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THE CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

“We (literally) couldn’t have done [the Africana Philosophy Conference] without you—and that’s plain simple fact! Thanks, yet again, for your efficiency and enterprise and enthusiasm and energy. Let’s hope for many more such successes to come.”

—Charles Mills, Distinguished Professor, Philosophy

“Let me express my thanks here as well—yes, this was a historic conference, and it would not have happened without your help, good cheer, knowledge, and shared commitment to what Charles and I were hatching, and hopefully, will continue to hatch!”

—Linda Alcoff, Professor, Philosophy

“The relaunch of the MALS translation track ... owes a great deal to the brilliant work [the Center for the Humanities] did for Translating the Future, for which I am forever and ever in your debt.”

—Esther Allen, Professor, French and Latin American, Iberian and Latino Cultures

CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES



Morris Dickstein. Photo: Richard Alcorn.

On behalf of the entire staff of the Center for the Humanities, I would like to acknowledge [the sad passing of our founding director, Morris Dickstein](#) (1940–2021), to whom we would like to pay tribute with this publication. In everything we do at the Graduate Center, CUNY and beyond, we hope to honor and perpetuate his vision to engage a public beyond academia.

One of the roles of the Center is to be open and welcoming, and we envision our projects, exhibitions, and programs as an eclectic and wide-ranging part of the public face of this fine research institution. As a good host, we entertain all-comers, delivering projects in collaboration with the faculty, staff, and students from our postgraduate academic base, while working closely with an array of individual, community, and organizational partners around the city and further afield. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have adapted our activities in Midtown

Manhattan to accommodate new realities, from the financial and the practical to the existential. Through this year of physical distancing, we have, as ever, kept our public-facing efforts “free and open to all,” while critically scrutinizing what making such an offer means in practice.

It has been a challenging but rewarding year, and the many researchers we worked alongside have been more appreciative than ever of our efforts (as we have been of theirs) and of the support that our collaborative model

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of working has offered through these difficult times. Together, we have been rethinking our modes of engagement: every day finding innovations, adaptations, and workarounds, and continuing to deliver programming while finding that we have new and unfamiliar global audiences to serve. Never has working at the hyper-local level felt so valuable, so isolated, while so connected.

Because the Center is formed in coalition, we are each able to take our responsibilities and freedoms from a shared supportive base. While we are well positioned to shine a light on the existing areas of research strength here at the GC, we increasingly look to lead and explore the many other contexts in which humanities research can flourish. We are delighted that we are joined this year by a new initiative: Social Practice CUNY, led by Greg Sholette and Chloë Bass, with generous support from the Mellon Foundation. Social Practice Queens has been an MFA strand of socially engaged art practice, running for [the past ten years between Queens College and the Queens Museum](#), and with whom the [Center](#) and the James [Gallery](#) have had long fruitful collaboration. Social Practice CUNY, a new project, will bring Sholette and Bass to the Center for the Humanities and the Graduate Center over the next three years, with a view to uniting the broad but currently dispersed socially engaged art community of the wider CUNY network.

Our activities evolve in response to those we work with and in response to wider political and world events. Throughout, we look to set high standards in our public

programming—from the accessibility of our events to the quality of delivering and archiving them—all of which serves to increase our training capacity for students and faculty when it comes to public-facing research and dissemination.



Julian Louis Phillips, *Court Crier*, 2018. Phillips is a graduate of [Social Practice Queens \(SPQ\)](#). Image courtesy Julian Louis Phillips.

Over the past academic year, we have been delivering our programs and projects with a shared drive for the sort of accessibility that is afforded by virtual events and online delivery. In looking to serve Blind and low-vision and Deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences, as well as those for whom English is not their first language, we are increasingly producing hybrid events with live captions, interpretation, and translation into other languages. This has been an exciting new initiative, albeit expensive both to produce and to archive. We ask all of our research partners and funders to assist with prioritising the budget for interpreting, live captioning, and archiving. We are now opening conversations with other centers and institutes at the GC to develop protocols and guidelines to help optimize accessibility across the board. This has involved making visual descriptions for the images we use, often encouraging

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participants in events to offer descriptions of themselves as part of the introductory chat, and evolving an augmented role for the event mediator as we take a lead on increasing accessibility.

We continue to support the research work of often marginalized educators with small but vital grants like our collaborative project with the Gittel Urban Studies Collective, [The CUNY Adjunct Incubator](#). Entities like ours can help an early career educator to make their first public event a success, to refine a research idea, to make their first research publication or pull together a community agreement when working with outside partner groups. We are a generator of new research across the disciplines, integrated, collaborative and diverse. We complement the foundational work of subject-specific programs by creating transformational environments in which to co-research. We establish spaces for dialogue and encourage real engagement with publics over time so that together we are able to address shared challenges to building a sustainable civil society. This year, more than ever, we have increased our digital offer, extending the breadth and reach of the research that we house.

From the extraordinary work of the [Mellon Seminar](#) on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research, in its remarkable third iteration, to the [James Gallery's](#) seamless reinvention as an entirely online offer; from [Lost and Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative](#) elegantly digitizing its popular in-print publications to developing

and hosting initiatives like the Wellcome's [Mindscapes](#) project; from growing our own digital publishing platform [Distributaries](#) to creating new forms of team research like the development of a sizzle trailer for the film project [Mae West: Boxer in a Corset](#), we seek to manifest the sort of creativity and openness to reinvention that we ask of all the co-investigators we work with.

This work is made possible only with the generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their funding of the Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research and the Curatorial Practice Seminar and Fellowships at the James Gallery; Amie and Tony James for their support of all the James Gallery programs, research and artist residencies, as well as the Object Library and the Mae West residency project; the Engaging the Senses Foundation, Margo and Anthony Viscusi, and the Early Research Initiative, and Poets & Writers for their support of *Lost & Found: the CUNY Poetics Document Initiative*; the Sylvia Klatzin Steinig Fund and the Gittel Collective for their support of the CUNY Adjunct Incubator; the Wellcome Trust for their support of the Postdoctoral Curatorial Research Fellowship; Max Palevsky for his endowment of the Irving Howe Lecture and the family of Stanley Burnshaw for their endowment of the Stanley Burnshaw Lecture, established by Professor Morris Dickstein and hosted every other year by the Harry Ransom Center for Research in the Humanities at the University of Texas, Austin; World Poetry Books and Bread Loaf Translators Conference, Boston University, Tess Lewis, Middlebury College, Yiddish Book Center,

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LTI Korea, and Princeton University for their support of the Translating the Future conference; the Vera Shlakman Irrevocable Trust for their support in honor of the Herbert Gutman Memorial Fund; and the Provost's Office at the Graduate Center for their support of the Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research, the Object Library, *Lost & Found*, and the James Gallery. Finally, this work depends on the active and engaged participation of our publics, to whom we extend our heartfelt thanks.

We collaborate with a truly extraordinary community of researchers working creatively alongside all our many co-investigators. We serve many audiences cultivated over the years by our complex and varied work. In bringing scholars and non-academics together in creative combination, we hope to remain always a pluralist Center, with an ever-open door. If you recognize the need for and importance of our work, then please consider making a contribution or please contact us to discuss your donation directly.

[Support the Center for the Humanities →](#)

The past year has tested everyone, and I would like to pay special thanks to the staff at the Center for rising to each new challenge with good humor and unstinting commitment in service of the projects that we all value. While we hope to retain the best of our innovations over the past year, we also look forward to the return of the missing dimensions of our work together, in person. We want to extend our research—into social justice, racial equity, mental health, ecological and

economic crises—within an ever-widening frame: to work with academic partners across the US and further afield to imaginatively connect complementary international humanities hubs, growing partnerships old and new to support our shared endeavours.

Please enjoy the following brief summary of our activities throughout the past year that we have organized into our three core missions—to engage students, faculty, and the public—although you will find that so much of what we do involves all three in assembly. Over the next year, whether online or in person, please come join us in study. We look forward—more than ever—to welcoming you.

Keith Wilson
Director

"Art As Social Action: 10 Years of Social Practice Queens"

**On View:
Art As Social Action:
10 Years of
Social Practice Queens**

March 24, 2021
to July 25, 2021

QUEENS MUSEUM

[Watch:](#) "Art As Social Action: 10 Years of Social Practice Queens".

STUDENT MISSION

The Center is committed to the professional development of CUNY students by supporting skill development, directly funding student research initiatives, tailoring community networks, and offering researchers expertise and logistical support. We help students develop innovative and creative strategies to increase the quality, the impact, and the reach of their research projects whether across the CUNY system, across New York City, or beyond to reach audiences further afield.



Dannie Harris as Mae West. Image courtesy Faction North 2021.

Mae West: Boxer in a Corset

In late fall 2019 and early spring 2020, the Center partnered with Edinburgh-based documentary film director Virginia Heath and producer Grant Keir to [build an interdisciplinary group of CUNY students](#) to aid in the research phase of their docu-fiction film on 1930s comedienne Mae West. Produced by Edinburgh-based Faction North, *Mae West: Boxer in a Corset* is a hybrid documentary that reveals Hollywood comedy star Mae West's personal empathy with Queer and African American cultures in 1920s America and celebrates why her controversial, groundbreaking work as a playwright inspires artists and audiences today.

Led by Research Lead Elyse Singer (Theatre), a group of eight students was selected to research 1920s vaudeville, West's more transgressive plays, the links between West's period and 2020, and the Harlem Renaissance in NYC. The team was briefed with delving into archives

containing ephemera, film, photographic records, scripts, correspondence, and more.

[As reported by Carolyn McDonough \(Digital Humanities\) in *Distributaries*](#), the COVID-19 pandemic forced much of the team's activities online, including both weekly meetings and archival research. Their April 2020 "Pitch Salon," in which the students shared their findings with the director, was also shuttled online. However, the digital turn had unexpected creative consequences as well, including a [video performance of West's song "And Then" \(1913\) by Alyssa Kayser-Hirsh](#).

Since meeting with the CUNY team, Heath began to rethink the project and adapted West's experience to Glasgow, where she found a drag performer, CJ Banks, who embodies West in their performances. With Banks's help, Heath produced a sample trailer that was used to market the film. And, in May 2021, the film, now titled *Mae West: Boxer in a Corset*, was nominated as one of [Inside Out's International Finance Forum finalists](#) as part of its 2021 film festival.

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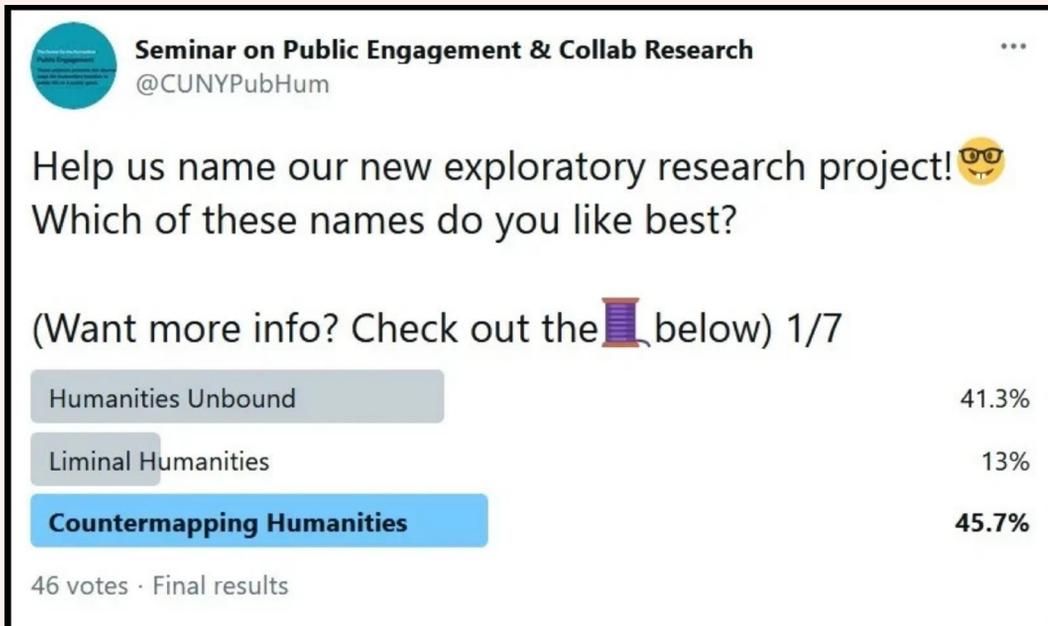
Adam Hogan and Laura Stayton, courtesy Mariam Ghani + Indexical Films.

Spotlight: Mariam Ghani

Mariam Ghani visited CUNY's Advanced Science Research Center (ASRC) to film interviews as she works to complete the feature length version of [Dis-Ease](#), an essay-film investigating the linguistic and visual metaphors we use to understand illness. *Dis-Ease* was initially developed as part of Wellcome's [Contagious Cities](#), an

international collaborative cultural project. Ghani, the [artist-in-residence for the New York component](#) of the project, was hosted by the Center for the Humanities, and worked with a team of [CUNY graduate students](#) to conceptualize and conduct research for the film.

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As part of their interactive public humanities research, the Countermapping the Humanities team utilized Twitter to name the project.

Counter-mapping the Humanities @ CUNY

An extensive machine-learning survey about public humanities practices is being developed on the digital platform Polis, by a team of five interdisciplinary scholars—including two GC student fellows in the [Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research](#)—who hope to explore the uses of computational analysis in community-engaged humanistic discourse, scholarship, and activism. The collaboration between the Seminar and the Computational Democracy Project, Polis’s parent company, marks the first relationship of this kind for both entities.

Darshana Narayanan of Polis says, “This project has the potential to open up a whole

new space for Polis, and provide a powerful new tool to researchers in the digital humanities and the social sciences. This project also resonates strongly with my personal commitment to breaking down disciplinary silos, moving information into the public realm, and increasing public participation in decision making.”

In addition to the overarching survey project, this platform is being used by numerous projects in the Seminar to conduct surveys—which participants can themselves add and make suggestions to—on issues including student food insecurity and access on CUNY campuses, the twin crises of racism and COVID-19 in NYC public schools, and parent experience of pandemic response in Harlem.

For more on Countermapping the Humanities, please see [this article co-authored by project leads here](#).

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Mellon Seminar: Digital Fellow Nga Than

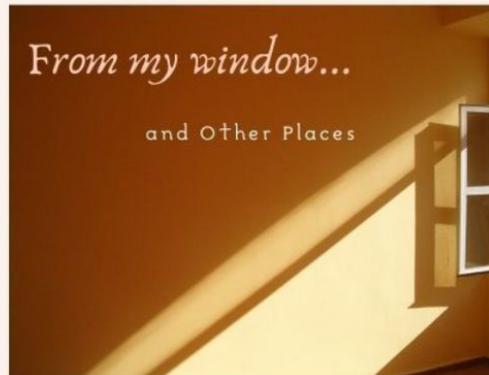
Drawing on digital humanities methodologies, Digital Fellow Nga Than encourages social science students to frame research questions and to conduct their research projects creatively and rigorously. As Nga says, “I teach faculty and graduate students in computer and social sciences who wish to learn digital and technical skills how to run surveys, conduct interviews, produce and market podcasts, and clearly contextualize the stories they tell with sociological theory.”

This year, Nga commissioned and organized a series of essays for our publication platform *Distributaries* on how teachers in higher-education classrooms adapted their approaches to pedagogy in the wake of COVID-19, including:

- [Podcasting and Pedagogy](#) by Ellen Meiser
- [Flipping It Horizontal](#) by Katherine E. Entigar
- [Prefigurative Activism as an Inspiration for Expanding Pedagogical Possibilities](#) by André Luis Leite de Figueirêdo Sales
- [Communities and Emotions in the Digital Classroom](#) by Nga Than

She also worked as part of a research team that launched the podcast “[Voices of the Gig Economy](#),” which applies sociological thinking to the lived experiences of gig workers before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Listen to this episode on “[Hungry Panda, Food Delivery in Immigrant Communities](#).”



#CUNYFromMyWindow
@GCTL
@HumanitiesGC



Mellon Seminar: From My Window ... and Other Places

Led by Seminar Teaching Fellow Fernanda Blanco Vidal

The Teaching and Learning Center and the Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research invited CUNY students to participate in an ongoing visual and textual sense-making project to document and reflect collectively upon this unprecedented moment of the COVID-19 crisis.

Led by Fernanda Blanco Vidal, a critical psychologist with a focus on environmental trauma, disaster, and displacement, *From My Window ... and Other Places* [#CUNYFromMyWindow](#) was a space for expression, connection, and reflection to

elaborate the social, psychological, political transformations we all faced as educators and students in 2020 and beyond.

The project had two parts. The first was an open call for creative documentation, sharing and reflection of student perspectives on the moment using social media. The second was an ongoing focused inquiry group: a small group of CUNY students who reflected more deeply and collectively about their experiences through the spring 2021 semester using artistic and written projects, taking part in workshops with artists Tracey Berglund and Ryan Seslow. Both parts worked together to document our moment and offer a collective reflection upon our common past, present, and future.

