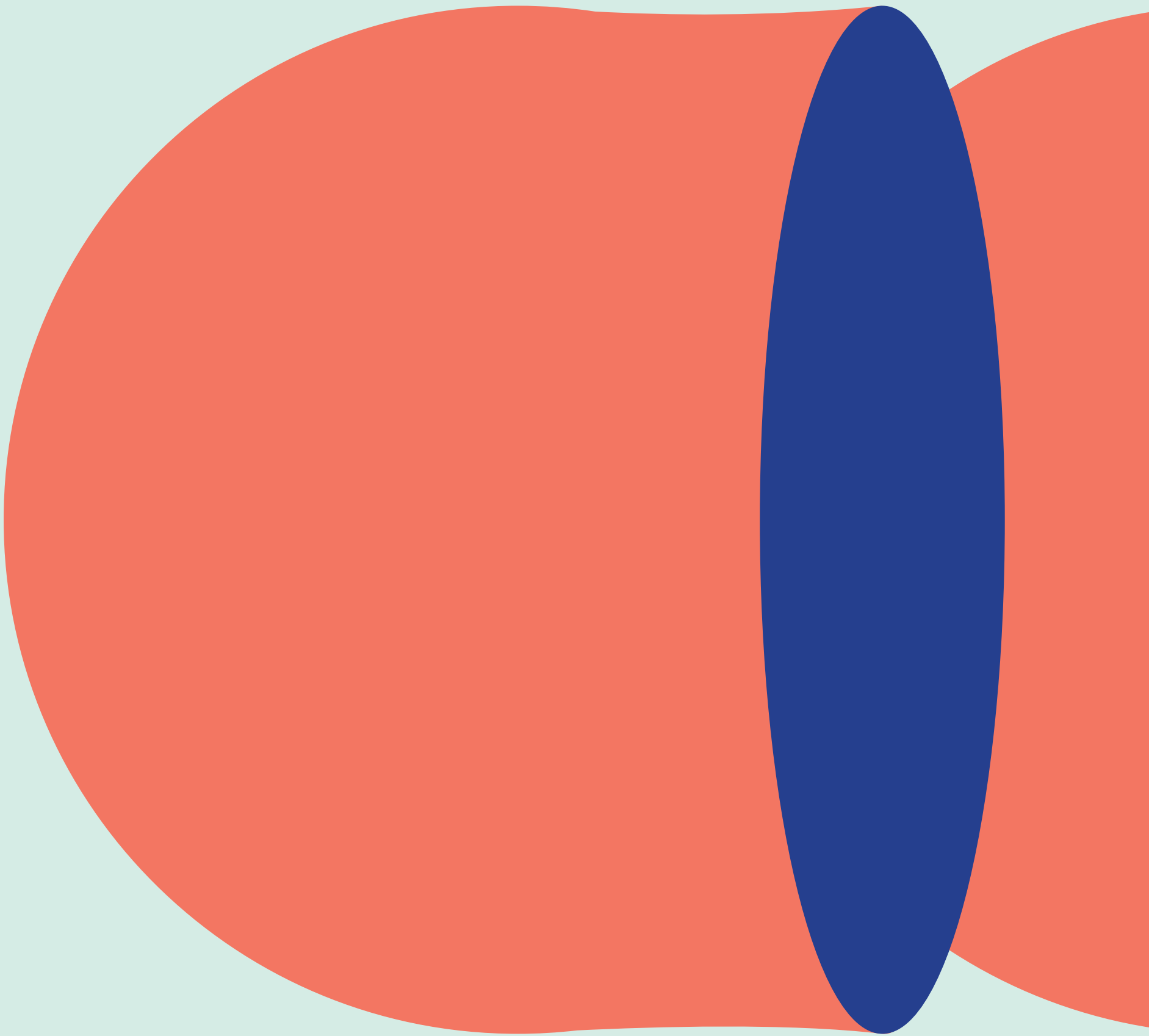


LUMIPEN



K I M S K I

SLAMMING KOREAN AND
POLISH FOOD TOGETHER

By Marina Resende Santos, on behalf of us all who got this magazine together

In Fall 2019, Public Media Institute organized *Togetherism*, a series of programs experimenting with horizontal, collective art-making and organizing. Between August and November 2019, artist collectives and community leaders, criminalized youth and teen activists, radical printmakers, curators and architects gathered for exhibitions and panels, workshops, and river tours.

I had worked with Public Media Institute for a little less than half a year when we began in earnest to work on the fall program. We meant and Nick Wylie and I, then joined by Graham Livingston for the bulk of our research, by Nora Catlin for this publication, and many other partners as each part of the program developed. Throughout this process, our understanding of *collective* expanded and shrunk; we curated by exploring and readjusting and renaming the program. *Togetherism* is a speculative ‘-ism’, an art critical spin-off with no pretence to label a new movement. We landed on a funny neologism, broad enough to avoid constraining the terms of collectivity, while centering the simple fact that we work together.

Togetherism asked:

What does it mean to work collectively in the time of isolated, individualized labor in the arts and beyond?

Why do groups come together, and how do they fall apart?

Note From the Editor



We were interested in how collaborative work in art has been associated with social practice and activism. We questioned what collaboration did to authorship and authority. We wanted to know how people made decisions and compromises to make things together—and to stick together over time.

This magazine is the last and lasting component of the festival. We invited artist collectives, writers, curators and scholars to contribute their responses to the magazine. With their contributions, Lumpen 135 serves as a testament to the project.

When I took upon editing Lumpen 135, I thought it might answer those questions. The magazine would provide the project’s missing statement, the unifying concept that was only partly available throughout the events calendar. Fortunately, instead, Lumpen became another part of the exploration, and a platform to share it with writers and readers. Through this process, each contribution shaped the next, and helped us see collectivism in the variety of forms it takes today.

Alongside new writings, we reprint the texts *Group Work* by Temporary Services (2010), and *Observations on Collective Action* by the Critical Art Ensemble (1998). These formative texts shaped my line of inquiry on interviews with Related Tactics and Industry of the Ordinary. Camel Collective’s peculiar early work *Submission to Archive for Exhibition* has a footnote on the fictional ending of the collective; my conversation with Camel’s Anthony Graves about the tragic narrative of endings informed how I worked with Sarah Skaggs on her essay on the final strides of Goat Island. In this way, the parts of this magazine contribute and respond to each other.

New responses from our contributors expand the artistic possibilities of collective action. The printmakers from Justseeds, making murals with summer school students and desert communities, and the architects of TANTO, with their collaborative designs, widely incorporate audience and communities in their practices. Tracie Thompson and Tom Groom present two collaborative games—printed here in a spread readers can cut out to play—where competition usually turns into a collaboration. Willy Smart treats an entire insect society as a group that may work

or dream together. In this Lumpen, we’re asking the tough questions: Why do we want to be termites?

Looking at this magazine as a site of research, I could take down a few notes. There is a political science to group work, but one that remains fundamentally personal. Many groups fear hierarchy, but often do best when dividing specialties and tasks. This division of labour is neither equal nor constant: people have different needs, resources, and life paths. Maybe groups end when a certain balance of those differences slips; but ending doesn’t need to mean failing. Ending can mean that a mission has been accomplished, and out of one group many more collaborations can flourish.

For those interested in a history of collectives, *Togetherism* shows what group work looks like in the waning 2010s. Virtual communication has made its way into the collective creative process, enabling long-distance, instant, and wider collaboration. But for CAE, a group will always need present bodies and a shared space. For Camel Collective, indeed, *the process* is mostly conversation over wine. Working together involves much more than working: lasting collaboration means mutual understanding, and an even more lasting bond of friendship and silent trust.

But to this editor, late in the lonesome task of writing this introduction, one note stands out and last.

A group is more than the sum of its parts. Bertha Husband’s *third hand* or Postcommodity’s *organism*: an emerging agency forms by and between and beyond each individual when people gather and make something together. Something no one of them would, or could have conceived on their own.

In quality and quantity, this new *something* shows what group work can offer to an artform as well as to political action.

That, it seems to me, is the charm and the power of working together.

