying to figure out how to survive, and we still have to pay rent and eat and get health care and all this shit. So, yeah, how do we link?

VJ You spoke about how horror movies are part of your research. They are not something that you show in an exhibition, but they inform your practice. Which movie triggered you to relate horror cinema and class struggles? How do you understand that research?

MW I wasn't aware of it at the time when *Get Out* (Jordan Peele, 2017) came out, and everyone was seeing how race and horror were applied in the screenplay. Like, I was a huge fan of that. I really appreciate bringing this other framework into the analysis of the horror movie. I apply the class and race struggle to everything, honestly, always dissecting even the mainstream media. And then there's this book that came out, *Horror Noire*, by Robin R. Means Coleman. There is a documentary also, and that really stuck with me because it goes more into *Get Out*, but there's a whole historical analysis like where it's coming from and *The Birth of the Nation* (D.W. Griffith, 1915) as the first horror movie because it created the black man as a threat and a monster to be scared of. It even talks about Halloween and contemporary movies in terms of segregation, the suburbs, and how the hoods were created, etc. At one point, I decided that if I'm working with video, I should play around with these genres or ideas of horror to talk about that. Like, I've been watching these movies my whole life, and there's always been a race and class lens to that. What is truly horrifying in the Bronx? The Columbus statue, or the new police precincts, or the luxury towers: that is gentrification in our neighborhood. Those are the scary, real monsters of society. Lenin talks about Capitalism being morbid and imperialism being decay. They [Marx and Lenin] use the language of rotting, the ruling class being parasites, and leeching off. And it creates a grotesque idea of the class struggle.

VJ There is something I'm curious about. I am trying to piece it together. It has to do with surfaces... There's something about the texture, like a skin enmeshing a car, and the tobacco leaves in your studio. A skin-looking object or like an object that's trying to go through a skin. I am thinking of a threshold: curtains, skins, textures, tobacco.

MW I believe that unconsciously, I've been thinking about that a lot, like going through transformation or changing from one thing to another. This is from like 2023 [pointing to tobacco leaves rolled in plastic], it's plastic and glue. And if you play with it, it comes off the plastic now. The only way I've realized it is because I've been working with this since 2019. This is two years old and wrapped. It gets preserved, but also dragged. I am into that ephemeral aspect of the material, its conservation, or like, extending its life. It hasn't disintegrated. Because what I really like is how it breaks down to time. That domino table was beautiful and after two years, it cracked—I really love that. The point is that what I am really drawn to about material is that it breaks down, and I like that it takes time to break down, and it fits within my theme about the living dead. I think about it like alive and dead material that's still breaking down.

Why are these materials so predominant, strong, and historically charged, but also accessible? This is stuff that I can find in a bodega. So I like that it had all these histories. All layered into it, including its breakdown as well.

VJ Given that they feed in the rot, how did your interest in mushrooms come into being? What are your mushroom encounters?

MW Through grad school, I was reading that book by Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom At The End Of The World*. I really loved that they just supplied a whole class analysis of mushrooms. I also come from an environmental activist background since high school. In grad school, we talked about the anthropocene, capitalism, and the industry impacting the environment. So here were all these environmentalists doing an analysis from a class lens to understand human intervention. This mushroom brings labor history and struggles, and it's not just like something that appears in a forest, but it gets foraged, and it's exploited, and someone gets exploited from finding these mushrooms. I don't go to the woods. I don't forage mushrooms, but I just love this idea. Then also I was watching *The Magic School Bus* (Joanna Cole, 1994-1997) with my nephew, and it was about the mycelium network. It's a recurring theme that I encounter, especially as an organizer. In organizing we work in a *mushroom effect*. Like what we do as individuals impacts everyone. How we're sharing nutrients and resources and we're connected, and we're not actually isolated. And then of course, I've been thinking about Engels and the dialects of nature also through a dialectical materialist lens. He talks about nature as kind of representing those ideas of dialectical materialism. There are contradictions, like for a mushroom to grow from decay and to try and transform it into something

new. And that feels like it has so many revolutionary metaphors and symbolism because capitalism is decay. How can we grow from that? And that resistance in the dark feels like the Undercommons, or like in the hood or, you know, working class. Even going back to my ideas of the living dead and the necropolitics of Mbembé. How do we exist in the shadows? How we're dying and the system is decaying, but the working class is the most revolutionary force that can transform into something that's really beautiful for many!