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Jadele McPherson. Photo by Jon Vachon.

Mellon Seminar: Afrofuturist Sound Ecologies

Led by Teaching Fellow Jadele McPherson

Working collaboratively with artists, students, and scholars, Mellon Seminar Teaching Fellow Jadele McPherson has been exploring ecology locally through Afro-Caribbean music and performance to study how sound can alter or shift environments.

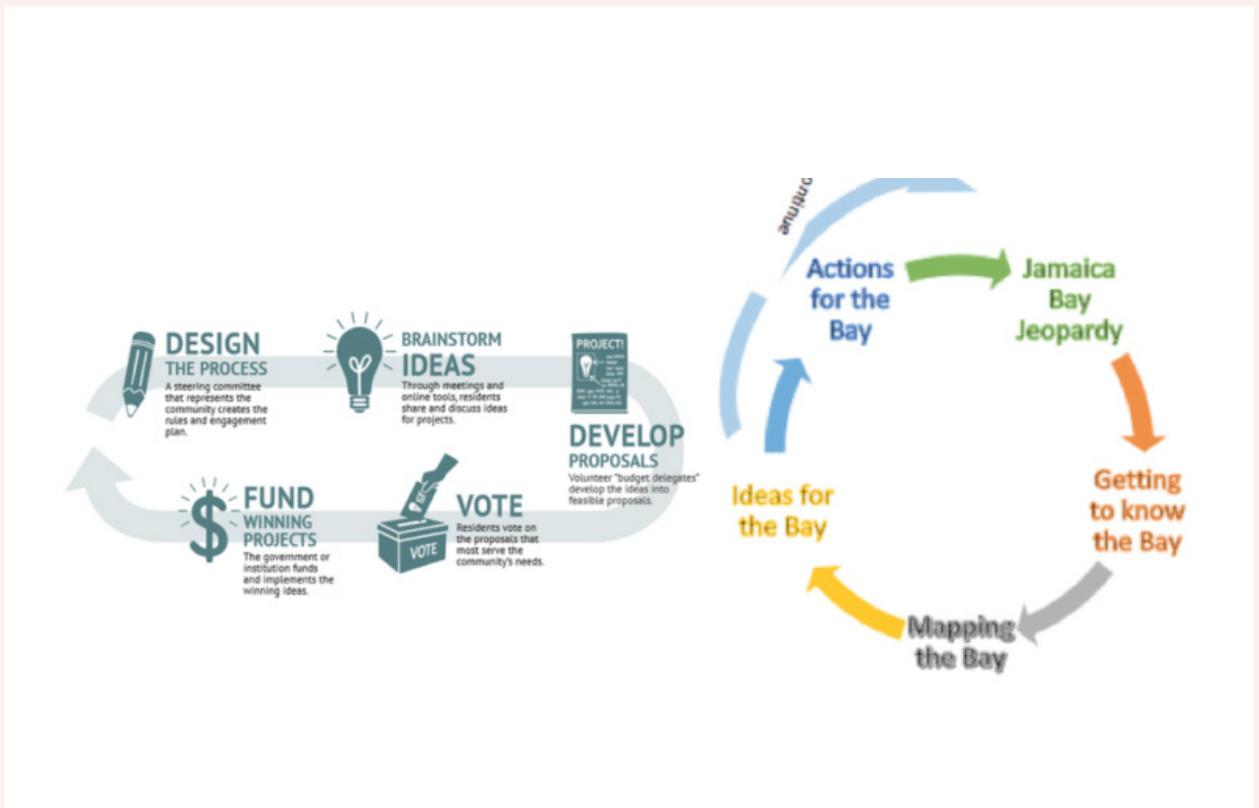
As part of the public-facing element of this project, she organized the event series [Mind, Body & Soul: Afrofuturist Sacred Sounds](#).

This event series explored embodied art practices during the COVID-19 pandemic and amid proliferating rebellions protesting systemic racism, the police state, and carceral practices that have resulted in the state-sanctioned killing of Black people. This series brought community-based Afro-Latinx artist practitioners, poets, performers, healers, and activists together

to promote wellness and creativity during the pandemic.

As McPherson said of the first event in this series:

“On the eve of December 4th, Cubans who observe begin celebrating Santa Barbara-Changó, who represents music and social justice, with parties that have delicious food and sweets, live music, and the power to elevate everyone’s spirits who attend. This year I will genuinely miss these parties since we cannot gather in large groups, and so the launch of this series will bring artists together through sacred sound by other means. We will channel that spiritual energy to make space and to discuss how we are keeping our emotional creativity alive and practicing wellness while living under the compounded duress of the pandemic. In this first installation of the series, we invoke our ancestors’ voices, chat as if we were hanging out in someone’s living room, and share intimate, live performances that will inspire us to enter a New Year refreshed and fortified.”



Mellon Seminar: Resilient Participatory Budgeting

Led by Faculty Lead **Michael Menser**

Resilient Participatory Budgeting builds inclusive and collaborative roots for system transformation through participatory democracy practices led by CUNY students. The topics discussed range from participatory democracy, budgetary justice, food security, and climate resilience, among others. Over the course of the past year, Professor Michael Menser worked with GC PhD student Kristen Hackett and Civic Tech Assistant Cecily Wu, an undergraduate student at Brooklyn College, to map connections that show

how city government, CUNY, and community organizations can nourish meaningful ongoing relationships among city agencies and local groups who share common goals that might help to advance agendas toward food justice and climate resilience.

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Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative publications.

Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative

Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative (L&F) publishes previously unknown, genre-bending writing from the archives of twentieth-century poets.

L&F's catalogue includes syllabi by Audre Lorde, June Jordan, and Toni Cade Bambara; Pedro Pietri's conceptual art and sex activism during the early AIDS crisis; Amiri Baraka's correspondence with Ed Dorn; a translation of an essay on John Keats by Julio Cortázar; and Jack Forbes's strategic plans drafted during the founding of D-Q University, the first

tribal college in California. Shining a light on understudied aspects of literary, cultural, and political history, these previously unpublished materials are compiled by doctoral student editors conducting research in personal and institutional archives in the United States and abroad. L&F creates new ways for archives to be activated as living sites of inquiry and innovation while working with emerging CUNY poets and scholars to critically and creatively redefine literary and cultural histories in broader, more complex and inclusive terms.

Student Fellowships and Publications

Each year, L&F partners with the Early Research Initiative to award fellowships to GC students performing original archival research.

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Forthcoming publications developed and edited by past fellowship recipients include:

- *Jim Schoppert: What Price This Pound of Whale? and Other Unpublished Writings*, edited by Chris Green.
- *Jacques Viau Renaud: Selections from "Permanence of the Cry,"* edited and translated by Ariel Francisco.
- *Lucia Berlin: "Dearest Dorns"—Letters 1976–1989*, edited by Megan Paslawski.
- *Sargon Boulous: "This Great River"—Translating the Beats into Arabic*, edited and translated by Khaled al-Hilli.
- *KULCHUR 1-20 (1960–1966): Selections*, edited by Ammiel Alcalay and Chris Clarke and including George Bowering's "The New American Prosody," Diane di Prima's "Murder Cake," Gilbert Sorrentino's "Remembrances of Bop in New York, 1945–1950," and music reviews by A. B. Spellman.

This year's L&F Archival Research Award Recipients are:

- Sarah Akant (English), on the "Poetics of Flicker," a research and translation project.
- Onur Ayaz (English), Correspondence between Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov, Joel Oppenheimer, John Wieners, Ann Charters, Jack Kerouac, Frank O'Hara, and Donald Allen.
- Joseph Caceres (English), on Miguel Algarín.

- Jaime Zabinsky (English), on Grace Paley.
- Khaled Al Hilli (Comparative Literature), on Sargon Boulous.
- Jadele McPherson (Cultural Anthropology), on Eusebia Cosme and the Poetics of Afro-Latinx Performance in New York City.
- Sam O'Hana (English), on "Examined Lives."
- Shoumik Bhattacharya (English), on Meena Alexander.
- Wendy Barrales (Urban Education), Women of Color Archive (WOCA).

Student-Led Public Programming and Poetry Scholarship

L&F brings together poets and scholars to mobilize the living legacies of 20th-century poets and poetic movements through its public programs. Past highlights include a gathering of UMBRA Workshop members, reunited for the first time since their historic African American poetry education program, who met regularly on Friday nights on the Lower East Side of Manhattan; a conference on June Jordan's teaching and poetry organized with Cave Canem and her estate; and a two-day conference entitled "Poetry Studies Now" convened by ACLS visiting scholar Dorothy Wang and L&F editor and poet Tonya Foster.

L&F organized 32 events in 2020–21, including readings, conferences, and lectures with Joy Harjo, Harmony Holiday, Cedar Cigo, Eileen Myles, Cecil Taylor, and Joyelle McSweeney,

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among many others. Below are a few examples of this past year's student-led public programs.

- [The Craft We Didn't Learn: Retroactive Writing Advice from the Archive](#) was an AWP panel of L&F editors that contributed to a timely conversation about the rich instructional writing history available in radical and marginalized literary archives.
- [The School of Toni Cade Bambara with Makeba Lavan, Linda J. Holmes, Thabiti Lewis, and Louis Massiah](#) showcased Bambara's late 1960s efforts at City College as a teacher and cultural worker and screened the documentary-in-progress *The T.C.B. School of Organizing*.



Toni Cade Bambara, n.d. Courtesy of Karma Bambara, Executor of the Toni Cade Bambara Estate.

- [Poetry and Revolution on the Lower East Side with Mary Catherine Kinniburgh](#) was part of NYPL's Doc Chat series, presenting teaching and research methods

to better understand the cultural impact of archives and special collections. This episode created a curriculum around the mimeograph revolution on the Lower East Side



Covers of *Hornswoggle* and *Silver* magazines. Courtesy of From a Secret Location website.

- [Radiating Black ~ Puerto Rican ~ Feminist Studies from the City University of New York to the Americas and the Caribbean](#) was a series organized by Conor Tomás Reed while in residence at Wendy's Subway. Co-editor of Toni Cade Bambara's "Realizing the Dream of the Black University," Reed organized "[Radiating Black ~ Puerto Rican ~ Feminist Studies](#)" in order to share archives and lessons on the entwined legacies of Black, Puerto Rican, and feminist studies movements at CUNY in the 1960s and '70s with current educators and activists.

Read the L&F Newsletter [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) for more news, ongoing discoveries and research from the archives, past and future projects, new writing, audio and video recordings, collaborations and public programming, memorials and tributes, L&F Fellows' projects, and a sneak peak of Series 9.



Fungus Guy, *Decolonize* (Gore Street), Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, 2014. Graffiti mural. Open access image available at Wikimedia Commons.

James Gallery: Indigenous Perspectives: Conversations with Contemporary Artists

**María Beatriz H. Carrión, James Gallery
Mellon Fellow in Global Art**

This [series of conversations](#) illuminated the complex and diverse practices of Indigenous artists in Latin America, North America, and Oceania in order to destabilize homogenizing definitions and narratives about contemporary Indigenous

art. Speaking from different geographies, nationalities, generations, sociopolitical contexts and standpoints, the three artists featured in these presentations introduce the public to their careers, oeuvres, challenges, and aspirations.

María Beatriz H. Carrión (Art History) took part in the Decolonizing Curatorial Practice Mellon Seminar in Art History, co-taught in spring 2020 by James Gallery Curator Katherine Carl and Professor Claire Bishop (Art History) and was selected for the James Gallery Mellon Fellowship in Global Art for the year 2020–21. In fall 2020, Carrión chose three Indigenous artists whose work exemplified these concerns and in the spring conducted interviews via Zoom. The project

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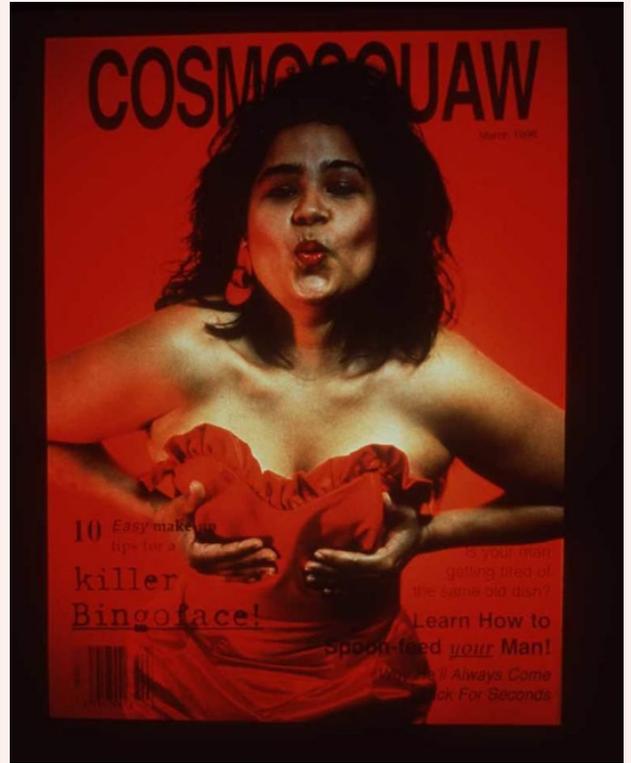
Amaru Cholango, *Thou Shall Have Other Gods before Me*, Chapel of Our Lady of Angels, Quito, 2011. Mixed media. Image courtesy of Rodolfo Kronfle Chambers.



Amaru Cholango, *Saramama/MON 810*, genetically modified corn; and Amaru Cholango, *Multiculturalism*, used clothes, Museo de la Ciudad Quito, 2011. Image courtesy of Rodolfo Kronfle Chambers.

transcripts and video excerpts are being presented publicly on the gallery [website](#).

The first artist, Amaru Cholango (Kichwa), is based in Ecuador. His interdisciplinary and primarily conceptual work consists not only of installations, video installations, photography, objects, and performance, but also painting, drawing, and poetry. His art builds a bridge between the ancient Andean Cosmogony and contemporary art.



Lori Blondeau, *COSMOSQUAW* (detail), 1996. Duratrans in lightbox, 10.6 x 8.3 in. John Cook Collections. Photo courtesy of Bradlee Laroque.

The second artist, Lori Blondeau (Cree/Saulteaux/Métis), is from Canada who works primarily in performance and photography. Her work critically examines both the representation of First Nations women in popular culture and media, and also considers issues of family, history, and colonialism. In addition to her artistic production, Blondeau was a founding member and director of TRIBE: A Centre for the Evolving Aboriginal Media, Visual and Performing Arts Inc.

The third artist, Ayesha Green (Māori, Kai Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu), is based in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Her work, primarily pictorial, explores questions of identity, family relations, history, and everyday life.



Ayesha Green, *Nana and Grandad*, 1994 (New Zealand Gothic), 2016. Acrylic on ply, 57.3 x 48.1 in. Courtesy of Jhana Millers.



Daniel Paul, *Mills Falls: Kejimikujik*, n.d. Photo by Daniel Paul.

James Gallery: Expanding Options for Digital Repatriation

**Anna Orton Hatzis, James Gallery Andrew
W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow**

**Travis Wysote, Listuguj Mi'gmaq
researcher**

In their [collaborative research](#) toward a virtual exhibition in fall 2021, PhD student Anna Orton Hatzis (Art History) and Indigenous scholar Travis Wysote interrogated the current structures of repatriation

of Indigenous objects and pushed the tools of digital repatriation to operate differently. In light of the limited options made available by museums and long, drawn-out legal repatriation battles, how can options be reimaged and expanded for the return of objects to Indigenous communities? How can the flow of money and resources used in legal battles be reoriented into Indigenous hands as part of restitution efforts? Digital models, virtual and augmented reality, computer animation and video games may be tools to imagine ways to reorient resources into Indigenous hands that are needed to remake the connections of the objects, people, and land.

Throughout their research this year, Orton Hatzis and Wysote have focused on the

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Mi'kmaq chief's regalia, including coat, leggings, and moccasins made of navy-colored wool duffel, which is currently in storage in the Melbourne Victoria Museum in Australia. It is decorated with red, olive, and gold silk ribbon appliqué and embroidery, as well as intricate beadwork of hundreds of tiny glass beads attached by moose or horse hair. The outfit was the property of Louis Benjamin Peminuit Paul, a chief from the Sipekne'katik District, today's Colchester County area. Records show that it was sold in 1840 to S. D. S. Huyghue, a captain in the British military who had been serving in Nova Scotia and later returned to Great Britain. In 1851, he emigrated to Australia and, after his death, the items were donated to the museum. Orton Hatzis and Wysote's project continues to imagine further where legal repatriation efforts for the regalia, led by Heather Stevens operations supervisor at the Millbrook Centre, slowed since her proposed bill for Canadian repatriation was rejected by the Senate in May 2019.

Orton Hatzis took part in the Decolonizing Curatorial Practice Mellon Seminar in Art History co-taught in spring 2020 by James Gallery Curator Katherine Carl and Professor Claire Bishop (Art History) and was selected for the James Gallery Mellon Curatorial Fellowship for the year 2020–21.