Generous Support

Contributors & Editors

Lumpen Magazine

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Generous support for Public Media Institute (PMI) provided by

The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs
 The Dean Allen Olson Foundation
 The Driehaus-MacArthur Fund Field Foundation
 The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
 Haus der Kulturen den Welt
 Illinois Arts Council Agency
 Illinois Humanities
 Lumpen Patreon members
 The Robert R. McCormick Foundation

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Lumpen Magazine

Operating a Front for the Left in the Arts since 1991

960 W 31st St Chicago IL 60608

lumpen.com

Part of the Buddy System

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 Circular Standard
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 Arial Narrow Bold
 Phase-B 12-86-50

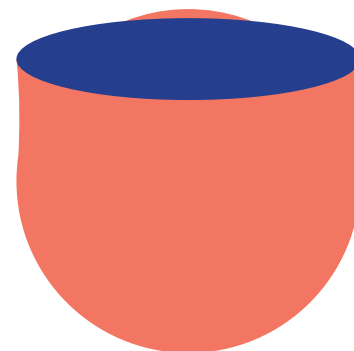
Issue 135

Volume 28

Issue 02

Winter 2020

Togetherism



Cover Image: *Various Stacked Vessels* by Jeremiah Chiu



Indicates Continuation



Indicates End

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Press Press: Building Sanctuary Together

Working within the university context, and particularly in Boston, which is a city of institutions, I think a lot about who may or may not feel included in these spaces. I think about the ways in which community histories exist in fraught relationship with these institutional structures, and about how to bring in grassroots, community-driven, multimodal collective practices that challenge our traditional modes of display. As part of a process to think about a longer history of building artworlds together, we at the Tufts University Art Galleries started the Artist Response exhibition series, which puts historical and contemporary artists' projects in dialogue with their social moments—to show that we need to learn from the past to respond to the present. The series has included Zoe Leonard's 1992 work "I want a president," displayed as a billboard on the exterior of SMFA at Tufts for the academic year; TVTV's landmark documentary "Four More Years" of Richard Nixon's 1972 presidential campaign; Gabriel Sosa's 2019 installation drawing from his experience as a court interpreter; Antonio Serna's "Documents of Resistance," an art, research, and educational project on the history of artists of color in protest and struggle; gerrymandered district maps from across the United States produced by Moon Duchin, associate professor of Mathematics at Tufts University; an artist talk with James McAnally on the new formations of artist-organizing in St Louis; and a mixtape of creative-activist tactics by Houston artist Carrie Schneider. Each installation incorporates a wheat-pasted component, so that layers of history are built where the various works in the series are imprinted onto the school and the space.

Now is a topical moment for considering sanctuary, global migration, the brutal treatment of refugees, and the US government's inhumane policies—but it is a long-term, ongoing process of racist, white supremacist and exclusionary practices that led us here. For this reason, for Fall 2019 we invited Press Press and founding organizer Kimi Hanauer to produce large-scale cross-campus installations. Press Press's collective process uses research and group work to develop nuanced language around race and immigration that encompasses a wide set of identities and

experiences, while centering specifically the experiences of immigrants and immigrant-adjacent persons.

Press Press is a group of artists, creative organizers, and activists based in Baltimore and Los Angeles that works together as an interdisciplinary publishing initiative. Core organizers include Valentina Canbezcas, Kimi Hanauer, Bomin Jeon, and Bilphena Yahwon, as well as a network of family and friends who extend the projects' mission. Formed in 2014, Press Press started its partnership with Baltimore City Community College Refugee Youth Project by holding creative writing workshops with a group of teens in Catonsville, Maryland. After they started publishing the work of their collaborators, Press Press evolved into public cultural programming, an open-access publishing studio that is based on an exchange economy, youth publishing workshops in an immigrant and refugee-only space, and the ongoing production of print and digital publications, all of which operates out of a storefront studio and library in Baltimore, Maryland and a production space in Los Angeles, California. Press Press write that their publishing practice is organized around two key goals: "first, to shift and deepen the understanding of voices, identities, and narratives that have been suppressed or misrepresented by the mainstream, so far focusing on immigration and race in the United States; and second, to build networks of relationships through publishing practices centered on self-representation and gathering."

For the Remis Sculpture Court in the Aidekman Arts Center on Tufts University Medford campus, Press Press will produce the immersive installation *Sanctuary is on the Horizon*. Posters and banners will line the walls with statements from their collaborative manifesto on sanctuary, along with a reading room with selected works from their publishing practice. Members of the group will also host a workshop in the space on November 8th, where participants can contribute new entries to the evolving text. The work expands on their project *Sanctuary Manifesto*, a collaboratively-built manifesto created with immigrants and immigrant-adjacent people through workshops in Baltimore, New York City, and Chicago. The manifesto is part of their 2018 publication, *Sentiments: Expressions of Cultural Passage*, a compilation of conversations, artist projects, and writings that explore various intersections of immigrant identities and the multiple and complicated facets of immigrant experiences. Guided by three central questions: What is sanctuary? How can

sanctuary be created? and How can sanctuary be protected?, the Manifesto explores the many nuanced meanings of the word "sanctuary," and asks viewers to consider if and how sanctuary has manifested in their own lives. In exploring sanctuary's many potentialities, the Manifesto makes room for speculative, impossible and poetic possibilities to describe what sits between a legal framework and a feeling. As Press Press describes it,

An essential element of sanctuary, according to the ideas this process has yielded, is its ability to morph and accommodate varying visions of its form and function, including sometimes contradictory ones...

Rather than seeing this collection of items as a concrete and final destination, we understand the process we've undertaken this past year as a point of departure. We recognize that some of the principles outlined here are not easily realizable, nor are they pragmatic. However, because of the collaborative process we've undertaken, we recognize this manifesto's power in representing a collective vision we can reference as we make practical efforts toward accomplishing our goals.

At the School of the Museum of Fine Arts (SMFA), which is the art school campus at Tufts, Kimi Hanauer's *Calling All Denizens* comprises a large-scale public billboard on the exterior of the SMFA courtyard and a wheat-pasted installation in the Well Space, considering alternative conceptions of citizenship through an ongoing participatory research process. *Calling All Denizens* gives new form to research on the history of immigration and naturalization policy in the United States, which Kimi originally compiled as an editorial framework for Press Press's *Sentiments* and *Sanctuary Manifesto*. Launched as part of the Counterpublic public art triennial in St Louis in 2019, the project

Abigail Satinsky



A

Their tender, urgent, poetic calls for participation model

a powerful form of togetherism

facilitates conversations, workshops, and programs that aim to cooperatively imagine the new political practice of denizenship as an alternative to the notion of citizenship. Hanauer writes, "'Denizen' has historically been used in reference to foreign residents who are granted limited rights in the states in which they reside. Building on this historical meaning, *Calling All Denizens* partners with individuals and organizations to explore the notions of "from within" and "from without" as they pertain to the nuances of citizenship, sovereignty, migration, exile, and diasporas. In response to a history of race-based exclusion to citizenship and processes of identity-erasing assimilation in the United States, *Calling All Denizens* aims to give rise to a more compassionate, ethical, and genuine vision of a liberated society that holds its denizens dear." Visitors are invited to participate in the project by contributing their ideas to the notion of the denizen through recorded conversations with the artist. The conversations will be archived online on a publicly available platform.

Both projects are connected to art institutions, but exist outside of the gallery proper. The Remis Sculpture Court is a frequent event space for groups across the Medford campus. The billboard at the SMFA is on a busy thoroughfare situated between the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, with Northeastern University and MassArt in close proximity. I don't yet know the impact of this work on our communities here, as it had just gone up at the time of this writing. But their tender, urgent, poetic calls for participation model a powerful form of togetherism, one that ruptures the over-determining legal frameworks of citizenship and political agency, into a more complex understanding of what belonging can be. In that spirit, I want to end this piece with their *Manifesto for Tender Collaborative Work*, held closely throughout every facet of their work.

A Press Press, *Sanctuary is On the Horizon*, 2019, Installation view with inkjet paper, vinyl banners, and Press Press library Remis Sculpture Court, Aidekman Art Center, Tufts University Medford campus, Images courtesy of Tufts University Art Galleries

Abigail Satinsky is the Curator of Exhibitions & Programs at Tufts University Galleries. She is a partner of the *Togetherism* program organized by Public Media Institute in fall 2019. Satinsky and PMI organized a revival of Sunday Soup, a collaborative micro-grant model created by InCUBATE, a research institute and art residency co-founded by Satinsky in Chicago in 2007. On Sunday, September 22, diners gathered at Co-Prosperity Sphere for soup prepared by Chef Zac Green and voted to support a project presented by a Chicago-based collective.

01

EMBRACE AND SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER FULLY. YOU ARE AT YOUR BEST WHEN YOU FEEL ACCEPTED.

02

DON'T COMPARTMENTALIZE. BE YOURSELF AND BRING THAT INTO THE WORK.

03

MOLD THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR WORK AROUND THE PEOPLE WHO ARE PART OF IT.

- 04 Be tender to your collaborators identities, experiences, and daily challenges.
- 05 Know what is going on in your collaborators lives. Don't assume your project is their priority at all times.
- 06 Universal love. Pick up the extra slack when needed.
- 07 The product is never more important than the process or the relationship.
- 08 Embrace difference! We are different, let's address our differences directly.
- 09 Paid time. Creative freedom. Femme-centric space.
- 10 Trust the process and trust the people. Make space for each other's quirks.
- 11 Know and embrace your own subjectivity. There is no such thing as being objective.
- 12 No hierarchy. No one should have more control than someone else.
- 13 Let go of control and try stepping into a supportive role.
- 14 Let yourself be vulnerable.

Press Press is

Kimi Hanauer, Jenna Porter, Iris Lee, and Shan Wallace



a yolk, suspended

What does collaboration look like when intimacy and vulnerability are the expected modes of being and making? How does the environment, both physical and emotional, influence a group's ability to hold and be held, together? How might collaboration shift our sense of possibility; of how we trust the people with whom we are involved and expand the boundaries of what we share?

In 2019, Annas began its first collaborative residency program as a means of addressing the above questions. Driven by a curiosity of what unfolds when ideas, materials, intentions, and resources collide, for each residency, four artists are given keys to the space and invited to turn Annas into a studio. The expectation is that after three months of working together, they build an exhibition, publication, or program to be hosted in the very space they worked.