[Travis Wysote](#) is a Listuguj Mi'gmaq researcher, currently working on his interdisciplinary PhD in humanities at Concordia University on Haudenosaunee territory. His research interests are related to Mi'gmaq history and settler colonialism, with writings

on Mi'gmaq treaties, the aesthetics of sovereignty, the politics of genocide recognition, and the state of exception. Travis's current research analyzes the aesthetics of resurgence and refusal enacted in the documentary films of Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, with particular reference to his family's roles in Incident at Restigouche and Our Nationhood.

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Linda Nochlin teaching an art history class, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, 1959. Archives & Special Collections, Vassar College Library.

James Gallery: Ethics and Labor in Art History

Organized by PhD students Lauren Rosenblum (Art History), James Gallery Presidential Fellow, and María Beatriz H. Carrión (Art History), James Gallery Mellon Fellow in Global Art

“As PhD students immersed in art historical scholarship, working collaboratively on our project [*Ethics and Labor in Art History*](#) provided the opportunity to consider larger stakes of the academic

field in new ways—from methodological and pedagogical issues to labor-related conflicts. The full intellectual and administrative support of Katherine Carl and Whitney Evanson at the James Gallery enabled us to convene the virtual event, invite esteemed artists and art historians to workshop practical strategies for teaching and learning, and financially compensate attendees for their work. Bringing together peers from across educational institutions, socio-cultural and racial backgrounds, and subfields, we confronted the impact of academia on one’s personal life and professional future, ultimately developing solidarity

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among graduate students based throughout the country.”

—Lauren Rosenblum and
María Beatriz H. Carrión

This intensive two-day virtual convening of 25 art history graduate students selected from nearly 100 submissions from across the country aimed to articulate the state of the field, the conditions of our employment, and the ethical transgressions and future directions of the discipline. This event equally prioritized knowledge gleaned from peers and the expertise of established scholars and artists. Recent responses to the colonialism of art history have posed important questions concerning the ethics of the field and how young scholars can address this criticism through their research and in their teaching. To this end, how do art history students confront the burdens of their field while promoting its relevance? How do art history students envision the future of art history, its teaching, and its audiences? How can they work toward diversity and inclusivity in the art history classroom? How do they shape their own scholarly paths while also navigating tenuous working conditions and a precarious field of employment? How can emerging art historians enact change in an art world of predominantly white voices and while elite institutions in urban centers dominate the discourse?

The participants gathered in small discussion groups to digitally unite students organized across geographical regions and size of educational affiliation. This platform

provided a rare chance to create solidarity among distant colleagues who confront disparate working conditions while ultimately sharing stakes in the future of art history. In advance of these meetings participants completed a self-assessment reflecting on their scholarship and pedagogy, read short texts on disciplinary demography and canon formation, prepared a short presentation in response to the program’s topics, and contributed to a shared bibliography. For the first session, participants broke out into focus groups to collectively examine their own positionalities, entanglements, and investments. Graduate students, who are simultaneously students and educators, are already shaping and being shaped by art history. A plenary session brought together these small groups to envision the discipline as a more reflexive humanistic endeavor.

The artist collective BFAMFAPHD led a program to encourage expansive thinking about the role of academic art history as a linked site within a network that must, in their words, “analyse and reimagine power relationships in the arts.” A series of activities offered an alternative pedagogical framework that emphasizes contemplation, collaboration, community, and political economy.

Next, Roland Betancourt (Professor of Medieval Art, University of California, Irvine) facilitated what evolved to be a deeply self-reflective and nurturing session for the group on Art History, Ethics and Pedagogy. Unlike in the social and medical sciences, most art historical education does not include training in ethics; in fact, much research in the field

STUDENT MISSION

receives very limited ethical oversight. This lack of criticality is the most problematic in light of the current sociopolitical and environmental realities of our times, as well as of the controversial history of the field. Can we ethically study works of art that are foreign temporally, religiously, racially, or culturally? How can we diversify our bibliographical footprint without tokenizing minorities and scholarship from the Global South? In what terms and with what goal is it appropriate to study images of violence? When is it appropriate to advocate for the destruction of cultural heritage?

Mia L. Bagneris (Associate Professor of Art of the African Diaspora & Studies of Race in Western Art, Tulane University) led the final and vibrantly creative session on Inclusive, Anti-Racist, and Decolonial Pedagogies. Recently, students and scholars have begun to question who has access to an art history education and whether one's pedagogical approach should reflect and speak to the positionalities of different student bodies and institutions. How can instructors not only teach non-Western artwork, but also effectively incorporate non-Western cosmologies and philosophies? How can art historians learn and use tools like fieldwork from other disciplines like anthropology in order to better work with living people, oral histories, and community traditions? How can we diversify the student body that constitutes most art history classrooms? How can we guarantee that students in suburban and rural areas have equal access to museums as those in metropolitan sites?



[Watch:](#) Professors and Mellon Seminar Faculty Leads Ryan Mann-Hamilton, Ángeles Donoso Macaya, Naomi Schiller, and Michael Menser in “Food justice, activism, and the public university: a conversation”

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The Center is committed to offering faculty support in taking their research out of our building to reach audiences both within the university system and well beyond. We are pleased to offer time, space, and expertise to help faculty researchers share new knowledge with publics beyond academia. We help realize individual research projects, assist in the delivery of faculty-led public programs, and facilitate longer-term collaborations between faculty and community partners.



[Watch: Of Islands and Archives: Celebrating Île en île and World Literature in French.](#)

Of Islands and Archives: Celebrating Île en île and World Literature in French

November 16, 2020

This dialogue, co-sponsored by the Center and the GC's French Department, marked the culmination of two decades of research work building [Île en île, a digital humanities archive](#) documenting the cultures with special focus on the literature of the world's Francophone islands. A pioneering addition to the French-speaking internet, Île en île has presented to a global audience works by authors far removed from a Parisian "center." Online since 1998, it is an extensive archive with biographies,

bibliographies, excerpts of prose and poetry, and an audio and video archive.

Île en île will remain online but transitioned in 2020 to become a fixed archive. This was an opportune moment for a group of scholars, including Régine Michelle Jean-Charles, Françoise Lionnet, Thomas C. Spear, and Alex Gil, to address the evolution of scholarly research and pedagogical methods of Francophone studies, in geography, technology, and with parallel fields of the humanities. These speakers addressed the transformations that have taken place in the last decades in the field of Francophone studies as well as with the digital resources available to scholars, students, readers, and teachers.



Translating the Future

May 12–September 25, 2020

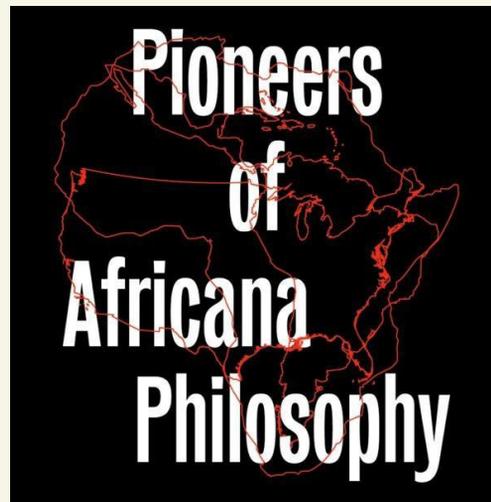
In spring 2020, professors Esther Allen and Allison Markin Powell began to reconceive a two-day conference that they had scheduled for fall 2020. In mid-May 2020, [Translating the Future](#) launched with weekly hour-long online conversations with renowned translators hosted on the web platform Howround.

The conference, co-sponsored by PEN America, the Center for the Humanities, and the Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library, with additional support from the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, commemorated and carried forward PEN's 1970 World of Translation conference, convened by Gregory Rabassa and Robert Payne, and featuring Muriel Rukeyser, Irving Howe, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and

many others. It billed itself as “the first international literary translation conference in the United States” and had a major impact on US literary culture.

Weekly Translating the Future events occurred throughout the late spring and summer 2020, attracting thousands of viewers from around the world. Topics included the relationship between translation and ecopoetics, children's literature, and plays, among other areas, and the 1970 World of Translation conference.

The series culminated in late September 2020 with a lineup of five events hosted by Allen and Powell on topics as diverse as Democracy and Translation, a gathering of Olga Tokarczuk's translators, and Postmonolingual New York. In total this series of events reached an audience of over 9,000 people from 87 countries, a good example of how transitioning online can build a much larger and more international audience.



Pioneers of Africana Philosophy

March 19–20, 2021

Stemming from the long-term collaboration with the GC's Philosophy Department, the Center sponsored a [two-day conference](#) organized by Professors Charles Mills and Linda Martin Alcoff on the subject of Africana philosophy.

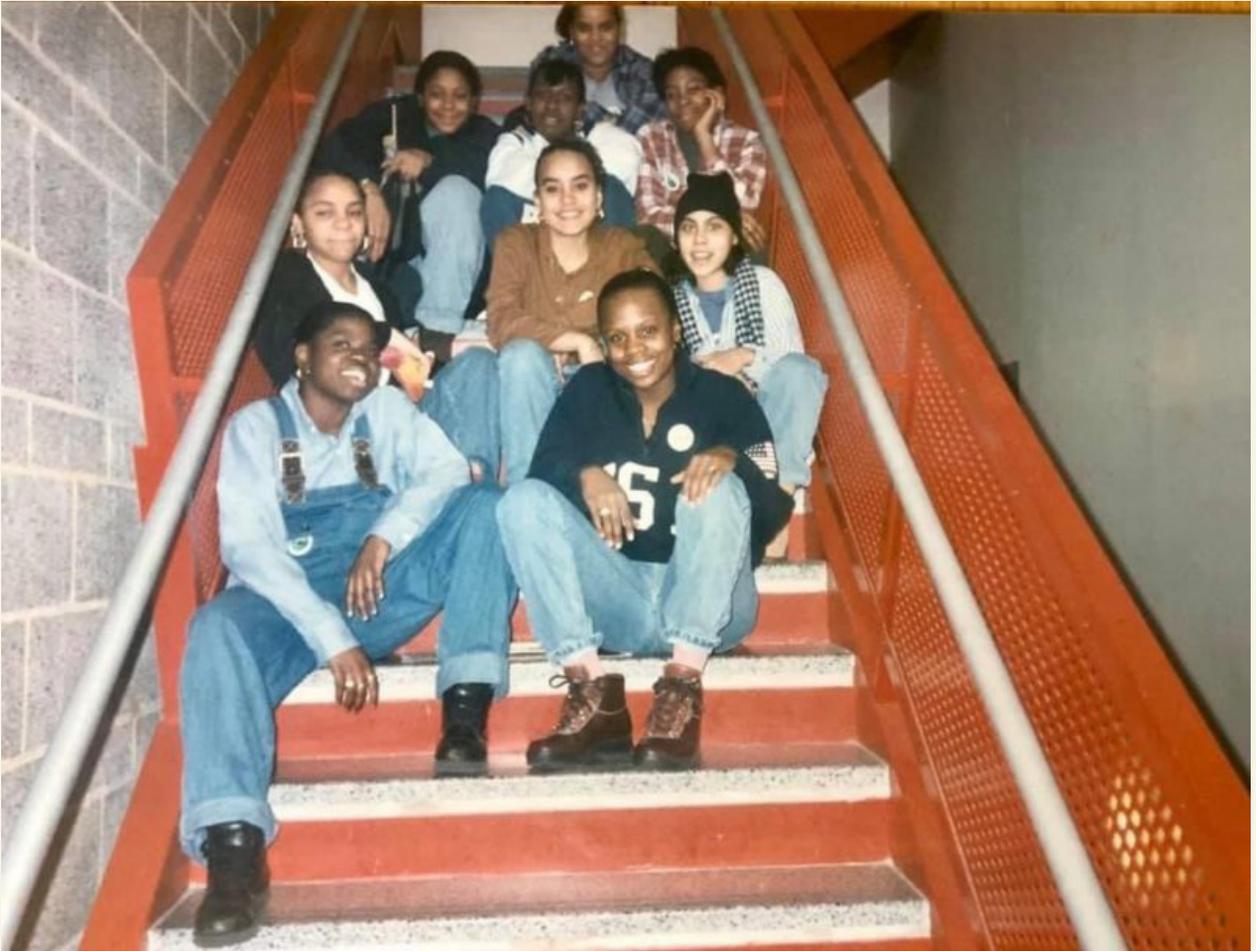
“Africana philosophy” is the term that has been coined to designate philosophy in Africa and the African diaspora (the Caribbean; the two Americas, North and South; Europe; Asia), both in the pre-modern and modern periods. In modernity, this philosophy will be fundamentally shaped by the experience of transnational racial subordination: racial chattel slavery in the Atlantic world, colonialism, and then continuing diasporic racial oppression in nominally post-slavery and postcolonial societies. Thus, it is arguably in modernity that a subset of Africana philosophy becomes “Black” philosophy. As such,

Black philosophers have played a crucial role in pioneering what is now known as critical philosophy of race: the philosophical examination of race from a “critical,” anti-racist perspective.

This conference paid tribute both to the historic pathbreakers of the past and the living pioneers of the present who—under the most difficult and unfavorable conditions—were eventually able, after decades of struggle both within and outside the academy, to get Africana philosophy and critical philosophy of race recognized as legitimate areas of philosophical exploration and inquiry. But it also looked forward—given this historic experience of racial oppression—to exploring the contribution Africana thinkers can make to the understanding of our present national crisis, and to developing suggestions for how best to resolve it.

Previous co-produced conferences have explored topics including Black Women Philosophers (2019), #MeToo and Epistemic Justice (2018), and Racial Inequality (2018).

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Dr. Terri N. Watson (front center) with students in her 7th grade class at Junior High School 45, including Dr. Gina Charles (front, to Dr. Watson's right).

Mellon Seminar: The Schools We Need: Lessons Learned from Harlem

Led by Seminar Faculty Lead Terri Watson

[The Schools We Need: Lessons Learned from Harlem](#) highlights the ways in which the institution of Black motherhood has transformed and works to foster agency, community, and discourse around New York

City's desegregation efforts. In Professor Terri Watson's words, this project "amplifies the agency of Harlem's mothers as a powerful resource in education research and advocacy. Drawing from the MLK's theoretical framework, *Beloved Community* grounds school transformation and leadership in the 'five Cs': care, courage, critical reflection, commitment and community." Watson brings the five Cs to life through theory, action, and education.

This year, Watson presented a public [lecture](#) and a [symposium](#) around the theme of

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“Creating the Beloved Community.” The symposium featured presentations by five keynote speakers on each of the five Cs: Christopher Emdin, Noliwe Rooks, Wendy Luttrell, Shannon R. Waite, and David E. Kirkland, as well as a panel discussion on the theme of community led by Watson.

As an extension of many of the themes of this work, Watson also published a [conversation](#) with her former middle school student Dr. Gina Charles about the importance of Black women teachers in the lives of Black girls on our publishing platform *Distributaries* and [A Love Letter to Babette Edwards: Harlem’s “Othermother”](#) on the blog of the Gotham Center for New York City History about the life and education activism of Babette Edwards, a parent activist, educational advocate, and community leader (a noted pioneer in the movement for community control), who has worked to support the education of children in Harlem throughout her career.

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Alexandria Eregbu, *Water Women*, 2017. Collage on paper. Image courtesy of the artist.

Mellon Seminar: Environment Community Humanities Oasis (ECHO)

**Led by Seminar Faculty Lead Ryan
Mann-Hamilton**

As Faculty Lead Ryan Mann-Hamilton says, “[Environmental Humanities Collaborative Oasis \(ECHO\)](#) establishes longstanding connections between CUNY and NYC to re-envision the local landscape as a site of

research, recreation, and civic engagement around issues related to environmental justice and access.” In the broadest sense, Mann-Hamilton sees and reinforces connections between groups, helping to resource and sustain those connections through coalition building around common aims.

This year, ECHO has launched a [website](#) that collects information about its manifold activities, including a series of public events, an oral history project, and infrastructural interventions including:

- [Just Strategies: Pathways to Water, Food and Wellness](#), a conversation that cross-pollinated communities that are

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navigating the climate crisis to amplify efforts and experiences in NYC, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico that focus on water, food, and wellness. Activists Ysanet Batista (Woke Foods), Jacqueline Pilati (Reclaim Seed NYC), Olatokunboh Obasi (Omaroti, from the Well of Indigenous Wisdom & Herbalists without Borders International), and Amara Abdal Figueroa (Tierrafiltra) discussed their projects to inform, inspire, and incite student-led and community-based efforts organized at and adjacent to LaGuardia Community College.



Ysanet Batista, Jacqueline Pilati, Olatokunboh Obasi, and Amara Abdal Figueroa.

Community College's Faculty and Staff of Color Collective (FSOC) to screen the documentary [Latinegras: The Journey of Self-Love through an Afro Latina Lens](#), directed by Omilani Alarcon, and discuss it alongside other Afro Latinx experiences within higher education and beyond.