But how do you get four makers who don't know one another to create anew, in such a short time, and in tandem? And what benefit does this have for them during the process and in the long-term? For each of Annas' cohorts, the answers change depending on the group in question. However, we believe there are fundamentals which remain constant when fostering collaborative making:

Group Size

The size of the cohort is determined by the number of people that fit around a standard size dinner table, a place we believe fosters intimacy through meal-sharing and comradery, important for rich collaboration.

Time Dedication

The timeline reflects the necessary time for participants to get to know each other's conceptual and material interests before making begins. A sense of momentum and routine is also needed to propel the group forward. What results are weekly three-hour meetings, in which each participant takes turns facilitating group readings, discussions, and mind mapping. These weekly meetings turn into dedicated production time toward the goal of a public-facing culmination.

Roles and expectations: Participants respond well when clear goals, expectations, and roles are set. In this way, each member can take ownership over one aspect of the collaboration (writing, programming, performance, etc.) in which their strengths lie.

Growing intimacy and trust

Meetings began with a shared meal from food brought by all participants. Each member took care of each other's nourishment, establishing a quality of trust. We found that prioritized time spent eating and talking about one's day, experiences, and emotions built intimacy. Watching the first cohort grow from strangers to people who care about the well-being of one another the most amazing part of the process.

For the culmination of Annas' first intensive, collaborative residency, artists Caroline Dahlberg, Mariel Harari, Azalea Henderson, and Maggie Wong created a yolk, suspended, an exhibition and environment for performative dinner programming. Each element built anew and at Annas represents what happened between these four individuals when tasked with exploring their capacity to build a world, together.

Part 1
Alden Burke
&
Stephanie Koch,
Co-Directors,
Annas

ANNAS PROJECTS

Part 2 Maggie Wong

In four months I became part of a quadruple-yolker: four yolks housed in one mucus. Many times, our individual and collective shell cracked. With each break, I witnessed habits and propensities slip out of the membrane that held my yellow-ochre nucleus together. In fact, each yolk held vitality that was revealed as forms of tacit knowledge. While oozing and pouring, I disoriented my practice to trust that the cohort's movements were building a form to fall into. Our container became a kind of social relation akin to a porous egg shell, that mediates, breathes, between internal and external realities. Disguised as a performance, the form decisively expanded when we spilled out into twelve dinner guests. Our drips trailed across tables and time. A residual feeling lingers with me after the four months. I continue to sense the nurturing and, perhaps, nauseous process of noticing myself while digesting a near stranger.

Annas is multifunctional and ever unfolding—a collective, a site, a feeling. As collective, Annas is a rotating residential cohort of emerging artists, writers, and curators based in Chicago, IL. As site, Annas is malleable and transforms with each collaborative cohort in the space. As feeling, Annas is the energy of shared ideas bouncing around a dinner table.

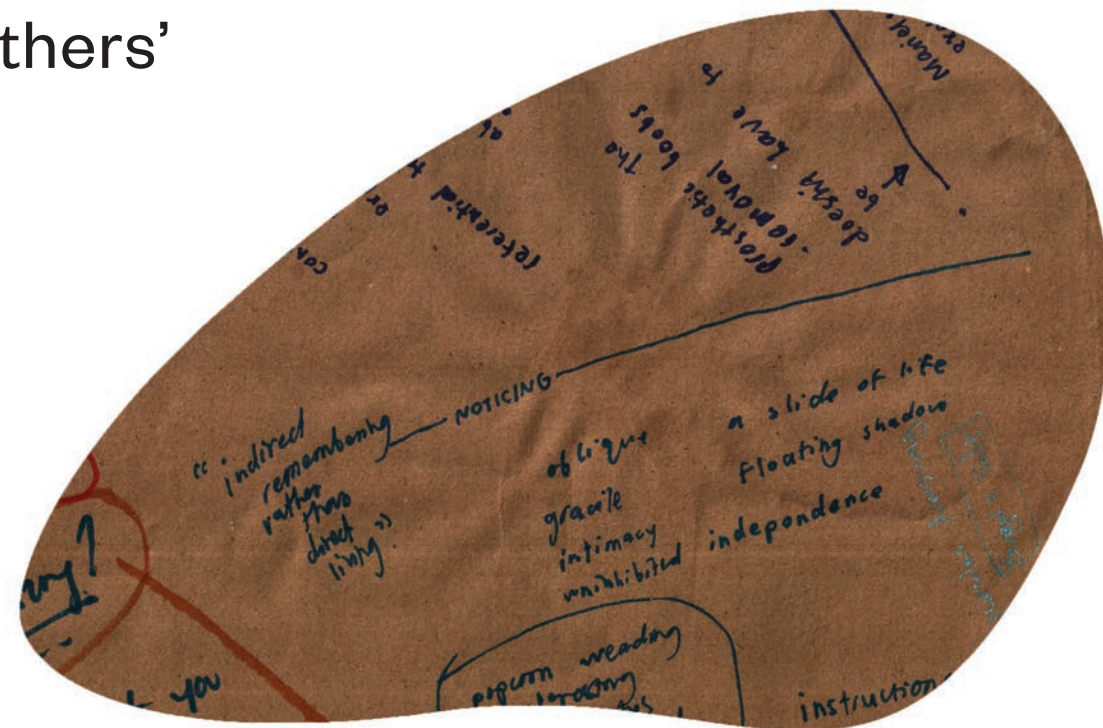
Four artists are given keys to the space and invited to turn Annas into a studio.



TUESDAYS

6:30 PM

Eat eachothers' days



A



B

TUESDAYS

6:45 PM

Stretching

7:00 PM

One designated person commands the group

7:30 PM

We start to feel held

7:40 PM

We question our understanding of the terms

Any time between 8-8:30 PM

We spontaneously move (maybe in sync, mirroring each other)

8:50 PM

We are mindful of the time

9:00 PM

End

Thank you Azalea, Caroline, and Mariel. I would not have these words if not for you.

Maggie Wong, artist and 1/4th of Annas first cohort

Thank you Alden and Stephanie for your bravery.

A

Annas Noticing

Photos by Caroline Dahlberg, Mariel Harari, Azalea Henderson, and Maggie Wong

B

Annas Big Table

C

Menus after dinner performance, August 1st, 2019.

THURSDAY, AFTER MANY TUESDAYS

7-9:00 PM

Dinner



C



Keefer
Dunn

Radical Praxis: Activism Within and Beyond Architecture

There is no such thing as an activist architecture, only activist architects.

The following piece has been excerpted in the interest of length and relevance for this issue of Lumpen magazine. You can read the full essay “Radical Praxis: Activism Within and Beyond Architecture” online on the author’s Medium account: medium.com/@KeeferDunn.

The answer to the question of what we can do as architects to end systemic inequality is by necessity bigger than any one project, person, or firm, and even architecture itself. This statement should be obvious, but the insularity of the discipline has created an echo-chamber that vastly overplays the capabilities of “good design.” We cannot design our way out of a system of global capital that perpetuates inequality. Only mass movements from below can threaten that system and fight for reforms. Hopefully Trump’s election will precipitate such resistance. A politics based on cynicism or localism is not enough. Architects must reach beyond the profession and locate their activism in the context of mass-movements.

We often forget that our radical idols—groups like the Constructivists, Superstudio, Archizoom, and even the Situationists—were following what was happening on the streets and not leading it.

In some ways, architects can be left off the hook for failing to engage in mass-movement activism given the scarcity of such movements over the last few decades. Architects tend to see themselves as part of a cultural elite slowly shaping behavior and opinion and imagine the change they effect as incremental. These attitudes pose evident psychological barriers to meaningful participation in mass-movement activism and are largely self-imposed ideological constructions. Architects cling to the self-image of the “gentlemanly professional” in spite of the fact that the standardization of our tools has created work processes more akin to a factory than a studio. The reality is that this proletarianization of immaterial labor has made most architects workers. Relatively privileged workers to be sure, but workers nonetheless. It is on that basis that we can understand ourselves less as architects and more as global citizens fighting for justice. In short, we should focus less on the limited agency of buildings to make change and more on the agency we have as people. Go to a protest, act in solidarity with the marginalized, find a local grassroots activist formation (there are many) and join it.

A genuinely progressive spatial practice will follow from those activities. We often forget that our radical idols—groups like the Constructivists, Superstudio, Archizoom, and even the Situationists—were following what was happening on the streets and not leading it. In each case, these groups found a different way to mobilize architecture in support of a mass movement. In the case of the Constructivists, it was the forging of a new aesthetic to match a newly ordered society. For Superstudio and Archizoom, it was paper architecture to estrange and elucidate the spatial conditions of the capitalist city. The Situationists theorized the way that aesthetics have been operationalized for systems of control—particularly apropos given that all of the above movements and many more have been aestheticized into impotence. The continued regurgitation of images from more radical times has helped create generations of designers who are unwitting experts at translating radical ideas into something salable.

The site of political agency is not the product of our labor, buildings, but rather in the conditions of their production.

This kind of co-optation of radical architecture underwrites the importance of operationalizing spatial expertise beyond building. For instance, as part of non-architectural activist formations we can use our knowledge of the legal dimension of the construction process to fight gentrification. Likewise, we can use our understanding of space to maximize the effectiveness of civil disobedience actions.

I do not, however, mean to imply that we must unilaterally abandon architecture altogether in favor of hitting the streets. The time pressures of architecture and architecture school often stand in the way of doing so, and most of us are not privileged enough to be full-time activists. Struggles within architecture can be linked to activism outside of

architecture. For instance, a key demand of our program should be fair compensation for all architects as well as the reduction of working hours so that we can actually engage in the ways described above.

The biggest lesson we can take away from labor struggles outside of architecture is that work is a great unequalizer. Those entering the profession after years of architecture school have learned first-hand that our universal subservience to the forces of economic development obviate the cultural agency we were trained to leverage. The technology-fueled proletarianization of our work means that we will not find an agency in the buildings that we design—our agency is no longer located in the sphere of culture, but in the field of production.

We only go to work because we need to sell our labor to survive. While many of us would still opt to be architects in a world without work it would be on vastly different terms. Still, the very fact that we are laborers gives us power in the space of production for the simple reason that the system falls apart without our work. Our largest and best point of leverage is in the collective denial of our labor power—or at least the threat thereof. Imagine the interns walking out of an office that is building a prison. Imagine the production staff of an architecture office en masse refusing to work for the GSA under a Trump administration. Imagine a strike for equal pay. Imagine a strike for more pay.

To be sure, we are very far away from achieving that kind of collectivization in the architecture industry, but consciousness changes fast in moments of upheaval. What we do know now is that our existing institutions, namely the American Institute of Architects (AIA), are not equipped to be the force behind that collectivization. They represent a managerial class that, although at times sympathetic to the needs of architectural workers, still is not their natural allies, as it often stands to benefit from neoliberal development. Never was this clearer than in the AIA’s positive response to Donald Trump’s election. As the Architecture Lobby, a group in which I proudly count myself as a member, wrote in response to that statement: “The AIA’s rhetoric has always emphasized the importance of women and people of color to the architectural profession, but only as a product of their economic utility. Now that the business proposition has changed, disenfranchised communities are left in the cold.”

To their credit, the AIA has slowly begun to realize that there is a crisis in architectural work. In their conferences and workshops,

they often discuss “the live-work equation” and “finding the right fit” of values between employees and employers. Their solutions, however, are colored by their privilege. They emphasize attitudinal shifts and making the right personal choices as an employee. While it would certainly be nice if architectural work were a consensual relationship, the immediate power dynamic of the employee-manager relationship, and the need to have a job in the first place (especially given massive student loans) limit and obviate the ability of most of us to make a choice at all.

We can fight for an architecture where we do have an ability to make those choices, but it means rethinking and reordering the innate economic structures of the profession and of capital itself. This fight against the brutality, banality, and inequity of work is precisely where our demands as activist-architects will intersect most with the burgeoning anti-Trump progressive resistance. Architecture is but one front amongst many in the larger movement against precarity, sexism, racism, homophobia, and xenophobia. It’s a fight that will be carried out on the streets as well in young and old institutions and activist formations. The structures of systemic oppression can be upended if we organize and collectivize. It’s been amazing to see so many rising for the first time. Now we have to keep it up.

Keefer Dunn is a partner of the “Togetherism” programming season organized by Public Media Institute in fall 2019. Dunn has joined ArchiteXX in organizing the exhibition and panel series Now What?! Advocacy, Activism, and Alliances in American Architecture since 1968, on view at Co-Prosperity Sphere between September 13 and October 2, 2019. As part of PMI and Tender House Project’s programming at the Bridgehouse Museum, he also recorded a special edition of his radio show Buildings on Air (monthly on WLPN 105.5FM and podcast outlets) inside the Michigan Avenue bridgehouse.



Advocacy, Activism, and Alliances in American Architecture

From large to small, grassroots to institutional, there have been organizations of architects devoted to collective action to affect change in the spirit of the women's, civil rights, LGBTQ, and environmental movements of the 20th century, and that history is still largely overlooked or unwritten.



Lori Brown,
Andrea Merret,
Sarah Rafson,
and Roberta
Washington

Members of
ArchiteXX

ArchiteXX is a cross-generational group of academics, practitioners, and students that seeks to help architecture become a more diverse, equitable profession. A registered 501(c)3 organization, ArchiteXX was founded in 2012 to combat unhealthy trends in the profession by creating opportunities for praxis between feminist theory and real-world engagement.



A

1968
The Architect's Resistance,
Architecture and Racism protest,
New York. Courtesy the collection
of Julie K. Stone.

The Architect's Resistance (TAR) organized an architecture and racism protest, accusing the corporate office Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill of supporting the oppressive apartheid regime in South Africa through its completion of a 51-storey tower in Johannesburg. In "Architecture and the Nuclear Arms Race" (1969), TAR opposed a new fallout shelter building program for architects and educators sponsored by the Department of Defense and endorsed by AIA leadership.

Whether Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, or Frank Gehry, a common image of the architect is a solo genius: usually a man, working alone to create buildings that are timeless works of art. That image is completely at odds with the collective nature of architecture practice, which requires collaboration at every step of the design, planning, and building processes.

This misconception is also one way that the work of women, people of color, and other minorities are overlooked in architectural discourse. Feminist activists have rallied against this through the years, particularly since the women's movement fueled similar discussions in the art world. Fittingly, the critics that attempted to correct architecture's patriarchal tendencies have long operated in collectives and organizations that lacked the strict hierarchy of many architectural offices. Addressing and changing inequities in the profession, like building itself, is a group activity. From large to small, grassroots to institutional, there have been organizations of architects devoted to collective action to affect change in the spirit of the women's, civil rights, LGBTQI+, and environmental movements of the 20th century, and that history is still largely overlooked or unwritten. Given the polarizing and provocative politics of our time, we exhibit and discuss *Now What?! with a sense of urgency—it is more urgent than ever to reflect on this heritage, bringing architectural organizations together to discuss these alliances in order to share histories and chart new paths forward.*

ArchiteXX is a partner of the "Togetherism" programming season organized by Public Media Institute in fall 2019. Their exhibition, *Now What?! Advocacy, Activism, and Alliances in American Architecture* since 1968, is on view at Co-Prosperity Sphere from September 13 through October 2, 2019, and includes a series of panels with architects, scholars and activists.

Inspiration

Our inspiration was to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective*, a groundbreaking exhibition held at the Brooklyn Museum in 1977, which was directly responsible for an increase in scholarship and public awareness of the overlooked role of women in the profession. Women in American Architecture occurred at a galvanizing moment in women's quest for professional standing. The exhibition travelled nationally and received positive publicity in the professional and general press. The book published alongside the exhibition, by Susan Torre, was meant as a freestanding project, not as a catalog, and remains a critical resource for the study of gender in the profession and the issues it raised remain still necessary to discuss.

Their format inspired the structure of *Now What?! While traveling theirs incorporated the work of local women mounted alongside the traveling exhibition. The project was groundbreaking both in the breadth of material covered and the approach taken. Torre coordinated an impressive demonstration of the extent of women's contributions to the built environment. Further, Torre helped expand the discourse beyond a narrow definition of architecture of monuments and manifestos. We also believe this expansion continues to be needed. We seek material that continues to demonstrate how architects and designers who are using their expertise in engaging with and responding to contemporary issues.*

A critical theoretical difference between our project and the 1970s is that we had to expand the scope of who and what to include. Feminism has had a tremendous influence on social movements and we want to demonstrate the connections between 1968 to today moving beyond the 1970s white middle class feminism, we engage intersectionality. Feminism is complex and engages with broader movements such as the environment, queer and gender identities, poverty, and Black Lives Matter to name a few.

Now What?!

Now What?! Advocacy, Activism, and Alliances in American Architecture since 1968 is organized to do just that. The exhibition shows that in the five decades since 1968 the social movements of the mid-twentieth century impacted every facet of American society, including architecture and design. *Now What?!* is the story of the activism of these groups told chronologically from 1968 until the present day. There are visible gaps in the story that exist because so much of the history of grassroots activism—especially by architects—remains unwritten. Among the missing-in-action are Black women architects, for example, who like African American architects in general have made only the faintest indentation in most history books. With each exhibition location, we seek the stories of events, organizations, and individuals who should be included in the broader history of activism in architecture. These contributions take physical shape in the exhibition as color-coded cards aligned with one of four exhibition themes: Representation, Advocacy Through Design, Academy, and Design Culture. Some words are brief “2018, Undesign the Red Line” or provide suggestions “There need to be some examples of built projects (and their processes) to illustrate the issues and victories,” that when looked at together tell us that there are so many ways the exhibition could expand. By traveling the country and facilitating visitor contributions to the timeline, *Now What?!* conveys a broader picture of the struggle for diversity and equity in architecture nationwide.

This has also been an incredible opportunity to examine ways that we can work towards greater alliances; collaboration and solidarity between organizations dedicated to similar missions. As the exhibition travels, we have the chance to meet activists and learn about different initiatives in each city the show visits. For the most part, these

organizations use the same strategies to call meetings, network, and communicate to their audiences. The slight differences are the most interesting part, and where we see an opportunity for growth: how does an organization avoid burnout? How does it cultivate leadership? How does it balance the need to agitate with the desire to build a donor base? Our exhibition collects the stories of the many small, short-lived organizations that disappeared as quickly as they formed. In contrast, especially in Chicago, long-standing organizations like the Chicago Women in Architecture (founded in 1971, with roots going back as far as 1921) and the Illinois Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects have cultivated leadership models that allow for intergenerational dialogue within its leadership ranks and membership base.