- The installation of three [water catchment systems](#) in the town of Mayaguez, PR, in collaboration with Bemba PR and ISER Caribe
- A [visit](#) to Fusion Farms Vertical Garden Facility.
- An oral history project at LaGuardia that gathers [Narratives of Food and Movement](#).

- A conversation between Alexandria Eregbu and Chelsea Mikael Frazier about the intersections of [Ecology](#), [Ancestral Healing](#), and [Visual Art](#).
- [Voices of the Unheard: The Afro Latinx Experience](#), which gathered LaGuardia

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PS:Environment

A Vision for 29th St

Transforming 29th St With Open Space
and Natural Elements

LaGuardia
Community College

Watch: a short clip of President's Society: Environment, in which students at LaGuardia present their visions for the closure of streets adjacent to their campus to create an open space for community use.



Watch: Are We Feeding the Crisis? Pandemic Hunger and Food Justice: A Discussion and Screening of the short film "On the Line". Film still from [On the Line](#). Carts lined up against a colorful graffiti wall along the sidewalk in the Lower East Side; a bicycle blurs by in the foreground.

Mellon Seminar: On the Line: Land Use, Food Access, Climate Justice and Organizing in New York City

Led by Faculty Lead Naomi Schiller

Professor Naomi Schiller brings together anthropology, history, documentary film-making, and urban planning in her approach to understanding civic processes around land use and food distribution. Working with activist-artists focused on anti-displacement

activism and land-use activists from Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx, this project also contributes to debates about how to advance democratic and just decision making around land use in New York City. As Schiller writes, "It is our hope that the collaborative learning in our collective oral history project will produce knowledge and tools that will have a democratizing impact on the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), the city's decision-making process for making changes to land use, such as rezonings."

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This year, Schiller worked with artist, writer, and organizer Vanessa Thill as well as Brooklyn College interns Onyx Clarke and Teresa Rodriguez to initiate ongoing efforts to document and make accessible histories and activist knowledge of land-use organizing, particularly around changing waterfronts. This project will involve a series of public discussions anchored around an oral history archive, a handbook for action, and a public exhibit.

The other core component of this project is to facilitate conversation and listening surrounding the Sixth Street Community Center's Weekly Food Distribution Line. [The Sixth Street Community Center](#) (SSCC) has been involved in community organizing around food, health, and the environment in the Lower East Side since 1978. Since the onset of the COVID crisis, SSCC has been involved in direct relief work, distributing boxes of food once a week. Working with SSCC Program Director Jen Chantrtanapichate and interpreters Chloe Lin and Ziyi Li, this team is helping to facilitate logistics of the food distribution process and sparking conversations among people waiting in line about their lives, needs, concerns, and hopes.

As part of this process of initiating conversation, Schiller, Lin, Chantrtanapichate, and filmmaker Dan Fethke joined together to make a 10-minute documentary, *On the Line*, which explores the frustration of hours waiting in line for donated cheese, the pressure on the community to adapt to unfamiliar foods, and the power of mutual aid amidst the crises of hunger, health, and violence facing

low-income Chinese and Chinese American people. This group also organized a screening of the film and a discussion “Are We Feeding the Crisis? Pandemic Hunger and Food Justice” about the broader terrain of food insecurity and justice.

See the trailer for the short film *On the Line* [here](#).

As Schiller has said, “*On the Line* has allowed me to forge new collaborative relationships that bring together what have been largely separate facets of my life: activism, scholarship, teaching, and service work. For the first time, my intellectual, artistic, and community-based commitments are cross-pollinating.”

Lost & Found Faculty Engagement

This year brought an incredible opportunity for *Lost & Found* to work closely with Lehman College colleagues on two interrelated poetry programming endeavors.



Image Collage from One Book One Bronx (Left to right: Sun Ra, Cover of *Olio* by Tyehimba Jess, Audre Lorde, Tyehimba Jess and Abiodun Oyewole of the Last Poets).

One Book One Bronx

Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative partnered with One Book One Bronx and Literary Freedom Project in collaboration with the Leonard Lief Library at Lehman College, CUNY, to host a series of virtual programs and reading groups as part of a nationwide initiative, [Lift Every Voice: Why African American Poetry Matters](#). Our collaboration with One Book One Bronx/Lehman College brought audiences closer to the intersection of Black language and music.

Programs organized by CUNY faculty focused on the Last Poets, Sun Ra, and Audre Lorde, among others, and included Tara Betts, Sequoia Maner, Tony Bolden, Mariposa Fernandez, LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs, Patricia Spears Jones, Hank Williams, The Last Poets (Abiodun Oyewole, Umar bin Hassan, and

Felipe Luciano, and Woodie King Jr), Rodney Terich Leonard, Lise Esdaile, Trapeta B. Mayson, Grisel Y. Acosta, Juliana Costa, Ochy Curiel, Tanya L. Saunders, Monnette Sudler, Harmony Holiday, and Hanif Abdurraqib.

The series culminated with a performance by Pulitzer Prize-winner and CUNY professor [Tyehimba Jess from his book *Olio*](#).

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THE AUDRE LORDE GREAT READ
At Lehman College

February
African American
History Month

March
Women's History
Month

April
National Poetry
Month

May/ June
Pride
Month

cunxaudrelorde # lehmgreatread

Designed By:
Nicole Flores

Audre Lorde Great Read at Lehman

During the spring 2021 semester, Lehman faculty, staff, and students dove into the oeuvre of Audre Lorde, drawing connections not only to the inequalities made starkly apparent by the Black Lives Matter movement and in the midst of the pandemic, but also linking and reminding ourselves of a very important history of labor movements, Black intellectual thought, community-based pedagogy and ethics of care, and queer feminisms that have been rooted in many of our CUNY campuses.

Affiliated instructors assigned monthly readings across courses in English, sociology, women's studies, Latino/Latin American studies, and more. Among the four books by Lorde assigned monthly was the *Lost & Found* publication [Audre Lorde: "I teach](#)

[myself in outline," Notes, Journals, Syllabi, & an Excerpt from Deotha](#). Monthly events featured international panelists, including Queer Black and Latinx students and scholars from Colombia and Brasil, as well as talented student poets and writers from the Bronx. The organizers were Nicole Flores, Francis Merencillo, Matt Caprioli, Lise Esdaile, Sarah Ohmer, Mary Phillips, and Olivia Loksing Moy.

Their great read was highlighted by [Black Cuir Revolutions](#). Grounded in Lorde's "Learning from the 60s" and Black Queer/Cuir voices from the Caribbean and Latin America, Black Cuir Revolutions engaged Black History and Women's History Months with Sarah Ohmer, Tanya L Saunders, Ochy Curiel, Juliana Costa, and Grisel Y. Acosta, who considered the ways in which Black Queer/Cuir experiences and perspectives contribute to current revolutions.

“I TEACH MYSELF IN OUTLINE,” NOTES, JOURNALS, SYLLABI & AN EXCERPT FROM DEOTHA

Contributors: Iemanjá Brown, Miriam Atkin

“I teach myself in outline,” Notes, Journals, Syllabi, & an Excerpt from Deotha, is a collection of Audre Lorde’s teaching materials from her time as an instructor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Hunter College, which spanned the years of 1970–1985. The volume also includes a chapter of Lorde’s unpublished novel Deotha, and an editors’ introduction that elucidates Lorde’s teaching philosophy through an in-depth look at her classroom documents.



 START READING

“I teach myself in outline,” Notes, Journals, Syllabi, & an Excerpt from Deotha, is a collection of Audre Lorde’s teaching materials from her time as an instructor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Hunter College, which spanned the years of 1970–1985. The volume also includes a chapter of Lorde’s unpublished novel Deotha, and an editors’ introduction that elucidates Lorde’s teaching philosophy through an in-depth look at her classroom documents.

Publishing with Manifold

[Manifold](#) is an intuitive, collaborative, open-source platform for scholarly publishing that CUNY recently installed. With Manifold, you can publish dynamic digital texts with rich media support, powerful annotation tools, and robust community dialogue: a perfect virtual home for *Lost & Found*. CUNY’s Manifold, led by Professor Matthew K. Gold with support from colleagues Robin Miller and Wendy Barrales, is a free publishing platform for the CUNY community. [Lost & Found texts are now available on Manifold](#) for custom classroom use, self-study, and group engagement and annotation.

The first two of our publications from our CUNY Pedagogy Series are now available on Manifold: [Audre Lorde: “I teach myself in outline,” Notes, Journals, Syllabi, & an](#)

[Excerpt from Deotha and June Jordan “Life Studies.” 1966–1976](#). We are launching these digital versions of our physical texts as part of an ongoing effort to make our pedagogy series available to all who might use them in their daily education, liberation, or self-care practices.

“The CUNY Manifold team is delighted to partner with the Center for Humanities and *Lost & Found* on this amazing project. We’ve been developing the CUNY instance of Manifold as a hub for open educational materials (OER) across the 25-campus CUNY system, and these primary source documents are an amazing trove of materials that will be of wide interest and that will be used in a number of CUNY classrooms.”

—Matt Gold

FACULTY MISSION

“I’m especially happy that the first wave of CUNY poet-activist-pedagogy digital editions by Audre Lorde and June Jordan are available through CUNY’s Manifold. An open online edition like this activates poetry as a knowledge practice in classrooms across CUNY while ensuring the continual presence and influence of these authors in a CUNY-specific context, the context in which they sharpened their craft and shaped institutional futures as part of student-led struggle. To say that the classes they taught, the lessons they learned, and the poems they wrote while doing so are still necessary is an understatement—these teaching documents and creative texts help readers understand how poetry and pedagogy can and do work together toward collective uplift, especially at CUNY, institutional home to so many poets.”

—Kendra Sullivan

James Gallery: Decolonizing Curatorial Practice Annotated Bibliography Project

The annotated bibliographies in this booklet were completed this year and are the outcome of the [Decolonizing Curatorial Practice](#) Mellon Seminar in Art History co-taught by James Gallery Curator Katherine Carl and Professor Claire Bishop (Art History) at the Graduate Center in spring 2020. The group examined the growth of decolonization movements in art and activism that began in earnest in the 2000s with the Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité Réunionnaise MCUR in La Réunion, and the Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (DAAR) in Beit Sahour, Palestine. In New York, such efforts have taken the form of calls to decolonize the museum both in terms of its exhibitions and organizational structure—from the exhibition *This Place* (Brooklyn Museum, 2016) to the campaign to remove Warren Kanders from the board of the Whitney Museum of American Art (2019). The seminar set out to trace the various historical and theoretical inflections of the term “decolonization” in North and South America, Europe, Africa, Australia, and South Asia, and their impact upon exhibition practice. Due to generous funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the seminar was largely based around visiting speakers with expertise in these regions.

The seminar began with the activist movement Decolonize This Place, whose understanding of decolonization is a confluence of Indigenous rights activism, Black liberation, Palestinian nationalism, and anti-gentrification. Since the Whitney protests, they have gravitated beyond the art world and towards the radical formation FTP (“Fuck the Police,” “Free the People,” or “Feed the People”). Françoise Vergès, a feminist activist and intellectual based in Paris, told us about her decolonial tours of the Louvre, her attempts to establish a “museum without objects” in La Réunion, and her innovative pedagogic methods for people of color. Nigerian art historian Chika Okeke-Agulu (Princeton University) presented his co-curated exhibition *Who Knows Tomorrow* (Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 2010) and spoke powerfully against the “decolonial,” arguing that West Africa is still in a postcolonial moment. Paul Chaat Smith, curator at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC, expressed skepticism about the accessibility of the term “decolonization” and presented his co-curated exhibition *Americans* (2018–ongoing) as an attempt to appeal to a broad public without condescension or moralization. Julieta González’s exhibition *Memories of Underdevelopment: Art and the Decolonial Turn in Latin America, 1960–1985* (Museo Jumex, Mexico City, 2018), by contrast, understood Latin American decolonization through the lens of 1960s anti-imperialism and dependency theory.

Berlin-based independent curator Claire Tancons energized the class with her research into Caribbean carnival practices

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Al-Idrisi's world map from 'Alî ibn Hasan al-Hûfî al-Qâsimî's 1456 copy of the *Kitab Rujar*. According to the French National Library, "Ten copies of the *Kitab Rujar* or *Tabula Rogeriana* exist worldwide today. Of these ten, six contain at the start of the work a circular map of the world which is not mentioned in the text of al-Idrisi". The original text dates to 1154. Note that south is at the top of the map.

and candid approach to the difficulty of translating these into exhibition formats. Wanda Nanibush, curator of Indigenous art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, discussed the notion of "performing sovereignty" through her rehang of the J. S. McLean Centre for Indigenous & Canadian Art, which included a rejection of chronology and informational labelling.

Our last speakers were Monica Narula and Jeebesh Bagchi of Raqs Media Collective (New Delhi), who confirmed that in South Asia decolonization still tends to refer to the partition of India in 1947; the term "decolonial" is emerging as a paradigm to replace the postcolonial/global, but its temporal and geographic reach are still waiting to be more closely defined. In preparing the class, we were struck by the dearth of material that linked decolonization to art history and museums. As part of their final assignment,

students contributed five entries for an annotated bibliography, each student focusing on a particular continent or region. The following booklet presents the outcome of this literature review, with groupings of texts on decolonial artistic and curatorial strategies in Africa, Australia, Canada, Europe, Latin America, South Asia, and the United States.

**Decolonial
Curating:
Methods and
Practices**

Download
booklet [here](#).



Tania Bruguera and Claire Bishop, May 2018.

James Gallery: Blurring the Lines Between Art and Activism

Public conversation between Tania Bruguera, Claire Bishop, and Irene Small

This [conversation between Tania Bruguera, Claire Bishop, and Irene Small](#) addressed the new book, *Tania Bruguera in Conversation With / en conversación con Claire Bishop*, through an exchange of different views on aspects of Bruguera's art. The speakers worked through differences between

action and gesture, how to navigate unexpected co-production of artwork with a state apparatus, and reflections on the artist's responsibility to the audience when the artwork involves danger to the artist. Questions from the audience were incredibly timely, and the participants offered thoughts on how artists respond to dictatorships and what we in the US can learn from international examples.

A controversial figure working in installation and performance, Cuban artist Tania Bruguera has consistently blurred the lines between art and activism. Defining herself as an initiator rather than an author, she often invites spectator participation and

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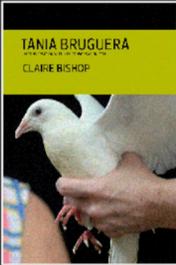
October 15, 2020
Blurring the Lines Between Art and Activism

Thank you for joining the virtual book launch of *Tania Bruguera in conversation with / en conversación con Claire Bishop* co-hosted by the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros and The James Gallery / The Center for the Humanities at The Graduate Center, CUNY.

During the final part of the event we will open the conversation to questions from the audience. Please submit any questions for the speakers using the Q&A feature.

Bienvenidos y gracias por acompañarnos esta noche en el lanzamiento virtual del libro *Tania Bruguera in conversation with / en conversación con Claire Bishop*. Este evento es organizado por la Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros y The James Gallery/The Center for the Humanities at The Graduate Center, CUNY.

Durante la parte final del evento abriremos la conversación a preguntas del público. Por favor envíen sus preguntas para las panelistas utilizando la función Q&A.



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OF NEW YORK

The James
Gallery

[Watch:](#) Blurring the Lines Between Art and Activism: A Conversation with Tania Bruguera

works in a collaborative mode, working with various organizations, institutions and individuals to challenge political and economic power structures and the control they hold over society.

This panel discussion looked at different aspects of Bruguera's career, including her exploration of the ways in which art can be applied to everyday life, and how its effects can translate into political action. Panelists explored topics covered in this eleventh title in the Fundación Cisneros' Conversaciones/ Conversations series, which delves into terms Bruguera has developed and or adapted over the last decade to "illuminate" her work: Arte de Conducta (Behaviour Art), Political Timing Specific Art, Arte Útil (Useful Art), Est-Ética (Aest-ethics) and Artivism. Bruguera's story, as discussed with Bishop over several years, runs from the development of her early

work in Cuba in the 1980s, motivated by her political activism, and her shift from intimate performances to the orchestration of the large-scale interactive situations and events that characterize her work today.

The panel also delved into Bruguera's current work, as she has said that this publication is closing a chapter in her life. "I sometimes feel I am carrying those works that belong to the past around too much. From now on, those that want to know about them, will have to read the book ... I am at that point in time where I want to look to the future."

For more information about the publication please visit the [Cisneros Foundation](#).



Watch: Adjunct Incubator recipient Kendra Krueger demonstrates how to build a DIY carbon dioxide sensor as part of her project The Community Sensor Lab.

CUNY Adjunct Incubator

Co-sponsored with the Gittel Urban Studies Collective, the CUNY Adjunct Incubator supports the critical and community-engaged scholarship of 10 CUNY adjuncts across 8 CUNY campuses. This year, they began developing a wide range of public and applied projects in the arts, humanities and humanistic social sciences, including an interdisciplinary art project focused on creating a community seed bank, a project that promotes the use of archives as open educational resources in the Spanish language class, an oral history of CUNY adjuncts, a lab that seeks to equip youth and community members with research tools and STEAM skills to better advocate for local

policy change on public health and environmental justice, a multimedia project that documents stories of community and neighborhood resilience in the South Bronx, and a class that integrates virtual reality and environmental social justice, among several others.

This year's grant recipients were:

- Alicia Grullon (Art Department, Social Practice Queens, Queens College, CUNY and The School of Visual Arts) for [Seed Books](#)
- Tania Avilés Vergara (Spanish for Heritage Students and Hispanic Linguistics, Lehman College, CUNY) for "[Teaching and Learning Spanish at CUNY: Public Language Education Through Archival Resources](#)"

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- Chloe Smolarski (American Social History Project/New Media Lab, CUNY Digital History Archive, and The Center for Teaching and Learning at The Graduate Center, CUNY, and Adjunct Instructor, Entertainment Technology/ Emerging Media, New York City College of Technology, CUNY) for [CUNY Adjunct Oral History Project](#)
- Kendra Krueger (Advanced Science Research Center, The Graduate Center, CUNY) for [The Community Sensor Lab](#)
- Mariposa Fernandez (Faculty member in the Women and Gender Studies Program and Africana Studies Department at Lehman College and the Black Studies Program at City College of New York) for [Be A Buddy Multimedia Project: Stories of Strength from the South Bronx](#)
- Jasmina Sinanović (Anthropology, Gender Studies and International Studies Department, The City College of New York, CUNY; Director of Development and Finance at the Center for LGBTQ Studies, CLAGS, The Graduate Center, CUNY) for [Transgender and Non Binary Contingent Faculty Experience at CUNY](#)
- Van Anh Tran (Department of Curriculum & Teaching, the Hunter School of Education, CUNY; and a PhD Candidate in Social Studies Education at Teachers College, Columbia) for [Im/migration, Belonging, and Disrupting Cycles of State Violence: A Southeast Asian](#)
- [Deportation Defense Case Study Curricular Toolkit](#)
- Michelle Gaspari (Sociology, Anthropology, and Women and Gender Studies, Baruch College, CUNY, and a Co-Organizer at The CUNY Adjunct Project) for [The Adjunctification of Higher Education: A Guided Syllabus](#)
- Dominika Ksel (New Media Arts, New York City College of Technology, CUNY, and Baruch College, CUNY) for [Virtual Reality and Environmental Social Justice presents “TrashTalk: A VR Exploratorium”](#)
- Apeksha Mewani (Health and Human Performance at York College, CUNY) for [Public Health Informatics Careers Dashboard](#)



[Watch:](#) Ellen Reid *SOUNDWALK*.

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The Center is committed to making the research offerings of the Graduate Center, CUNY, including the many creative and innovative projects that we foster, open and accessible to the widest of publics. The Center for the Humanities comprises a significant part of the public face of the Graduate Center and looks to amplify its identity as the home of doctoral research across the arts and sciences at CUNY with vibrant and innovative public programming. We encourage the public to join us in study, integrating art, creativity, and alternative ways of thinking into our myriad forms of discursive sharing.

Mindscales

Rebecca Jacobs, Wellcome Mental Health Curatorial Research Fellow

Over the past year and a half, [Rebecca Jacobs](#), the [Wellcome Trust Mental Health Curatorial Research Fellow at The Graduate Center](#), CUNY has been supporting the development of the New York component of [Mindscales](#), a new international cultural program about mental health, developed by [Wellcome](#). The program is predominantly taking place in four cities—Bengaluru, Berlin, New York and Tokyo—culminating in a series of co-produced public outcomes, including exhibitions in collaboration with artists-in-residence, events, and public programming in the spring and summer of 2022. By supporting local conversations and interdisciplinary collaborations around a shared topic, Mindscales aims to transform how we understand, address and talk about mental health by inspiring relevant and meaningful conversations that seek out a diversity of experience and place.

Soundwalk App, Film, and Panel Discussion

Ellen Reid's *SOUNDWALK*, a work of free public sound art that uses music to illuminate the urban landscape, [has launched in Central Park](#). Created by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer [Ellen Reid](#), the immersive audio experience has been created for people visiting Central Park, which features musicians of the New York Philharmonic, Young People's Chorus of New York City, Poole and the Gang, and the *SOUNDWALK*

Ensemble. Ellen Reid's *SOUNDWALK* is part of Mindscales, Wellcome's international cultural program about mental health.

As part of her role developing the New York City component of Wellcome's Mindscales, Jacobs served as curatorial advisor for the Central Park *SOUNDWALK*. She advised the team as they conducted research on the history and contemporary cultural meanings of Central Park and supported the development of original poetry by members of the Young People's Chorus of New York City, which is included in the experience.

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Rebecca Jacobs interviewing Commissioner Mitchell Silver for a video about SOUNDWALK for Mindscapes.

She also worked with local filmmakers Meerkat Media Collective and UK producer Barry Gibb to create a new short film about *SOUNDWALK* produced for Wellcome's Mindscapes, featuring Ellen Reid and New York City Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver, which addresses how music and parks contribute to mental health and well-being.

Jacobs also organized and moderated a panel discussion, "[Resonant Spaces: Finding Well-Being through Parks and Music.](#)" between Ellen Reid, Adedayo Perkovich of the Young People's Chorus of New York City, and Mitchell Silver. The panel was held on

November 12, 2020, as part of the Hamwe Festival, a virtual event on social justice and mental health, hosted by the University of Global Health Equity (UGHE) in Kigali, Rwanda. The group discussed mental health in New York's parks, a subject currently being studied through a collaboration between the [NYC Parks Department and researchers at The Graduate Center.](#)

Mindscapes NYC December 2020 Convening

At the end of 2020, Jacobs gathered a group of 45 people for Mindscapes.

Jacobs worked with facilitator [Nayantara Sen](#), Wellcome's [International Cultural Programmes \(ICP\) team](#), and the Center's [Cara Jordan](#) to develop plans for the convening. Participants included cultural institutions, artists, designers, policy stakeholders, researchers, foundations and Wellcome's ICP and Mental Health Priority area teams. The virtual meetings consisted of three different two-hour Zoom meetings held on consecutive Friday mornings in December 2020.

The sessions were intended to be informal, engaging, and provide an opportunity for people to meet, share, and think about ways they could collaborate for Mindscapes in New York. The group heard from the Tenement Museum, Laundromat Project, Center for Urban Pedagogy, Guadalupe Maravilla, and Brooklyn Museum with short presentations on their research and development for Mindscapes.

The key topics and themes that emerged specific to mental health and wellbeing in New York were:

- The power of words and narratives
- Reforming science by “bridging worlds”
- Cultural projects and policy change
- Community, trust, and repairing institutions

- Centering lived experience
- Mental health beyond healthcare
- Developing inclusive projects
- Thoughtful support strategies

Ahead of the convening, the organizers wrote a series of questions for the breakout sessions and asked participants to prioritize them and offer other suggestions. With the limited time available, the group collectively settled on five. Broadly:

- How to develop a shared mental health language
- Mental health policies and re-evaluating “access to care”
- How different disciplines can elevate lived experience as a valid form of knowledge
- How to work toward repair and joy at community, personal and societal levels while being mindful of toxic positivity
- How Wellcome might commission or generate inclusive collective research through Mindscapes that has a use and tangible impact

Following on from this convening and the themes that emerged, the Mindscapes NYC project partners are moving into the development and production phases of cultural programming, culminating in a Mindscapes public programming in spring and summer 2022. Major projects underway include plans for an exhibition by Guadalupe Maravilla at the Brooklyn Museum, along with an adjacent

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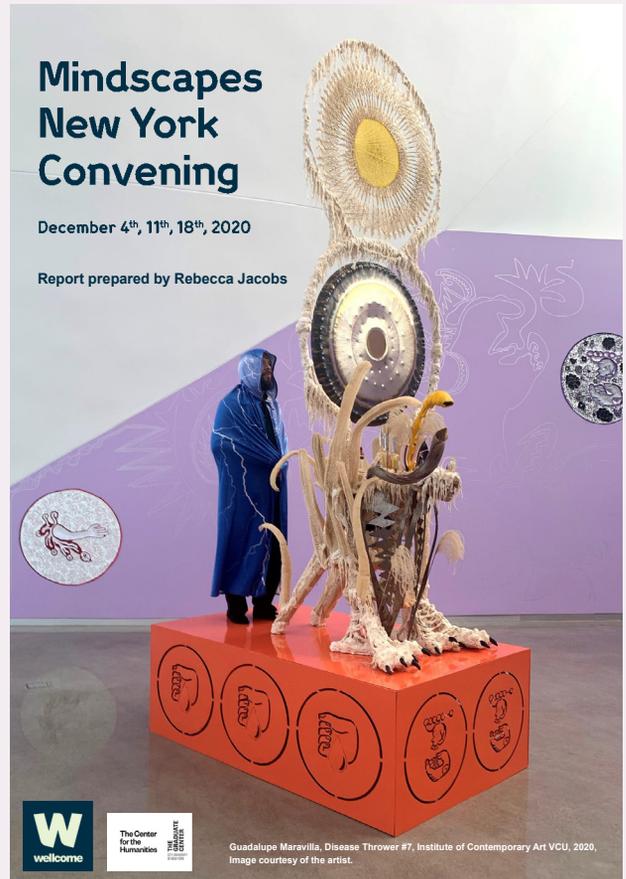
interactive gallery space that addresses themes from local Mindscapes projects, inspired by Wellcome's Reading Room.

Working Group

The Center for the Humanities, CUNY is hosting a [working group](#) for local Mindscapes partners to workshop projects and collaborate over the next year. Jacobs held the first of these local working group meetings virtually on April 23, 2021, and will continue to organize them through the 2021-22 academic year, with an aim for in-person meetings in the months ahead.

International Partners

Taking lessons from her experience designing the Mindscapes convening for New York, Jacobs is meeting regularly with each of the other curatorial research fellows in Berlin, Bengaluru, and Tokyo to support them as they plan local Mindscapes convenings in their respective cities over the next year. The group is also meeting regularly with an aim to build an international network across the Mindscapes projects.



Download the full *Mindscapes NYC Convening* report [here](#).



Nikki Columbus, *Remote Solidarity*, 2020. Courtesy of Nikki Columbus.

James Gallery: Art Work Place Publication

This past year, the incredibly dynamic Art Work Place massive group Zoom room discussions were transcribed to create a publication to historically document how the James Gallery worked with partners to respond, in the moment thoughtfully and with agility, to the unfolding COVID-19 crisis. Brainstorming to shape the publication and editing have been ongoing. Three emergency public Zoom sessions in April, May, and June 2020 were mobilized at lightning pace with technical alacrity following the gallery working

group Museum as Form's extensive public research on labor inequalities in museum structures and writer Nikki Columbus's collaborative research preparation for a summit on these issues.

The gallery worked with Michelle Millar Fisher of the PhD Program in Art History and curator Nikki Columbus to create the event series [Art • Work • Place](#), conducting research and creating a Zoom platform for sharing resources and ideas on precarious economic and labor issues facing cultural workers and students and the mutual aid efforts that have been devised to address them, in the wake of the pandemic. By reinventing how we gather, the interactive sessions were filled with

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brainstorming and resource-sharing. As part of the partnership network of mutual aid, we distributed small participation funds to over 100 artists and educators who are precarious cultural workers.

All three AWP links:

[Art Work Place I](#)

[Art Work Place II](#)

[Art Work Place III](#)

Capturing the layers of conversation that were recorded, with at times over 800 people in a room in moderated conversation and chat, and at other times small intensive working groups in breakout rooms, in a book is a

large project. It is an important undertaking, as this will become a historical document of the moments when COVID-19 hit the arts with devastating effects on artists, museum educators, and gig workers because of the structural inequality of the ecosystem of art.

The screenshot shows a Zoom webinar interface. The main content area displays the following information:

- FORUM**
- ART · WORK · PLACE:**
- Emergency Session**
- April 7, 2020**
- Vera List Center for Art and Politics
- SPEAKERS**
 - Ian Epps
 - Michelle Millar Fisher
 - Camilo Godoy
 - Landry Haarmann
 - Shaun Leonardo
 - Andres Puerta
 - Kate Zayko
- CHAIR**
 - Nikki Columbus
- If Art Is Politics 2018–2020

Below the text is a graphic of a laptop displaying eight raised fist icons in various colors (black, green, red, orange, brown, purple, blue, and white). At the bottom of the slide are logos for:

- THE GRADUATE CENTER (The Graduate Center, City University of New York)
- THE NEW SCHOOL VERA LIST CENTER FOR ART AND POLITICS
- The James Gallery The Center for the Humanities

On the right side of the Zoom window, there is a vertical stack of video thumbnails. The top one is a grey placeholder. The second one shows a woman with red hair wearing a yellow top. The third one shows a man with glasses and a beard wearing a white shirt. The bottom one is another grey placeholder. The Zoom interface includes a play button, a progress bar at 00:00, and various system icons at the bottom.

[Watch:](#) *Art Work Place Emergency Session I* Webinar.



From left to right: Harmony Holiday, Fred Moten. Images courtesy of the artists.

James Gallery and *Lost & Found* Collaborative Art & Poetry Sessions:

Ensemble Time: An Improvised Listening and Reading Session with Harmony Holiday and Fred Moten

This past year, there has been so much more to talk about and listen to. We acknowledged this shift and recognized that our community of artists and poets needed nurturing and were nurturing each other. Poets [Harmony Holiday](#) and [Fred Moten](#) continued their ongoing exchange in an [improvised session](#) of listening and reading from their new work.

Together, we all gathered in an imagined living room, across time zones, as we carried forward the conversation and spirit of their November 2019 reading in the James Gallery to celebrate their new books [A Jazz Funeral for Uncle Tom](#) (winner of a 2020 California Book Award) and [All that Beauty](#). Harmony's review of Fred's book was published this past year by the [Poetry Project](#). The shared experience of the evening extends forward in time in [video](#) documentation, the musical [playlist](#) "Ensemble Time," curated by Harmony for the event, and in a list of [resources](#) from this session.

Fred Moten teaches black studies, critical theory and poetics in the Department of Performance Studies at New York University. His latest book, written with Stefano Harney, is *All Incomplete* (Minor Compositions/ Autonomedia, 2020).

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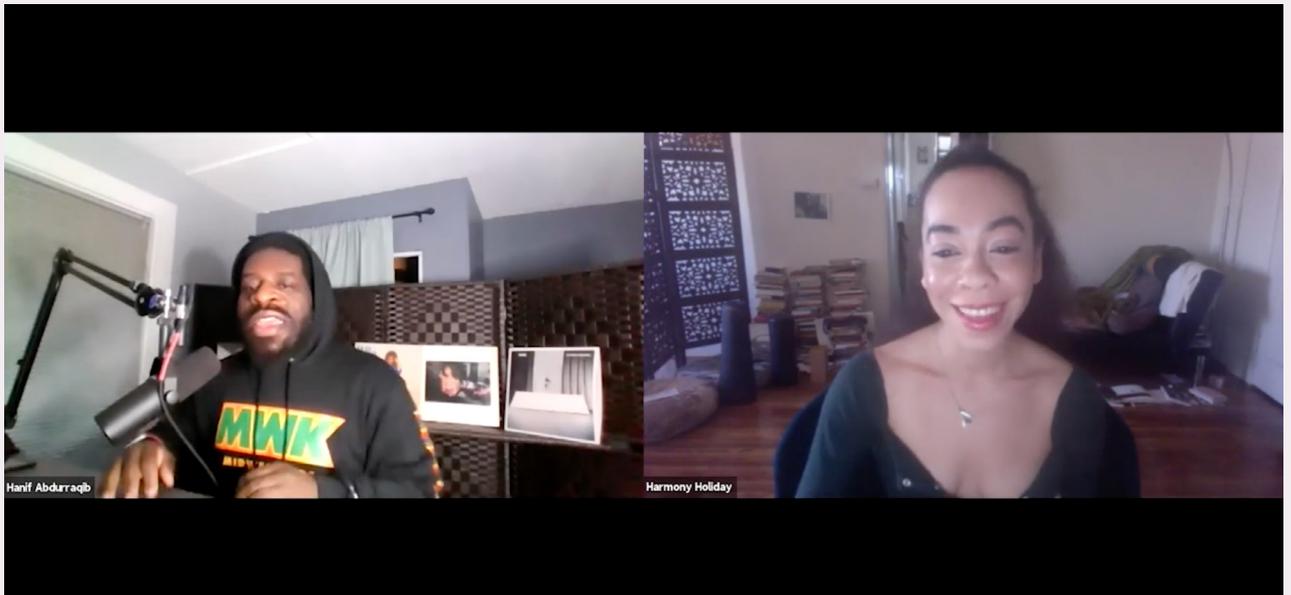
Harmony Holiday is a writer, dancer, archivist, director, and the author of four collections of poetry, *A Jazz Funeral for Uncle Tom* (Birds, LLC, 2019), *Hollywood Forever* (Fence Books, 2017), *Go Find Your Father! A Famous Blues* (Ricochet Editions, 2014) and *Negro League Baseball* (Fence Books, 2011).