Any progress we have seen in American architecture’s ability to work in solidarity with important social movements depends on the work of a diverse ecology of organizations large and small, some more radical than others. While architects are typically more comfortable designing building structures, in looking at this activist history we see something else they’ve been building and refining through the years: human architecture, the structure of organizations that enable collective action.

A

1968

Whitney Young Jr. speaking to AIA National Convention. American Institute of Architects Archives, Washington D.C.

The exhibition begins in 1968 with the National American Institute of Architects (AIA) convention, when American civil rights leader Whitney Young charged the profession with “thunderous silence” in the face of pressing social issues of the time. He challenged architects to consciously seek out minority individuals and foster their entry into the profession. Young’s call awakened collective action.

B

1971

NOMA event at Howard University in 1992, including many founding members. *Now What?!* Looks at the history of the organization, including the role of the founders’ wives in its development. Courtesy David Hughes.

The National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) was formed in 1971, to champion diversity within the profession. As the civil rights movement challenged all barriers to the full integration of African Americans within society, advancement in the professions became possible. NOMA seized upon the climate of the times to increase the number of minority architects.

C

1973

Women in the Organization of Women Architects and Design Professionals (OWA) fought for better professional status as a part of the Women’s Movement. Based on a participatory model addressing their founding philosophy, the OWA sought to have women’s full contributions in the workplace recognized. Members see professional and personal life as one. The organization has been successful and lasting due to the horizontal and rotating administrative and leadership structure.

A



B



C



A 1975
 WSPA: Women's School of Planning and Architecture participants forming a woman symbol, 1975, from the Women's School of Planning and Architecture Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College (Northampton, Massachusetts)

The Women's School of Planning and Architecture (WSPA) was a new space for feminist action with a vision of spatial and environmental design that was a departure from the design professions as they existed previously. Participants in WSPA's summer sessions fully intended to create a safe space for women to imagine the future of design prioritizing a woman's needs. Although the group disbanded after 4 summer sessions, their impact lingered in institutions across the country and contributed to the alignment of architects and designers in support of women's rights.

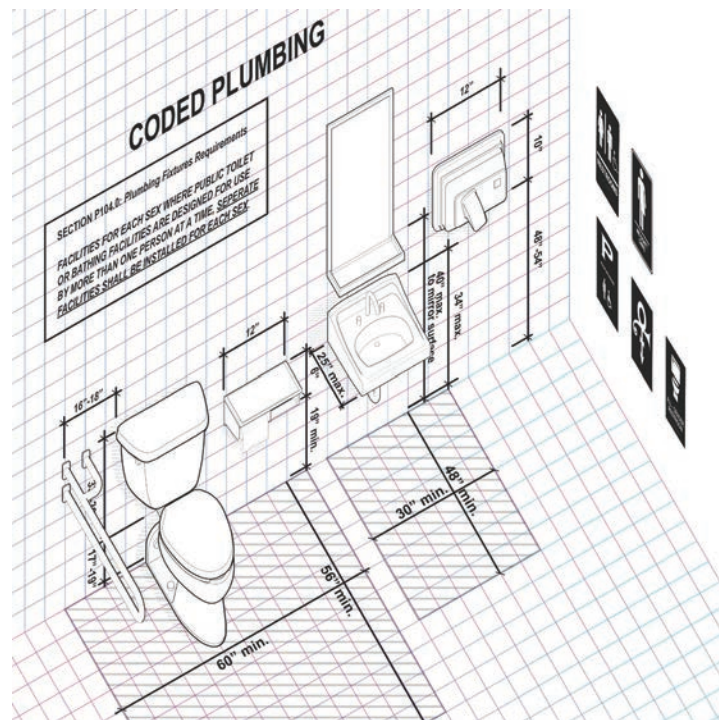
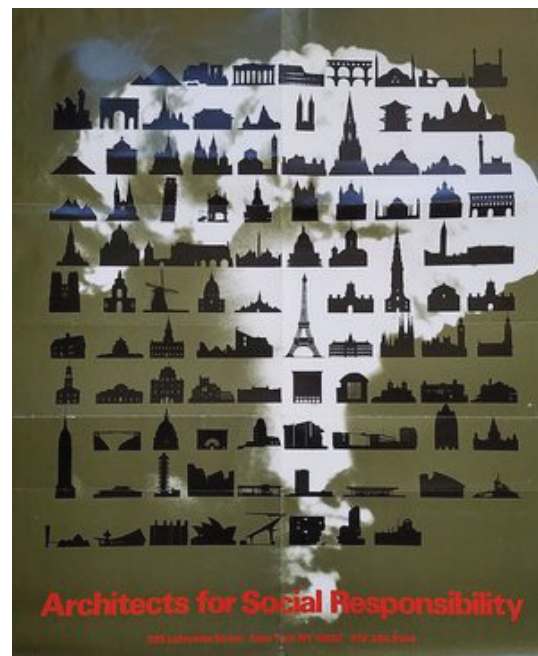
B 1981
 Poster for the Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) New York chapter. Courtesy of ADPSR.

In 1981 the Architects, Designers, and Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) was founded as a voice for architects and design professionals to oppose the threat of nuclear war and the militarism of the Reagan administration. Their work continues today—as of 2018 they have declared victory when the AIA amended their code of ethics to meet ADPSR's demand that the profession prohibit intentional violation of human rights by design, especially the design of execution chambers and spaces for solitary confinement.

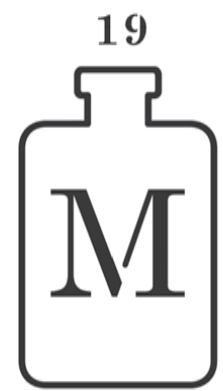
C 2014
 Blights Out with Junebug Productions and Freddy "Hollywood" Delahoussaye, Documentation of Home Court Crawl, December 2014. Photo by Scott McCrossen.

D 2016
 Coded Plumbing: Coded Plumbing Exhibition with QSAPP at Columbia University and the Van Alen Institute by QSPACE. Courtesy of QSPACE

QSAPP, a group of students at Columbia University "explore contemporary queer topics and their relationships to the built environment through theory and practice. Their exhibition, "Coded Plumbing," responded to the HB2 bathroom bill in North Carolina and 9 other states by developing new restroom design standards.



Service with
a mother's love.



Maria's

1986

↓
BAR



MARZ COMMUNITY
BREWING CO.



Collaborating with Mark and Judd is like groping one's way laterally through a network of valences—

linguistic,
embodied,
imagistic;

like navigating a network of wormholes that can collapse two things as disparate as an asshole and a blackhole.

Anatomical Theatres of Mixed Reality (ATOM-r) is a collective exploring 21st century embodiment through performance, poetics and emerging technologies. ATOM-r's work mixes the live body with ubiquitous computing through an implementation of Augmented Reality (AR) in which virtual content is overlaid onto bodies and spaces. Formed in Chicago in 2012, the group evolved from a decade of collaboration between writer and digital artist Judd Morrissey, and performance artist and choreographer Mark Jeffery, who were previously members of the Goat Island Performance Group. Performing members who contribute to the conceptualization and creation of work have included Justin Deschamps, Grace Duval, Sam Hertz, Leonardo Kaplan, Christopher Knowlton, Colin Roberson, and Blake Russell. Dedicated to reanimating queer histories, the collective has engaged with the biographies and archives of figures including Loy Bowlin, Samuel Steward, Alan Turing, and Derek Jarman.

ATOM-r was conceived after the architectural form of early modern anatomical theatres, small multi-level amphitheatres built for training physicians and the curious general public to gaze down upon live human autopsies and surgical procedures. The collective uses this architecture symbolically, to explore the altered and technologically augmented body, to dissect queer histories, and to expose embodied personal narratives.

The Operature (2014) juxtaposed an exploration of the early history of surgery with the "Stud File" of Samuel Steward, a 20th century artist and protégé of the modernist writer, Gertrude Stein, and who later became a tattoo artist under the alias Phil Sparrow. Throughout his lifetime, Steward constructed the "Stud File," a card catalogue of first-hand, and at the time illegal, homosexual experiences, encoded and cross-referenced according to the traits of his partners and the specific sexual acts performed. In *The Operature*, the artist's designs were recreated as temporary tattoos transferred to the bodies of the performers, where they were used as visual markers for augmented reality content, including video, text, and 3-D objects. In an extended intermission, the audience was invited to inspect the bodies of the male performers with a smartphone app, scanning the tattoos to view these virtual materials in juxtaposition with the flesh exposed through a staging of partial nudity that blurred the line between sexual and medical displays of anatomy.

Kjell Theory (2017), the second mixed reality performance by the group, juxtaposed Alan Turing's mathematical descriptions of nature with algorithmic mutations of Guillaume Apollinaire's 1917 play *The Breasts of Tiresias*, a nonbinary work in which a cis woman, Theresa, transforms into a war-like version of the ancient prophet Tiresias, while their husband gives birth to 40,049 babies. In describing the play, Apollinaire invented the word "surrealism."