Haunting Refrains: Sampling Practice in Black Poetry and Music with Harmony Holiday and Hanif Abdurraqib

How is the technique of sampling, pervasive in Black music, used in poetry and literature at large? Does poetry sample music, does it sample other poetry, does it do either well or effectively, or do poets need to catch up to music in this regard? And what is the relationship between sampling practice and free improvisation in both poetry and

music? In their [wide-ranging conversation](#), poets, writers, and cultural critics [Harmony Holiday](#) and [Hanif Abdurraqib](#) looked at their own work and that of poets whose work they admire, as well as music they love that helps answer and refine these questions. They shared some of their own work as well, and created a relaxed generative atmosphere with [playlists](#), in the Zoom room packed with hundreds of active participants that can be watched [here](#).

Hanif Abdurraqib is a poet, essayist, and cultural critic whose poetry has been published in *Muzzle*, *Vinyl*, *PEN American*, and various other journals. In 2021, he will release the book *A Little Devil In America* with Random House.



[Watch:](#) Hanif Abdurraqib and Harmony Holiday.



Image from [Library of America](#).

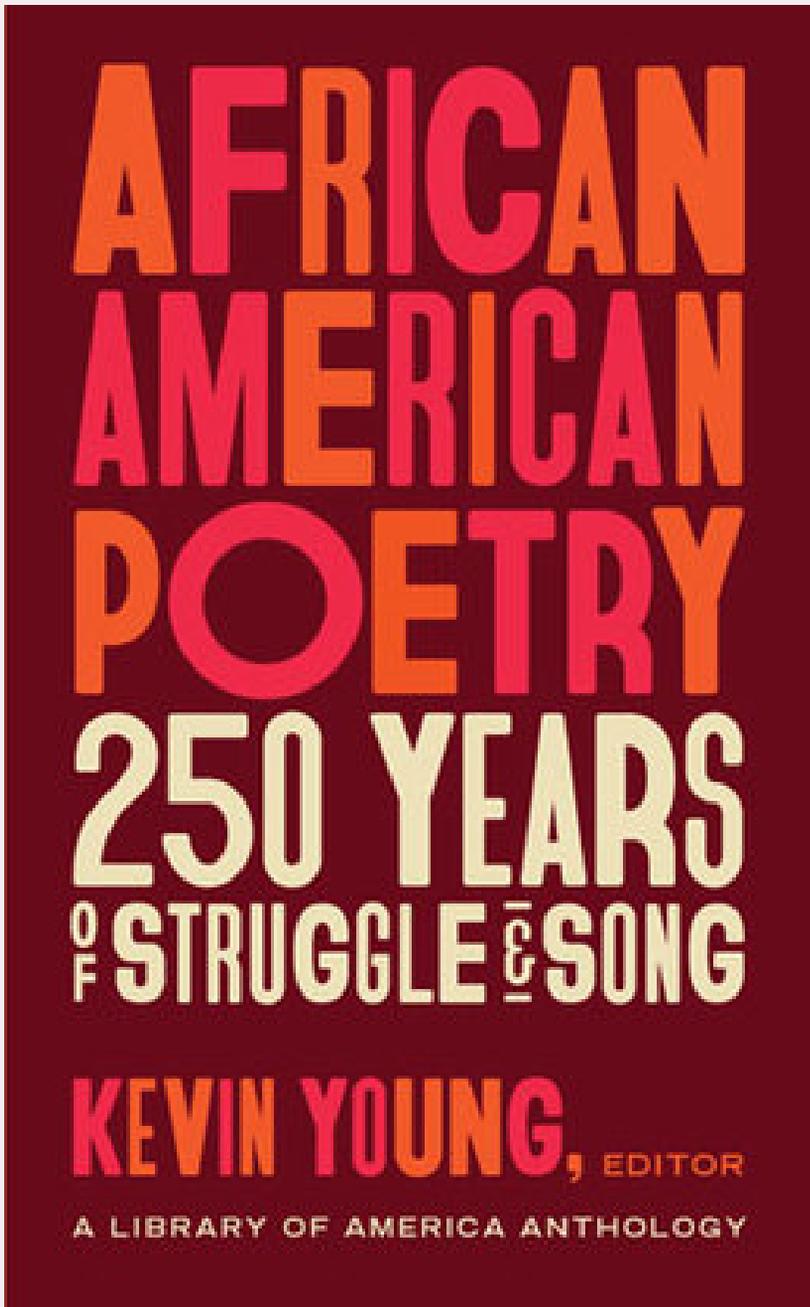
Lift Every Voice: Why African American Poetry Matters / Celebrating African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song

Lift Every Voice was a yearlong national public humanities initiative sponsored by the Library of America and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture that sought to engage participants in a multifaceted exploration of African American poetry, the perspectives it offers on American history and the ongoing struggle for racial justice, and the universality of its imaginative

response to the personal experiences of Black Americans over three centuries. These events were also in celebration of the recent publication of [African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song](#), edited by Kevin Young, a literary landmark: the biggest, most ambitious anthology of Black poetry ever published, gathering 250 poets from the colonial period to the present.

This event was sponsored by the Center for the Humanities, *Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative*, and the James Gallery at The Graduate Center, CUNY in collaboration with One Book One Bronx, Literary Freedom Project, and Leonard Lief Library at Lehman College, CUNY, who [hosted a series of eclectic programs and reading groups](#) as part of a nationwide initiative, [Lift Every Voice: Why African American Poetry Matters](#).

Cover of [*African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song*](#) anthology. Edited by Kevin Young.



James Gallery: Claudia Rankine and the Racial Imaginary Institute in Residence

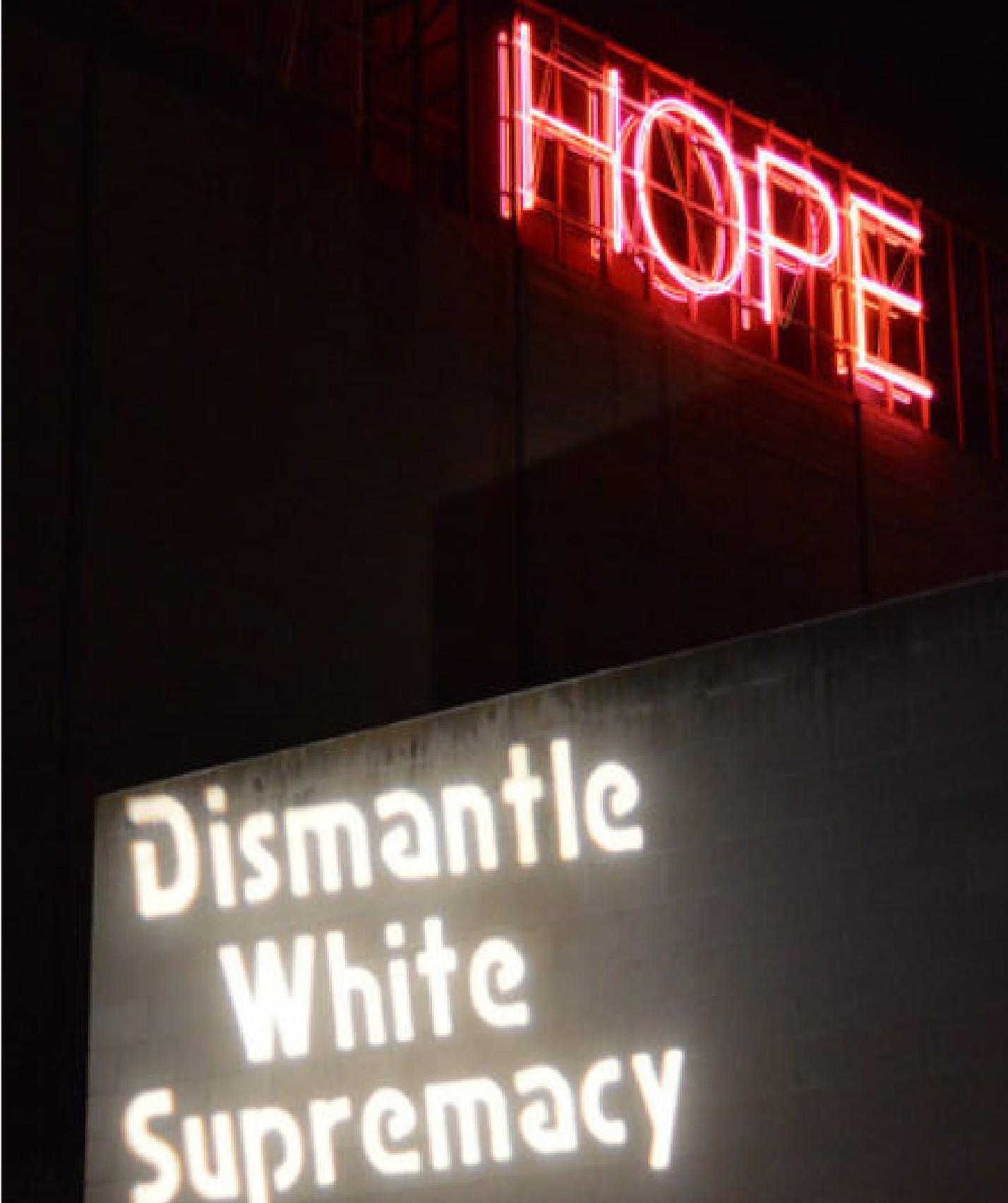
On Nationalism: The Fragility and the Possibility of “We”

In 2020–21, Claudia Rankine and the Racial Imaginary Institute were [in residence at the James Gallery](#) for the second of their three-year collaboration investigating nationalism. The Racial Imaginary Institute (TRII) is a collective of poets, writers, curators, and artists dedicated to creating spaces for the critical discussion of race and identity.

Building upon successful collaborative work by James Gallery Presidential Fellow James Sevitt (Environmental Psychology), two new James Gallery Fellowships have been created and awarded to Graduate Center students Jennifer Jones (Art History) and Busra Unluonen (Cultural Anthropology) for the 2021–22 year. The collaborative TRII–James Gallery curatorial team, including LeRonn Brooks, alumnus of the PhD Program in Art History, met weekly over the spring 2021 semester to brainstorm and plan a faculty-student seminar for the 2021–22 academic year that will generate new research and culminate in a range of interdisciplinary programs, including an exhibition and publication in spring 2022.

With intensifying systemic inequalities around the world in the context of a global pandemic, accelerating climate change, an escalating refugee crisis and rising race-based violence, the idea of any singular, national “we” has never been more contested. Toxic conceptions of “us vs. them,” a doubling down of “me and mine,” underlie a global ethos of racialized nationalism. At the same time, we are in a generative, yet tenuous time of community organizing, protest movements, mutual support, and intersectionality. Both responses stem from the language and feeling of injury and longing. When the notion of home is unstable, what are our options? As Paul Chan said, “Is there a direction home that doesn’t point backward?”

There is the possibility of “we.” How much should we invest in ideas of the “we”? How can we re-imagine nation, tribe, community? What practices of listening, sharing, and making could be enacted across varying visions of community, decolonization and self-determination? How does our complicity become constitutive of community as we imagine it? How do national identities shape our everyday lives? Which borders are permeable and which are sustainable? Which injuries are bearable and which are not? To quote Homi Bhabha, “When is a risk to life also a risk to living?” This collaboration of the Racial Imaginary Institute and the James Gallery builds an international network of programs, exhibitions, seminars, and creative acts in response to these questions, with the aim of scrutinizing nationalisms and considering the fragility and possibility of “we.”



San Diego Solidarity Brigade & OLBSD Projections for Racial Justice, *Dismantle White Supremacy*, Backbone Campaign, October 15, 2017. Creative Commons.

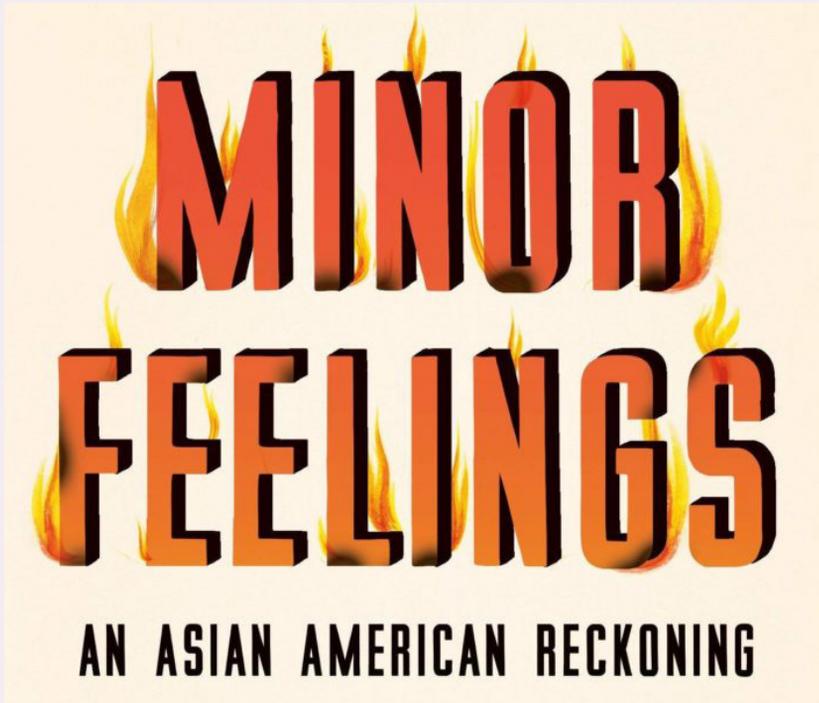
Asian American Reckonings with the Racial Imaginary Institute’s Cathy Park Hong and Monica Youn

Cathy Park Hong’s recent book *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* has become required reading in spring 2021 as our voices have called for a stop to anti-Asian American hate. The [author’s conversation with poet Monica Youn](#) was full of personal and lively reflections, including on how it feels when American optimism contradicts your own reality and when you believe the lies you’re told about your own racial identity. Park Hong dove into the shame, suspicion, and melancholy that she felt growing up as the daughter of Korean immigrants and found in these dissonant feelings the key to questions that haunt her. Engaging stand-up comedy,

visual art, and more, Park Hong experiments with form to create new articulations of the genres of memoir and cultural criticism. Simon Wu introduced the evening and facilitated the active and meaningful question and answer interaction with public participants.

Park Hong is a poet, essayist and author of poetry collections including *Dance Dance Revolution*, chosen by Adrienne Rich for the Barnard Women Poets Prize, and *Engine Empire*.

Monica Youn is the author of *Blackacre* (Graywolf Press, 2016), which won the William Carlos Williams Award of the Poetry Society of America.



Minor Feelings, An Asian American Reckoning book cover. Image courtesy of Cathy Park Hong.



Dina Weiss, *Building Frame (2)*, 2021. Gouache, mono print, paper 12 x 9 inches. Study for “Agents of Curiosity: Concerning Infrastructures, Facing Empire Window Project.” Image courtesy of the artist.

James Gallery: “Agents of Curiosity”: Concerning Infrastructures, Facing Empire Window Projects

The windows of the Graduate Center provide an opportunity to communicate with people traversing Fifth Avenue. The James Gallery creates and presents art as both catalyst and

outcome of research and dialogue between artists and scholars. Underlying this mission is the shared fundamental importance of curiosity and experimentation—in education and in art making. At the Graduate Center, we are part of the city, and we contribute to building its culture and civic life. The city flows through The Graduate Center with the energetic curiosity and experimentation of the students, faculty and staff—like a breath of fresh air in Midtown.

During the spring 2021 semester, the James Gallery has been working with artists, faculty,

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and students to envision a series of projects in the gallery windows to launch in summer 2021 and extend through winter 2022 while we gradually transition back into the building. The gallery has partnered with PublicsLab to offer a Mellon Fellowship next year to PhD student Jessica Applebaum (Theatre) to consider the dramaturgy of this liminal space and the ways in which movement and performance create the setting of a gallery space.

city during the pandemic, will make the most of previously overlooked spaces, relations, and small pockets of time and space. The projects also gesture toward the upcoming [Racial Imaginary project](#) that will be in the gallery physically next spring, which responds to artist Paul Chan's question "Is there a way to go home that does not point backwards?" How will we acknowledge the fragility and build on the possibility of "we" in this city that is our transforming home?



Dina Weiss, *Study for Agents of Curiosity: Concerning Infrastructures, Facing Empire Window Project*, Mail Art City Collage Print series, 2020. Gouache, silkscreen print, collage, 5 x 7 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

As we come back to Midtown and think about what nurturing practices we want to build in our institution, the artists' imagery, taking inspiration from networks of relations and quiet nurturing patterns of everyday life in the

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Installation view of 'Wayfinding,' Chloë Bass, 2020.

Mellon Seminar: Here and Not There

Led by Seminar Faculty Lead Chloë Bass

Artist Chloë Bass's project combines art and lived experience as research tools to inspire private and public dialogue about questions of intimacy and how socially constructed notions of "family" inform the way city dwellers understand their place in changing urban environments.