In the two years before his death, British computing pioneer Alan Turing visited Scandinavia, seeking tolerance after being convicted of homosexual acts in 1952 and sentenced to chemical castration, which caused him to develop small breasts. He was formulating a theory of morphogenesis to account for patterns found in flowers, embryos, and other natural forms at the time, and he named his theory for a male Norwegian love interest, Kjell.

ATOM-r layered these stories into a poetic choreography that is situated, like the mythological Tiresias, between worlds and genders, using augmented reality to portray a visionary blindness. The production included geo-spatial poems virtually distributed throughout the performance space as well as scannable tattoos and costume embellishments that served as markers that triggered the appearance of videos, texts, and 3D objects.

ATOM-r's current work has as a central starting point the figure of Loy Bowlin, a self-taught artist who took on the persona of "the original rhinestone cowboy" after hearing the hit cover song "Rhinestone Cowboy," written by Glen Campbell in 1975. In adopting this persona, Bowlin intricately glittered and bedazzled his house, car, clothing, and dentures, creating ubiquitous excess to compensate for a profound loneliness. In ATOM-r's *Rhinestone Cowboy*, the excessive ornamentation of Bowlin and his surroundings is placed in relation to textual forms and sources that perform excess as a profusion of linguistic material, including auction chanting, where the fluid accumulation of numbers and filler words comprise a continuous drone, and the ambient pornographic novels of the French writer Pierre Guyotat.

For *Rhinestone Cowboy*, ATOM-r has collaborated with Abraham Avnisan to create 3-D scans of Bowlin's house inhabited by performers, with permission of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, which, after the death of Bowlin, relocated the house from Mississippi to their collection in Wisconsin. Like the dismantled pieces of the transplanted house, multiple scans were then stitched together into a cohesive model and computationally animated for projection within the performance. This virtual backdrop is viewed in relation to a live choreography of movement, text, and image as well as staged interruptions of augmented reality where words appear as glittery architectural objects within the physical performance space and the negative space of letters become tunnels that can be excavated for originally composed and found poems.

Tender Operations: A Collaborative Poetics

ATOM-r,
in
collaboration
with
Abraham
Avnisan



ATOM-r and collaborator Abraham Avnisan are currently working on *The Tenders: A Last Dance*, a site-responsive mixed reality work for the moveable DuSable Bridge, supported by a residency at the McCormick Bridgehouse and Chicago River Museum in the fall of 2019. *The Tenders* taps into the site of the bridge as a microcosm of an America haunted by its history of white settler colonialism, a legacy of racial inequality expressed in the present by the looming of nearby Trump Tower. The work is included in the program of the Public Media Institute's Togetherism festival, Mejay Gula's Tender House Project, and the Chicago Architecture Biennial.

The modernist innovation of the moveable DuSable bridge and the "tender house" from which it is operated are built upon the grounds of the former Fort Dearborn, famously destroyed by a violent insurrection of native Americans during the war of 1812. The incident, depicted in the "Defense" bas-relief on the bridge house, was followed by an official US policy of Indian removal through the negotiated exchange of lands or by use of force. In 1835, 800 warriors of the expelled native Potawatomi nation enacted a last war dance throughout the vicinity of the bridge and riverfront, concluding on the north bank across from the fort's second incarnation.

ATOM-r's work will engage with the bridge site's colonial history while recognizing the proximity of the imposing Trump Tower within the scene. The response will draw upon the etymology and semantics of the word "tender" to explore power dynamics within the tenancy and tending of the land throughout history, informed by a residency within the bridgehouse museum and research into archival sources including an eye witness account of the last war dance of the Potawatomi published in the 19th century, and the speech of Potawatomi chief Metea upon the signing of the first Treaty of Chicago that called for the surrendering of substantial indigenous lands. This historical material will be studied in relation to contemporary policy documents and news items reflecting the exclusionary white nationalism of the current US administration.

In the following writings, Mark, Judd and Abraham each consider their points of entry into their collaboration in *Rhinestone Cowboy*.

Judd Morrissey: writer, programmer, and performer

I began to consider Bowlin's clothing, teeth and house as a breakdown of body and habitat, as a sort of dazzle camouflage. I searched the Poetry Foundation database for "dazzle" and came upon Whitman's *Song of Myself*:

Dazzling and tremendous
how quick the sun-rise
would kill me,
If I could not now and always
send sun-rise out of me

Mark introduced Werner Herzog's 1976 film, *How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck*, a documentary focused on the language of auctioneering. Colin Roberson, a writer, photographer, and performer in the work, introduced *Tricks*, a 1981 novel of man-to-man sexual encounters by Renaud Camus. In studying the etymology of "trick," I was led to the French noun "trique" (a stick) and verb "triquer" (sex with a sex worker) and then to a 1975 novel in which these words appear, *Prostitution* by Pierre Guyotat. Guyotat described the pornographic stuttering vernacular of his work as not writing but a sexual secretion.

ah suc' a mis'er youn'
guy woance,
he's payin' 1 peso, 2 times

I was beginning to connect the excessive total coverage of Bowlin's rhinestone interior to auction chanting and the fluid ambient embodied speech of Guyotat's book. The simple word that formed in my head to describe this set of overabundant vernaculars was "gorge" and this also felt like an environment for a cowboy. Using a newer implementation of augmented reality, I rendered the word gorge as a volumetric object on the floor. Later, with Abe, I filled the tunnel of the letter O with a text for two voices derived from Whitman's poem. It began:

now straining give me udder
now udder give me heart
now heart give me with
held drip

Abraham Avnisan: writer, programmer, and performer

The otherworldly home of a self-taught artist, every inch of it covered in rhinestones and glitter; "foramen," a word meaning an "opening [or] hole... especially in a bone," but also the name of a binary star within the constellation Argo Navis; an augmented reality poem Judd created in which that word, "foramen," is virtually embodied, made and unmade, in which desire is done and undone. These are some of the materials that I was invited to respond to when I began collaborating with Mark and Judd on *Rhinestone Cowboy*. I was fascinated by this loose network of associations, by what structure might hold them together ("I am large, I contain multitudes" writes Whitman in *Song of Myself*), by the myriad ways we might frame them.

As I began to create texts, moving images and augmented reality environments for the project, a frame I returned to again and again was the tension between an original and its copy or "cover." Glen Campbell's "Rhinestone Cowboy," though perhaps the best known version of the song, is actually a cover; Loy Bowlin's embodiment of the "original rhinestone cowboy" is dazzlingly original, but also a "cover" of the cowboy Campbell sings about. As we continued to perform *Rhinestone Cowboy* in diverse contexts and configurations, it became clear that this frame could be extrapolated outward: each performed iteration a strange cover of an elusive original.

Collaborating with Mark and Judd is like groping one's way laterally through a network of valences—linguistic, embodied, imagistic; like navigating a network of wormholes that can collapse two things as disparate as an asshole and a blackhole. *The Tenders: A Last Dance* is not a cover of "Rhinestone Cowboy," but it will inevitably be haunted by it as we continue to uncover our collaborative potential.

Mark Jeffery: Choreographer, image maker and performer

When did the *Farmer's Rhinestone Cowboy* Son start Dancing?

I've been walkin' these
streets so long
Singin' the same old song
I know every crack in
these dirty sidewalks
of Broadway
Where hustle's the
name of the game
And nice guys get washed
away like the snow
and the rain

How does the untangled body of a three-year-old who sang this song to his real mother before she left the family home and abandoned her children come into this time, now 42 years later? What bedazzles a space of the lonely and the haunted. What is it to find yourself caught in the body of yourself now at 46 and then at 3. What is inside the glitter of a skin that bleeds rhinestones, shiny objects to hide and mask, to become introverted and to become a theatre of glitter, dust, sadness and hope.

As I get older all I've learnt now is to be myself. Walk through the fire of my anxiety. I realise how much I have learnt from my own history of mental illness in my own family and not to be afraid. Listen to all that is around you. What is it to summon the cows and the trauma of witnessing a mother that left you singing *Rhinestone Cowboy* as a three-year-old on a working class stage in a working class club with tinsel and glam and camp? 1975 becomes 2019, 1975, Judd's birth year. In the road to my horizon. Abandoned ginger creates a Glen Campbell monster of cows and song and walking these streets so long. Breathing a sigh of loneliness and desire and I'm going to be the light that's shining on me. A three-year-old and a 46-year-old. To perform the feral. The cow. The sadness of being scared. Of being afraid. Not knowing. Always performing, trying to get attention.



A Performers (L to R)
Justin Deschamps, Christopher
Knowlton, Judd Morrissey

B Performers (L to R)
Justin Deschamps, Christopher
Knowlton, Blake Russell

ATOM-r are partners in the "Togetherism" programming season organized by Co-Prosperity Sphere in fall 2019. As part of the program, and also of Tender House Project and the Chicago Architecture Biennial, the collective has a residency at the Michigan Avenue McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum, culminating in new iterations of their "Rhinestone Cowboy" project responding to the site of the bridgehouse.



Interview with Industry of the Ordinary

Industry of the Ordinary is a Chicago-based collective formed by Adam Brooks and Mat Wilson. Founded in 2003, the conceptual art group uses sculpture, photography, video and performance to explore, celebrate and critique the customary, the everyday and the usual.