This year, Bass partnered with Social Practice Queens, a unique degree program based at Queens College, focused on art as an instrument of social justice. They collaborated with the Queens Museum to present the exhibition *Art as Social Action:*

10 Years of Social Practice Queens. Bass gave a virtual [walk-through](#) of the exhibition this semester. In addition to the exhibition itself, they organized a virtual catalogue and a series of public programs, including All Things Must Pass, a roundtable discussion with SPQ MFA candidate Cristina Ferrigno about art, grief, and communal mourning. This conversation is also related to Bass's Grief Museum Studies Syllabus.

In spring and summer 2021, Bass is presenting an exhibition and series of programs with the Brooklyn Public Library entitled [The Parts](#), which invites audiences "to reflect on how personal and public histories intersect and provide language and feeling through which to process the crises and positive developments around us."



The hands of a workshop participant brewing tea from self-made teabags in a clay cup. Photo by Cinthya Santos-Briones for Brewing Memories workshop, October 3, 2020.

Mellon Seminar: Archives in Common

Led by Seminar Faculty Lead **Ángeles Donoso Macaya**

Professor Ángeles Donoso Macaya and her collaborative partners are not creating “new” knowledge; they are sustaining and disseminating Indigenous knowledge practices concerning food growth, access, sustainability, and preparation. [Archives in Common](#) brings together community organizers with members of immigrant and university communities to assist in the support and expansion of undocumented immigrant-led initiatives (cooperatives,

workshops, and gardens) devised in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and to think collectively about how to build an archive of the commons during a crisis.

This year, Donoso Macaya and her collaborators have developed a website that documents the project’s collective work, presented numerous workshops and public events, and published writing on both *Distributaries* and elsewhere, including:

- The [Archives in Common](#) website, which hosts a growing archive of the commons, documenting the project’s ongoing work across events, workshops, public syllabi, and mutual aid work.

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- A public [conversation](#) between core project collaborators Carolina Saavedra, Marco Saavedra, and Yajaira Saavedra about the extraordinary community space they have created at La Morada, which not only functions as a restaurant but also a hub for mutual aid and a refuge and sanctuary for communities in the South Bronx.
- [Brewing Memories](#), a series of workshops that teach decolonial gardening practices, led by Carolina Saavedra. This workshop series began at Brooke Park, a community garden located near La Morada. These workshops taught participants not only the medicinal uses and historical lineages of various herbs and plants but also how to grow them. They invited participants to “draw” a memory using the herbs before making them into a tea shared by everyone present.
- A beautiful [reflection](#) on the first of these workshops by Donoso Macaya on *Distributaries*, in which she writes, “In *Brewing Memories*, participants not only collectively learn (or remember) Indigenous practices and knowledges centered in the use of medicinal plants as a way to care for oneself, to care for others, and to care for the environment. They also share experiences and memories, and create something from these memories. As Yajaira emphasized in the closing of the second workshop, the practice of sharing knowledges, experiences, and memories around a fire is not only a testament to the perseverance and presence of Indigenous knowledges, but also a form of mutual aid—and another instance of resistance to gentrification that continues to displace and push communities out of the South Bronx.”
- The [Undocumented-Led Struggle for Freedom](#), a conversation between four of the six co-authors of the book *Eclipse of Dreams*, Marco Saavedra, Claudia Muñoz, Mariela Nuñez-Janes, and Stephen Pavey, to discuss and explore how, in the search for alternative ways of struggle for real liberation, justice, and dignity, undocumented youth activists began to organize differently and to devise several forms of direct action.
- [Socializing Toxic Clouds](#), a conversation between Samaneh Moafi, Imani Jacqueline Brown, and Robert Trafford from the collective Forensic Architecture and Anna Feigenbaum about the use of toxic clouds to police and disperse collective dissent, inspired by a recent video project on which Donoso Macaya collaborated that investigates the use of tear gas against protests at the 2020 Plaza de la Dignidad protests in Chile.
- An [interview](#) between Donoso Macaya and Marco Saavedra about their collaborative syllabus that proposes reading together as an “act of love.”



A Brewing Memories workshop participant drawing a flag using honey and dry herbs—three long, green dried pieces of lemongrass serve to make three stripes with criss-crossed marigold leaves in the shape of a star, set on a triangle of lavender. Photo by Cinthya Santos-Briones, October 24, 2020.



Mellon Seminar: The Puerto Rico Syllabus

Led by Seminar Faculty Lead Yarimar Bonilla

The [Puerto Rico Syllabus](#) is a digital resource that was originally devised as a means of thinking and teaching about the Puerto Rican debt crisis. Over the course of the last year, Professor Yarimar Bonilla has been working to build and extend the work of this public syllabus through a series of courses, initiatives, and public events that not only continue to take up questions of the unfolding crises in Puerto Rico (PR) in the wake of a 15-year recession, cuts to basic services, and devastating storms and earthquakes but also how they relate to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, including:

- [Digital Puerto Rican Studies: Social Scholarship, Mapping, and Archives](#), an event in which the PR Syllabus presented alongside three other digital scholarship projects centered on PR: The Proyecto historias orales cayeyanas: Vivencias y resistencias; Visualizando El Apoyo Mutuo: Solidaridad en Acción; and the Digital Library of the Caribbean-Archivo Histórico de Vieques.
- [Sancocho LIVE: Catastrophe, Resistance, & Joy: A Virtual Stew of “Non-Essential” Thinkers and Makers / Un guiso virtual de pensadores y hacedores “no-esenciales.”](#) a three-part virtual event series that brought together scholars, writers, artists, and activists to think about how “non-essential” communities, workers, and institutions are responding to the intersecting catastrophes of the present. Drawing inspiration from Pedro Pietri’s

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concept of the “aesthetic sancocho,” each event consisted of short video presentations followed by a moderated dialogue with Puerto Rican cultural workers in the island and the diaspora, and ended with a virtual jangueo where DJs set the mood and participants could continue building together.

- [Sancocho LIVE 2 – La Brega: Stories of the Puerto Rican Experience / La Brega: historias de la experiencia boricua](#), a four-part virtual event series featuring reporters, sources, musicians, and artists from the new podcast La Brega, using narrative storytelling, investigative journalism, and first-person reflections to reveal how “la brega” has defined so many aspects of life in PR during its 120-year history as a colony of the United States. A term that has no translation from Spanish to English but for Puerto Ricans is a “way of life,” through struggle or hustle, these events sought to ask, alongside the podcast, what does it say about life in Puerto Rico that “la brega” is such a defining experience?
- [LANDFALL](#): a commemoration of the three-year anniversary of Hurricane Maria, its survivors and their stories, through a film screening of Cecilia Aldarondo’s film *LANDFALL*, live performances from Puerto Rican artists, including music by Danny Rivera and poetry by Raquel Salas Rivera, and an audience Q&A with top experts, including Xiomara Caro Diaz (Maria Fund) and Julio López-Varona (Center for Popular Democracy) centered on climate change, the current economic and political challenges facing PR, and a vision of a just recovery.
- A course developed by Curricular Fellow Ashley Coleman Taylor that activates the PR Syllabus and explores how the relationship between Black women’s bodies and geography in PR may help us understand the ways in which race, gender, and agency inform notions of debt, lack, ownership, and sovereignty.
- A project by Curricular Fellow Ricardo Gabriel, which focuses on climate justice, the energy system’s relationship to PR’s colonial debt crisis, and its role in shaping the country’s future, by providing an overview of the current energy system as well as multimedia resources on environmental justice and climate justice struggles in the Puerto Rican archipelago.
- A project by Research Assistant Daniel Vázquez Sanabria that seeks to maximize the accessibility of the PR Syllabus website.

PUBLIC MISSION

LOST & FOUND: LIGHT RELIEF

In a time where keeping connection alive and supporting artists and writers is of great importance, *Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative* will be continuing our ethos of collectivity, archival recovery, and collaboration. For this project, we commissioned the CUNY and *Lost & Found* community of poets/writers, archivists/scholars, and artists to dive into their personal archives, or the archives of their research focus to publish short-form digital works. The lightness of “Light Relief” also extends to the work itself—readily available fragments from works in progress, or works completed, rather than extensive work or reproductions from the archive.

The goal of Light Relief from *Lost & Found*, and the core of our work as a whole lies in careful attention to the interplay of poetry, poetics, friendship, and politics. Although our offering is modest, we hope to at least give some support to those whose incomes have been compromised but whose work remains crucial.

Special thanks to our friends and collaborators Engaging the Senses Foundation for their generous support.

 START READING



L&F Light Relief

During the pandemic, *Lost & Found* (L&F) centered its energies on keeping creativity and connection alive in our extended scholarly community. In the early weeks of lockdown in spring 2020, L&F sent out a call for Lost & Found: Light Relief, a WPA-inspired initiative to distribute resources to our community. CUNY and L&F-affiliated poets/writers, archivists/scholars, and students/artists shared short-form, mixed media work from their own personal archives to publish digitally. Poets, artists, and scholars sent provisional texts, fragments of research, and finished pieces. A dynamic poetic archive of the present emerged in real time. L&F teamed up with CUNY’s open-source, annotable scholarly publishing platform Manifold

to launch [Light Relief](#), a new mixed-media poetry journal, as well as texts by Audre Lorde and June Jordan from our publication series.

STATISTICS

Representing the first full academic year where the Center for the Humanities has found itself operating entirely remotely, the data presented here are offered as a snapshot of a new landscape that we are only beginning to understand as we adjust to what has become a “new normal.” None of us knows exactly how to interpret such numbers, although we have received plenty of anecdotal evidence that our ongoing capacity—through our relocated and extended programming—to convene communities new and old has served to establish and strengthen ties between participants and audience members alike.

New opportunities for engagement have arisen as we have been able to connect thousands of audience members and participants for whom attendance in person would have been impossible at any time. We have been able to proceed with much of our scheduled programming virtually and have been able to reimagine many of the other aspects of research-community gathering, taking the lead with innovative forms of remote operation that will find no numerical recognition below. Some critical parts of our work also had to be postponed and, as the opportunities to engage in person slowly return, we look forward to better articulating the many valuable aspects of the shared work we do so that, once the real world is again available alongside the virtual, we keep the best of both.

Events

115 public events!

26,551 total viewers of our events

Zoom attendees/viewers

20,600 viewers

Translating the Future series

9,058 viewers from 85 countries

Facebook live

4,243 viewers

YouTube

1,708 viewers

Social Media

Facebook

- Center: 5,199 followers
- Lost & Found: 1,786 followers

Twitter

- Center: 3,551 followers
- James: 723 followers
- Lost and Found: 1,630 followers

Instagram

- Center: 1,211 followers
- James: 671 followers

Mailing List / Newsletter

- Total: 76,342
- Center: 47,531
- Lost & Found: 14,826

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

The Center for the Humanities encourages collaborative and creative work in the humanities at CUNY and across the city through seminars, conferences, publications, and exhibitions.

Our focus is connecting the interdisciplinary research and teaching at the Graduate Center with stakeholders across the city with the goal of fostering new ideas in the arts, philosophy, politics, and the humanities.

Map Key

NEIGHBORHOOD
CAMPUS
DEPARTMENT
CUNY PARTNER
CIVIC PARTNER
COMMUNITY PARTNER
SOCIAL JUSTICE
LANDSCAPE
METHOD
AREA OF STUDY

Faculty Quotes

On the Line has allowed me to forge new **collaborative relationships** that bring together what have been largely separate facets of my life: **activism, scholarship, teaching, and service work**. For the first time, my intellectual, artistic, and community-based commitments are cross-pollinating. -Naomi Schiller, Brooklyn College

Beloved Community amplifies the agency of **Harlem's** mothers as a powerful resource in education research and advocacy. Drawing from MLK's theoretical framework, Beloved Community grounds school transformation and leadership in the "five Cs": care, **courtesy, critical reflection, commitment, and community**. -Terri Watson, CCNY

Archives in Common aims to dismantle/undo divisions such as **expert/non-expert, university/community, and citizen/immigrant**. These divisions are created and/or sustained by the same institutions "that have (and give me) access to the resources" that allow us to do this kind of work. We learn from and build on existing **mutual aid** efforts while nurturing **Indigenous and immigrant knowledge practices in community gardens**. -Angeles Donoso Macaya, BMCC

My project is about **radical reciprocal generosity** that leads to **deconstruction of academic persona**, especially due to renegotiation of time and project goals toward broader social aims and uplift. -Pedro Cabello del Moral, The Graduate Center

Resilient Participatory Budgeting builds inclusive and collaborative roots for system transformation through **participatory democratic practices** led by CUNY students. -Michael Menser, Brooklyn College

Environmental Humanities **Collaborative Oasises (ECHO)** establishes longstanding connections between CUNY and NYC to reinvigorate the local landscape as a site of **research, recreation, and civic engagement** around issues related to **environmental justice and access**. -Ryan Mann-Hamilton, LaGuardia

Geography
Public Syllabus
Social Sculpture
Migrant Justice
Racial Justice
Puerto Rico's Public Debt

Ethnic Studies
Climate Change
Decolonial Theory
Jamaica Bay
Polluted Waterways
Community Board 18
Eastern Queens Alliance
Queens Community Land Trust
Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Conservancy
Movement to Protect the People
Canarsie Alliance

QUEENS COLLEGE
Social Practice CUNY
Wagner Archive
Center for the Study of Brooklyn
Teaching and Learning Center
Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay
Brooklyn College Garden and Greenhouse
PSC Environmental Justice Working Group
Brooklyn/Queens Community Land Trust
Leadership and Human Development
Latin American, Iberian, Latino Cultures
Africana and Puerto Rican/Latino Studies

Environmental Psychology
Environmental Science
Division of Biology
Social Practice
Urban Education
Anthropology
Queens Museum
Public Agenda
La Morada
PSC CUNY
Wagner Archives
Inwood Legal Action
Broadway Stages
Artists Against Displacement
Environmental Psychology
Environmental Justice
Abolitionist Imagination
Migration Studies
Economic Democracy

Hudson River
Harlem
The City College of New York

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
La Brega: Stories of the Puerto Rican Experience
Clemente Soto Vélaz Cultural and Educational Center
Aquatic Research and Environmental Assessment Center
Food Justice, Inequality and Social Need Committee

Debt
History
Collaboration
Deep Listening
Machine Learning
Participant Observation
Participatory and Public Art

Dymaxion Projection
"Dymaxion" is a portmanteau created by Buckminster Fuller. It combines the words **DYNAMIC** and **MAXIMUM**. Dymaxion is also the type of **map projection** seen here. The projection invites rethinking the **orientation** of New York - as a city focused away from Manhattan and **decentralized** among the five boroughs.



Brooklyn Communities Collaborative
Protect Sunset Park
Voice of Gowanus
No BK Pipeline
Gowanus Canal
Right to Breathe
Food Justice
Philosophy
Anthropology
Humanities Department
Urban Sustainability
KINGSBOROUGH COLLEGE

Ditmas Park
Flatbush
Mutual Aid
Permaculture
Brooklyn Public Library
Bed Stuy Restoration
Community Board 17
Brooklyn College
Newtown Creek
Long Island City
Community Board 2
Jimmy Van Bramer
Hogshead Ranch
Newtown Creek Alliance
Long Island City Alliance

LaGuardia
BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Presidents Society Environment
LaGuardia Humanitarian Initiative
Bronx Land Trust
Brook Park
South Bronx
Mott Haven
Mott Haven Families
Friends of Brook Park
Bemba Art Collective
Harlem River
East River
HUNTER COLLEGE
CUNY SCHOOL OF LIBERAL AND URBAN STUDIES
East River Action
Lower East Side
East River Park
Planned LES Seawalls

Baruch COLLEGE
6th Street Community Center
University of Texas, Austin
NYC Public Advocate
USDA Food Distribution
Mayor's Office of Resilience
NYC Civic Engagement Commission
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Social Ecological Resilience
Parent and Community Education
Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños

Planting, Harvesting, Distributing Food
Gardening, Cooking & Eating Together
Oral History, Ethnography, Spatial Design, Surveys
Coproduction of Knowledge Through Partnerships
Documentary Filmmaking

Sociology
Motherwork
Food Studies
Memory Studies
Digital/Public Humanities
Environmental Engineering
Food Justice/Sovereignty
Visual Storytelling
Community Archiving
Co-created Oral History
Interviews

THE GRADUATE CENTER
Water Access
Water Safety
Sanctuary Movement
Environmental Justice
Eco-criticism
Digital Sociology
Education Justice
School Leadership
Solidarity Economy
Digital Storytelling
Podcast Production

BMCC
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Andrew W. Mellon Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research

Kendra Sullivan, Director of The Andrew W. Mellon Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research

Having long-identified engagement as key to its institutional character, the CUNY system is ideally placed to develop structures that revitalize democratic knowledge practices on and off campus, solidifying CUNY's legacy as a leader in 21st-century higher public education.

Every two years, a new cohort of approximately 20 faculty, students, and community partners come together through the Seminar to plan and implement creative, activist, and scholarly collaborations that result in research, teaching, and activities that serve greater public good. Over its history, the Seminar has funded nearly 60 collaborative projects, including playwriting and performance, publications, websites, new media and technology, oral histories, and artworks that offer new ways of understanding and solving pressing social issues. Taken together, the portfolio of individual and collective projects stewards profound connectivity, possibility, and progressive change across CUNY, New York City, and the world.

The current Seminar projects are grounded in creativity, democratic knowledge practices, and the reciprocal exchange of resources and ideas with wider communities. They cover topics ranging from Afro-Caribbean Sound Ecologies to Archives in Common to Voices of the Gig Economy to Ethnographies of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure. While planning these individual projects, the group is also working collectively and synergistically with each other and the Seminar team to establish a network of urban gardens and community kitchens where the bodies and minds of diverse CUNY communities are nurtured through engaged public programming, facilitated discussion around polarizing issues, and the distribution of fresh, healthy food. In the film below, edited by fellow Pedro Cabello del Moral (LAILAC), some of the activist-scholars affiliated with the Seminar whose study and activism is adjacent to, and sometimes grounded in, urban gardening speak candidly about how food justice became central to their public humanities projects during the pandemic.



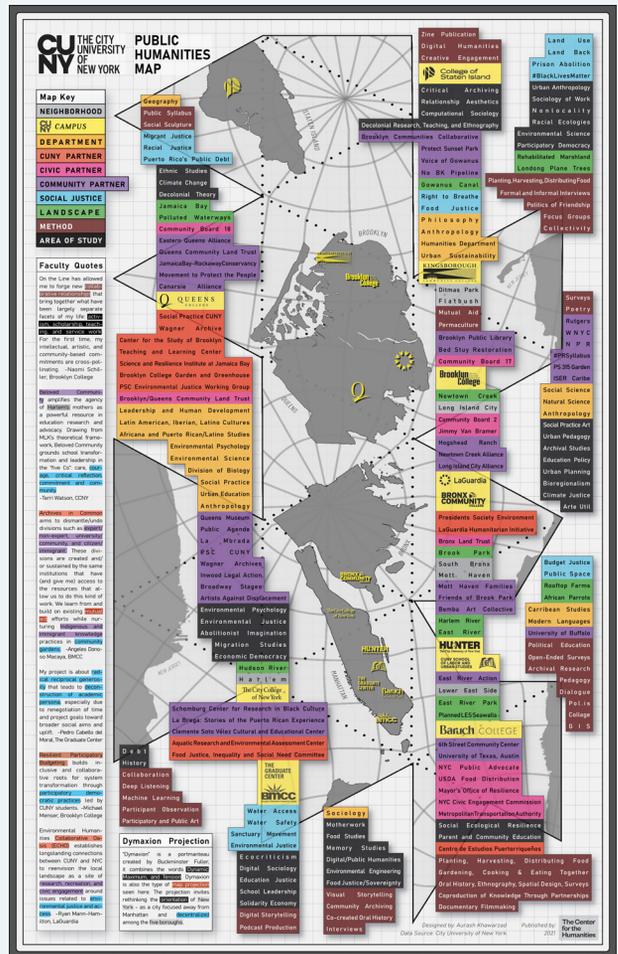
[Watch:](#) Food justice, activism and the public university: a conversation

Pub Hum Mapping Project

This year, Seminar leadership has also been working with our collaborators to enhance sustainable infrastructure for public humanities at CUNY. As part of those efforts, we developed a suite of interrelated projects, including the [Public Humanities Mapping Project](#). Urban designer Aurash Khawarзад (Geography, Earth and Environmental Science) has assisted in the development of techniques for cartographic research and mapmaking in the humanities as a tool for deepening public engagement and impact. Here is the first map project, co-created by Aurash Khawarзад and myself as a pilot and proof of concept.

CUNY Pub Hum Database

A open-access database of public humanists, departments, groups, centers, and institutes at CUNY is in formation. GC sociology students Kristi Kiley and Nga Than will work with me to update, seek peer assessment and review, and share this resource with colleagues to facilitate greater conversation and collaboration across disciplines, institutes, and campuses as we plan engaged scholarly research and programming. Please be in touch if you'd like to contribute to our efforts to centralize communication amongst public practitioners, administrators, faculty, and students at CUNY!



The [CUNY Public Humanities Map](#) shows a map of NYC, in which Brooklyn and Queens appear in the center and all 4 outer boroughs appear larger than Manhattan, with CUNY campuses marked by their geographic location such as Brooklyn College, Queens College, and Bronx Community College. Around these are colorful lists color-coded according to a key organized by Neighborhood, CUNY Campus, Department, CUNY Partner, Civic Partner, Community Partner, Social Justice, Landscape, Method, and Area of Study.

Countermapping the Humanities

“Countermapping the Humanities” is the core of the Seminar’s collaboration with the [Computational Democracy Project](#) and Polis, a civic engagement technology, with whom we’re exploring the role of machine learning in humanistic discourses by launching a series of surveys about the stakes and aims of public humanities practices at public universities. We’ve also collaborated on two other campaigns: one led by Wendy Luttrell and Urban Ed graduate students on the twin crisis of COVID and racism in NYC public schools, called NYC Parents Speak Out; and one designed to support a food access campaign at Brooklyn College, which has resulted in curriculum and infrastructural development around urbanism, gardening, and food justice. More context can be found [here](#).

Expanding our media output through public writing, filmmaking, and podcasts has become a significant focus during the last year. For example, our friends and allies at Humanities for All have profiled Seminar project leaders and collaborators’s projects on their site:

[Humanities for All Seminar on Public Engagement](#)

[Archives in Common](#)

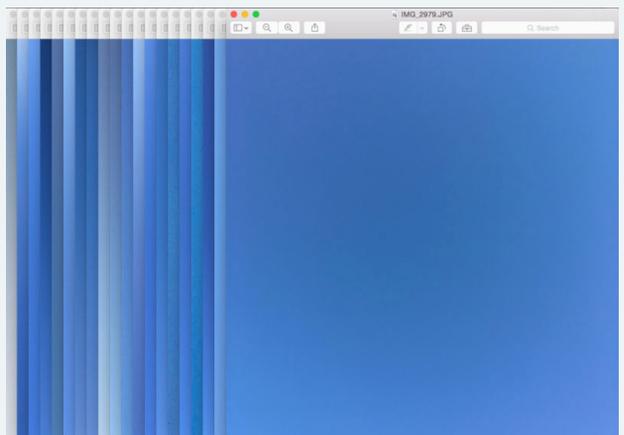
[Countermapping the Humanities](#)

We’re also working to enhance visibility and support for ongoing and new public humanities work at CUNY through [Distributaries](#), our online and in-print publishing platform. Queenie Sukhadia, our *Distributaries* writer-in-residence, has spent the last year conducting an ongoing series of interviews that highlight public humanities talent across CUNY. And, more recently, Sukhadia has joined the *Distributaries* editorial team to strategize content development for a relaunch of *Distributaries* this fall! Here are some highlights from *Distributaries* this year:

Marco Saavedra and Ángeles Donoso Macaya, [“love is the most subversive praxis: reading together as a working of love”](#)

Queenie Sukhadia, [“Why the Humanities Need to Go Public, and the Ways in Which They Already Are.”](#)

Michelle May-Curry: [“The Uses of Blue-Sky Thinking in the Imperfect World \(of Graduate Education\).”](#)



An image from the project #sky #nofilter, Chloë Bass, photography, text, and video, 2016–2017.

ABOUT

I'll close with praise and thanks to our full 2020-21 cohort:

Current Seminar Faculty Leads

Chloë Bass, Queens College, Department of Art and Art History

Yarimar Bonilla, The Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology; Hunter College, Department of Africana, Puerto Rican and Latino Studies

Ángeles Donoso Macaya, Borough of Manhattan Community College, Department of Modern Languages

Ryan Mann-Hamilton, LaGuardia Community College, Department of Anthropology, and Department of Latin American Studies

Michael Menser, Brooklyn College, Departments of Philosophy, Urban Sustainability Studies, and Caribbean Studies; The Graduate Center, Earth and Environmental Science, and Environmental Psychology

Naomi Schiller, Brooklyn College & The Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Terri N. Watson, The City College of New York, School of Education, Department of Leadership and Human Development

Current Seminar Fellows

Pedro Cabello del Moral, Department of Latin American, Iberian and Latino Cultures/LAILAC, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Courtney Frantz, Department of Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Nga Than, Department of Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Jadele McPherson, Department of Cultural Anthropology, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Fernanda Blanco Vidal, Department of Environmental Psychology, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Rosa Squillacote, Department of Political Science, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Eric Dean Wilson, Department of English, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Kristine Riley, Department of Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY

The James Gallery, Art and Interdisciplinary Research

Katherine Carl, Curator of the James Gallery

Since 2010, the Amie and Tony James Gallery has been creating new methods and structures for collaborative work between artists, scholars, and the public as it catalyzes and produces advanced research, artistic creation, and interdisciplinary dialogue on topics of mutual concern. The James Gallery provides support for creative processes that may lie outside usual disciplinary boundaries through multiple formats. Long-term art and interdisciplinary research collaborations with scholars at CUNY and public partners manifest in art exhibitions, yearlong seminars with CUNY faculty and students, performances, workshops, symposia, roundtable discussions, and screenings. The gallery addresses issues of global importance with innovative collaborative research and artistic creation. Located in midtown Manhattan at the nexus of the academy, contemporary international art, and the city, the gallery is central to The Graduate Center's and CUNY's contribution to the cultural life of New York City.

The gallery launched public programming in winter 2011 with [Fred Moten's inaugural lecture](#) and the major international conference [Now Museum](#) in partnership with Independent Curators International and the New Museum, and the exhibition [The Making](#)

[of Americans](#) based on the story of the early years of MoMA. The innovative practice of the gallery's curatorial method enacts investigative questions from advanced research in anthropology, history, political science, philosophy, computation, library science, music, theatre, economics, literature, psychology, geography, and much more through the creative production and dialogic interaction with artists and their work. The gallery is known internationally for its strong support of artists' expression in all forms and its important contributions to advanced research on modern and contemporary international art. Recognized for its outstanding long-term advanced research in modernism across many fields and geographies, the gallery has always created projects that reorient this discourse through presentation of views and voices that see modernism from vantage points of excluded and hybrid perspectives. This work is enacted in the public gallery and in the classroom. In-depth exchange with artists to cultivate new projects and support experimental approaches is a hallmark of the gallery's curatorial practice. Israeli choreographer Arkadi Zaides's 2016 exhibition [Capture Practice](#) was such a project showing that a committed, calm, measured tone in working method can open deep conversation on difficult topics in public.

The James Gallery continuously provides support, direct mentoring, resources, and creative research collaborations for students across disciplines to practice new methods of work with artists and the public in combination with approaches from their own disciplines. Students conceptualize their

ABOUT

multifaceted projects through dialogue with curators and fellow scholars, journalists, artists, and public non-governmental organizations on the local, national, and international levels. This foregrounds aspects of doctoral research that grow out of public discussion and might otherwise be left out of the traditional disciplines of graduate study and usual modes of presentation. Their projects dig deeply into the questions that motivate public discourse and artistic and academic practice in many fields. In addition to scholarly writing and organizing seminars, students may also explore how to spatialize their arguments in the gallery and invent other formats that foster artistic communities and create connections across disciplines. Truly exemplary recent student-initiated projects were Debra Lennard's (Art History) [Tricontinentalism](#) and James Sevitt's (Environmental Psychology) collaborative [Pressing Public Issues](#) with the gallery, community colleges and the [Teaching and Learning Center](#). These multiyear primary research projects contribute unique knowledge that furthers the development of scholarly fields through methods that involve deep exchange with people inside and outside the academy.

This year the James Gallery provided direct sustained support for 13 Graduate Center students. We offered two student fellowships this year with the support of the President's and Provost's Offices, and also two student fellowships supported through the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Curatorial Practicum, for exhibition and public programs in [Decolonial](#)

[Curatorial Practice](#). In addition, nine first-year art history students received financial aid to work with the gallery, learning and contributing to the inner workings of a nonprofit art space, exploring new approaches to public programs this year. Making use of the tools for digital gathering, a robust collaboration between two fellows produced a deeply reflective and impactful nationwide convening of graduate art history students to address [Ethics and Labor in Art History](#) in their relationship to the professional field and their teaching. Through these diverse in-depth collaborations with the James Gallery, students are supported to actively create new scholarship in their fields, engaging professionally before completing their degrees.



The Racial Imaginary Institute is a collective of artists and scholars including writer Claudia Rankine, artist and writer Simon Wu, Art Historian and GC alum LeRonn Brooks, Curator at the Getty. Viet Nguyen along with Homi Bhabha and many more are frequent collaborators.

For the last 10 years, the [James Gallery](#) has initiated and led new academic and artistic research at the Center for the Humanities in close collaboration with faculty at the GC and throughout CUNY in formats including seminars, public conversation series,

CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

exhibitions, conferences, and performances. The gallery provides the vision, motivation, and creative network and expertise to collaboratively conceive and organize new methods for faculty seminars that have included [Mediating the Archive](#), [Narrating Change](#), and [Social Choreography](#); this year gallery student fellows and the Racial Imaginary Institute artists began planning for an interdisciplinary CUNY seminar [“On Nationalism: The Fragility and Possibilities of We.”](#) Through such ongoing projects, the gallery convenes key creative voices in many fields to conduct research in art, culture, and society and elaborates new perspectives on faculty research in the public realm.

This year, the gallery published a [collection of annotated bibliographies](#) by PhD students on decolonization writings, including groundbreaking artistic and curatorial methodologies from all corners of the globe. This project is an outcome of the bi-annual collaboratively taught seminar on Curatorial Practice offered by the Gallery and the PhD Program in Art History with generous funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for curatorial practice at the Graduate Center. The gallery has offered [collaboratively taught courses](#) previously with Social Practice Queens and next year’s curatorial practice class will include Social Practice CUNY students.

Even as the physical space of the gallery remained closed, this year the gallery worked with major public intellectuals Fred Moten and Claudia Rankine, both MacArthur Award recipients. The gallery produced a sequence of public evenings of conversation, listening,

and exchange with [Harmony Holiday and Fred Moten](#) and another with [Holiday and Hanif Abdurraqqib](#), in appreciative collaboration with *Lost & Found*. Through a series of writing-intensive sessions with the Racial Imaginary Institute, we collaborated to conceptualize the responsive project [“On Nationalism: The Fragility and Possibilities of We”](#) and built opportunities for more students and faculty support to co-create the project. The public conversation [“Asian American Reckonings”](#) with poets Cathy Park Hong, Monica Youn and moderated by Simon Wu, all of the Racial Imaginary Institute, provided a space to come together to discuss the recent attacks on Asian Americans framed in the larger cultural context of Hong’s recent book *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*.

The James Gallery has developed catalyzing and sustainable creative opportunities and support for scholars, artists and publics for long-term collaboration and dialogue through interdisciplinary research and creative production in myriad formats. The thousands of programs—always free of charge and open to the public—we create in our space on the ground floor of The Graduate Center and with public partners internationally, represent the tip of the iceberg of the gallery’s long-term collaborative research and cultural practice. In spring 2020, we quickly reinvented how we gather with three interactive [Art Work Place](#) sessions filled with brainstorming and resource sharing to immediately address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on arts and culture workers and students, and the

ABOUT

particularly disproportionate toll on people of color. With nearly 40 speakers and 2,000 participants in three sessions, these events imagined new approaches to large questions of equity, diversity and accessibility for the art field and demonstrated the power of mobilizing our platform and resources to gather wider communities around issues of public concern. For our public Zoom convenings this year, we built on the lessons learned and developed and continue to hone new methods for increasing access and in-depth exchange on digital platforms whether in real time or through extensive documentation and resources on our website.

In the last decade, the gallery has expanded its capacity many fold by maximizing its resources with agility. Producing 52 exhibitions and thousands of programs, the international audience of the gallery is well in the six figures as in-person and online visitors access our creative visual and textual and video resources. Having worked directly to support upward of 2,000 local and international artists, the gallery's impact on their careers has a magnificent ripple effect that we are especially proud of. The gallery has directly mentored and financially supported 55 students through multiyear interdisciplinary fellowships and 73 one-year art history appointments, providing hands-on skills in the gallery and access to professional networks. This is in addition to dozens of students each year that the gallery works with on public events. The list of our project partners continues to grow, with well over 100 organizations ranging from CUNY colleagues to institutions, including Museum of Modern Art, New Museum, and New York

Public Library, as well as myriad universities, contemporary art centers, and museums worldwide. Major projects have been supported by the Carnegie Corporation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, among others. Our exhibitions are regularly reviewed by [Artforum](#), [Bomb](#), [New York Times](#), [Brooklyn Rail](#), [Hyperallergic](#), and [New Yorker](#). With a core staff of one to two people over the years, we have worked very efficiently. Most importantly, we value our public's in-depth ongoing engagement with our programs and the strong rapport with our community of artists and scholars.

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