Their projects have included actions within exhibitions, public art installations, publications, and performative interventions on the streets, and often involve the collaboration of other artists, specialists, and the public.

With their characteristic concision, the duo wrote to Lumpen about how they divide social obligations, and how, under the name Industry of the Ordinary, a “third mind” is in action.

Marina Resende Santos (MRS)
How did your collaboration start?

Industry of the Ordinary (IOTO)

Mat had been involved with a previous collaboration, *Men of the World*, for a number of years, and that was ending, and having known one another through our mutual friend Max King Cap, and Mat knowing that Adam was interested in publicly facing work, he approached Adam about starting a new collaboration. Mat had almost always worked collaboratively throughout his career up to this point, and was interested in continuing this approach.

MRS How do you work together? Can you describe your collaboration process? Some groups say that each member has different skills and interests that they bring to the collective project. How do you divide labor?

IOTO Early in our collaboration, we both brainstormed a lot of ideas individually which we then brought to the table for discussion. We were both always quite harsh with our critiques of the other’s ideas. Over time, this process became more internal, as we became very familiar with the way that the other thought. We both have to agree on an idea, after extended discussion, in order to move forwards with it as an executable work. We each have distinct hand skills, for example, Mat’s facility with drawing, Adam’s ability to sandblast objects, which often dictate how a particular idea might manifest itself physically.

Additionally, Mat tends to do a lot of the writing that precedes a given work, and Adam tends to manage the logistical oversight of projects.

Adam has always been more comfortable in dealing with the gallery or institutional component of the art world than Mat. While Adam is happy to grease the wheels of public engagement in a procedural, non-performative way, Mat tends to shy away from such encounters, while continuing to embrace engagement purely through the work itself.

However, we aren’t always really conscious of the means and methods that we use. A lot of the work has always been, and continues to be, organic in its development, without a clearly structured outcome. This is what remains most interesting to us.

MRS Have your relationship and the way that you collaborate changed throughout the years?

IOTO We have moved towards a more purely professional relationship, that is, less involvement in one another’s personal lives.

We each bring our own skill set to the project. This hasn’t changed much, although Mat tends to do more of the writing and Adam tends to do more of the organization and public interfacing. The development of ideas and sorting out solutions for execution continues to be an entirely shared and synergistic process.

MRS Your collective process might have varied from project to project, or throughout the time you’ve been active. Can you tell me the story of how you made one of your projects? I will let you choose it, because you know which works involved the most questions about collaboration.

IOTO Possibly the most complex project that we’ve completed has been *History As Idea*, a public work for the Nebraska State Historical Society. We knew that we were interested in addressing the highly subjective nature of History itself, and in order to address this in the context of Nebraska, we spent the summer of 2010 on the road, criss-crossing the state multiple times, talking to dozens of residents, collecting visual and textual information and forming the distinct ideas contained within the final installation as we traveled. As we had few preconceived views about what the final work might look like, it was an intense summer of discussion, negotiation, and the occasional argument.

This project was a collaboration between Industry of the Ordinary, the custodians of the museum of the Nebraska Historical Society, and its patrons. It could not be completed by IOTO alone. Names, dates, objects and ideas proposed by the public completed our portrait of the history of Nebraska.

The piece was embedded into the existing modernist design of the building and proposed to reinstate the original lighting to fully realize the intent of the architect, Ellery Davis. Each color panel in the work is linked to a word or name that is painted around the innermost circle on the lip of the rotunda. One panel and one space in the rotunda will be left white/blank. This symbolically represents those voices that came before recorded history or that were never heard, whether they be those of prehistoric inhabitants, other indigenous peoples, or the voices of the ordinary citizenry.

Listed on the light green panel is a series of years. These years are taken from standard histories of Nebraska in which significant events occurred. Its inclusions and omissions are a portrait of Nebraska. To the left of this panel is a red text panel presenting a seminal statement by Malcolm X, who was born in Nebraska, an open-ended phrase available to multiple interpretations.

It is important to understand that the process that we used for treating the glass panels, namely sandblasting from the rear combined with back-painting, produced an effect that functions differently according to the viewers’ orientation to the glass as well as to the time of day that the installation is viewed, and thus it physically functions as a visual analogue for our assertion of the slippery and shifting nature of history itself.

A Industry of the Ordinary, *History as Idea*. Installation at the Nebraska State Historical Society, 2010. Photo courtesy of Industry of the Ordinary.

Collaboration means the ability to multiply resources and externalize the editing process.

The role of art is not to make a series of statements, but to engage dialogue. Industry of the Ordinary intended this work to engage a dialogue about history in general terms and Nebraskan history more specifically. It does not need to reproduce the job successfully undertaken by the Historical Society and its museum or, indeed, any other institution or collection that celebrates the history of Nebraska.

MRS The Industry of the Ordinary mid-career survey at the Chicago Cultural Center in 2012-2013 included portraits of the duo made by 71 Chicago artists, and also served as a platform for activities by tens of artists and organizations.

The Nebraska project and several others have involved many other collaborators in addition to your own collective process. What can you tell us about collaborating with so many other artists and specialists? Why do you like to work in this model?

IOTO We often have ideas that require skills that we don’t possess. Also, working with other people can freshen up our process and lead to yet more possibilities. Keeping the process open through multiple collaborations requires a degree of ego-sacrifice, which counteracts the tired model of the heroic individual creator.

MRS For the artist Bertha Husband, who often worked with her collaborator Michael Piazza, a “third hand” acts when artists collaborate, making something neither could have made independently. Observations like this suggest that

collaborative work creates a third kind of agency, something that emerges between the collaborators and that is no longer any one individual’s authority. Others have talked about an organism that exists between the members, and about the group as a larger entity that transcends, or cannot be described as just its members. How would you describe authorship in your collaboration? What is the group, with relation to the individuals involved?

IOTO Authorship for us is always through the entity of Industry of the Ordinary, referred to in the third person.

Sometimes we agree immediately about the idea that leads to an executable project, and sometimes we have to fight our own corner, which occasionally leads to resolution but more often leads to an idea being shelved—although it may be resurrected months, years or decades later.

We agree with the characterization of Bertha Husband that collaboration creates a new entity, although we’ve always referred to it as the “Third Mind,” rather than the “third hand.” Possibly this metaphor better fits the work we typically make?

MRS What is collaboration to you? What does it mean for you as artists?

IOTO Collaboration to us means, in part, the ability to multiply resources and externalize the editing process.

MRS How did you collaborate to write these answers?

IOTO We sat down at the laptop, together, and started writing.



CAMEL COLLECTIVE
15 Nassau Street, New York, NY 10005

February 26th 2006

Dear Andrea:

It has come to our attention that you have made an unauthorized use of our copyrighted work entitled Camel Archive (the "Work") in the preparation of a work derived therefrom. We have reserved all rights in the Work, first published in January 2006, [and have registered copyright therein]. Your work entitled When Artists Say We is essentially identical to the Work and clearly used the Work as its basis.

As you neither asked for nor received permission to use the Work as the basis for When Artists Say We, nor to make or distribute copies, including electronic copies, of same, we believe you have willfully infringed our rights under 17 U.S.C. Section 101 et seq. and could be liable for statutory damages as high as \$150,000 as set forth in Section 504(c)(2) therein.

We demand that you immediately cease the use and distribution of all infringing works derived from the Work, and all copies, including electronic copies, of same, that you deliver to us if applicable, all unused, undistributed copies of same, or destroy such copies immediately and that you desist from this or any other infringement of our rights in the future. If we have not received an affirmative response from you by MARCH 11th 2006 indicating that you have fully complied with these requirements, we shall take further action against you.

Very truly yours,

Camel

CAMEL collective

CAMEL collective regrets the need to go to such extreme measures as this order. In fact, CAMEL collective was operating under the impression that the best way to garner attention for itself was to remain obscure. Recent events, however, have forced CAMEL collective's hand in the matter, and CAMEL collective has decided to go public. We submit this collection, evidence of our presence as a collective body, to the archive. We began with the best of intentions. We were a loose group of friends that met to discuss issues we found relevant to our practices. We thought that producing an archive of art-activist collectives would lead to a greater understanding of the cultural field in which we operated, and provide the groundwork for collective actions. Learning these histories by heart would dispel our naiveté and open horizons of limitless possibilities. The New York Public Library. MOMA's archives. Google. We could find and fill a niche; ours would be a humble cache of material that could propel us in any number of directions. Investing our interests, we would await returns.

There was the question of authorship. We thought that by forming a collective, we could avoid its pitfalls, but we were marked from the outset. Like many before us (should we flatter ourselves?), we indulged our desires for infighting until we settled on a division of labor, and management of tasks. On second thought, it was the other way around. How did we arrive at this point so quickly? It is difficult to tell. One member suggested that our premises were flawed from the beginning. Another suggested that our individual methodologies were incompatible. Other's subscribed to the hypothesis that society at large was at fault, that its structures had penetrated our attempts to define ourselves outside of it. It was not a matter of space, nor a lack of material or funding that led to our disillusionment, but a gnawing feeling of anxiety that we were somehow symptomatic of a present situation that escaped us in our attempts to grasp our relation to it. Perhaps it was only a matter of time. You may think our failures pathetic, and perhaps they are. Our meetings grew progressively more difficult. There were strikes and counter-strikes, attacks *ad hominem*, reconciliations, and protracted negotiations. Ranks thinned. There has now formed a right wing and a left, though it is often impossible to tell which is which.

Due to thinning ranks and consequent lack of funds, and because we have yet to secure another residency, we announce an edition of five archival containers at a price of \$500 per container. Further information can be obtained by contacting info@thewatercarriers.org.

Same Fate and Equal Risks: An Interview with Camel Collective

Camel Collective is
formed by Anthony Graves and
Carla Herrera-Prats.

Camel Collective's
research-based
projects involve
video, sculpture,
performance,
and photography
to examine con-
temporary condi-
tions of labor and
myths of cultural
production.

Camel began as a bigger group of fellows at the heady Whitney Independent Study Program, reading about affect in politics and the history of art collectives in early Bush II-era New York City. In the following interview, Anthony Graves describes his collaboration with Carla as "productive antagonism," and explains the distinction between collaboration and collectivity.

This profile features *Submission to Archive for Exhibition*, a small work presented at the exhibition *When Artists Say 'We'*, organized by Andrea Geyer and Christian Rattemeyer at Artists Space in 2006. By then, Camel Collective was working on an archive of the history of art collectives through a residency at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Swing Space.

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Submission to Archive for Exhibition (2006) comprised 500 legal orders to "cease and desist" the exhibition *When Artists Say 'We'* organized by Andrea Geyer and Christian Rattemeyer at Artists Space in 2006. Image courtesy of the artists.

Interview by
Marina Resende
Santos

Marina Resende Santos (MRS)

Submission to Archive for Exhibition, your piece in the show *When Artists Say 'We'* in 2006, included a cease-and-desist letter to the organizers with a footnote that told a fictionalized story of the origin and end of Camel Collective. Can you tell me more about this peculiar piece?

Anthony Graves (AG)

The show was a macro picture of the artistic collaborations at the time, or what Greg Sholette would later call the "dark matter" of the art world. It was an exhibition largely built out of ephemera, effectively a reading room on collectivity and collaborations in the art world of the time. We had been working on building a collection ourselves at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and so had the idea to deliver an order to "cease and desist" as a joke, making the ridiculous claim that it was infringing on the "copyright" of our work. We took the title of the show as a way to explore what happens when artists say "We," not as an emancipatory gesture, but as the more mundane one in which artists compete with one another over property and cultural capital.



We made it clear that this order was satirical, and not intended as legally binding, in the long addendum in the fine print at the bottom of the order, which narrates the fictitious collective in its rise and fall, along with speculation on the root causes of its disillusion. It was a kind of auto-historicization of the collective that we had become very suspicious of, these narratives of “rise and fall,” not to mention the “archive fever” that seemed to be prevalent.

Looking back, I think this anticipates our later uses of tragic and satirical modes in *Something Other Than What You Are* and *The Situation*. Tragedy is the fatalistic politics of our time to which satire or comedy is the antidote. The tragic insinuates itself via narratives of origin stories and eventual decay, along with the necessary lost object. Just consider the “Make America Great Again” narrative. You have this lost object—America’s “greatness” that never actually existed—and this fatal internal flaw - the US’s relationship to immigration, for example-, that blocks us from returning to that previous Eden. This is pure fantasy in the tragic mode and it appeals to people in its idiotic simplicity. There is a similar tragic mode among progressives. This might be akin to Hegel’s “beautiful soul,” who projects their own disorders onto the world as

a kind of comfort in order to deny their own responsibility for what is happening. We are familiar with it in collectivist practices from the 1970s, in the form of the infiltration of capitalist, sexist, and racist impulses that need to be expunged in order to begin the leftist project. I don’t think our comedies are necessarily funny; there is something to laugh at in them, a kind of laughter through tears, perhaps.

MRS How did you start collaborating? How and where did you become Camel Collective?

AG Carla and I first met at the Whitney Independent Study Program in 2004, where we were both studio fellows. The ISP draws on an incredible group of thinkers, including a canon of texts and histories from political theorists of the New Left, art historians and critics, not to mention the artists who are so integral to the program such as Mary Kelly, Vito Acconci, and Yvonne Rainer. So that was the milieu we were all encountering together, and yet we felt that there was something we wanted to address in addition to political theory, and that was the notion of affect and how it bore down upon the politics of our moment.

The 2004 Republican National Convention had just taken place in New York City, with many protests where most of us had been involved. Groups like 16beaver and the earlier Political Art Documentation/ Distribution (PAD/D) were very important to some of us at the time. Benj Gerdes had been involved in Friends of William Blake who had just produced *The People’s Guide to the Republican National Convention*. There was a collective energy to address not only hard politics, but manipulation via unconscious affect, often ignored when discussing deliberative democracy and agonism. After September 11th, 2001, Lower Manhattan was very much a militarized police state in a way that has now become normalized. So this was the climate at the time south of Canal Street where we were meeting.

Camel grew out of a reading group looking at texts on affect, from Spinoza to Brian Massumi. Meetings were very loose, and included myself and Carla, Lasse Lau, Michael Baers, Jacqueline Miro, Graham Parker, Benj Gerdes, Lize Mogel, Melanie Gilligan, Sam Lewitt, and Sarina Basta. It was Sarina who named the group. In 2005, we were invited to participate in a publication called *Art&Leisure* organized at Art in General, and many of

us wanted to collaborate in groups. After an incredibly long and ridiculous conversation over a name that we could work under, Sarina Basta, true to her name, pointed to a pack of Camel cigarettes on the table and said, “That’s it, you’re Camel.” It’s not a particularly interesting story, though one comes up with all kinds of post-facto justifications, such as the notion that “a camel is a horse made by committee,” or the aphorism that “a camel is a ship of the desert,” which perhaps describes our discursive methodology and the time we take on researching and realizing a project. Historically, collectives have many qualities, but endurance didn’t seem to be a common one. I think there was a shared feeling among us that we were already operating in a harsh environment.

In 2006 we were artists-in-residence at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s Swing Space program. Our proposal was to collect an archive of textual materials related to the history of artist collectives and to invite people in to interview them.

Our research into artist collectives and the distinction we were beginning to develop between collaboration and collectivity played a large part in our use of the term “collective”. We were suspicious of uncritical valorizations of collaboration, of what was called the “collaborative turn” and linked to Relational Aesthetics and social practice, and in the 2004 Whitney Biennial, which was talked about as the “collaboration biennial.” The reception of groups like assume vivid astro focus, Los Super Elegantes, Chicks on Speed, or the collaboration between Dan Graham and Japanther, read as strikingly depoliticized given the moment, especially considering the rich history of collectivity and collaborations since the 1960s. To name a few that were important to us: International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, the Situationist International, particularly the Danish version, Art Workers Coalition, Art & Language in the 1960s and 70s; and PAD/D, Group Material, and General Idea in the 80s and 90s. Collaboration was not a new thing,

but only symptomatically new, with shifting work dynamics and the adoption of creative labor as a model, as businesses tried to spin the freelance economy as somehow liberatory to the new precariate.

MRS How did you develop an art practice from the reading group? When did you and Herrera-Prats decide to work exclusively as a collective?

AG After the ISP, some of us either had to return to our home countries because of visa status, got teaching gigs in other places, or went on to pursue our own work. By 2010 we were made up of Lasse Lau, Carla and myself. We went to Denmark on a DIVA grant to do research on the 1956 First World Congress of Free Artists organized by Asger Jorn and Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio. It was there that we really decided to produce more ambitious works in performance and video. We made a number of works while there, *Howls for Bologna*, *Opening Address*, and the *Second World Congress of Free Artists*.

When we concluded the project in Denmark, Lasse took what we jokingly called a “permanent sabbatical” to work on his film project *Lykkelaender (The Raven and the Seagull)*. Carla and I then made a pact that we would keep the name Camel Collective and continue on together so long as we would devote one hundred percent of our efforts to the collective and on the condition that each of us would be able to see our own work in that of the collective. We felt that our individual practices were distracting from the collective project. That was when we abandoned our individual practices, got a studio in Brooklyn and started making *A Facility Based on Change* at MassMoCA, *Una obra para dos pinturas* for La Trienal Poli/Gráfica de San Juan, and *Something Other Than What You Are* and *The Situation* for REDCAT Gallery Los Angeles. We took what we had learned in the performances of *The Second World Congress* regarding the language of theater and performance, and began to examine theater and cinema as sites of labor, ideology, and the production of affects.



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A Still from *La distancia entre Pontresina y Zermatt es la misma que la de Zermatt a Pontresina (The Distance from Pontresina to Zermatt Is the Same as from Zermatt to Pontresina)*, 2-channel video, six-channel sound installation by Camel Collective, 2017. Image courtesy of the artists.

B Still from *Something Other Than What You Are*, 3-channel video installation by Camel Collective, 2016. Image courtesy of the artists.

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MRS What makes the collective work (and last)?

AG We couldn't do this for so long if we didn't love one another. By that, I mean that we are not bound together through some checklist of alignments or interests, whether ideological or in terms of identity. We differ on many things, politically and aesthetically. We come from different class backgrounds, different nations and cultures. Our differences, and our capacity to work with them, fuel and structure our work.

MRS How is your process? How do you work together?

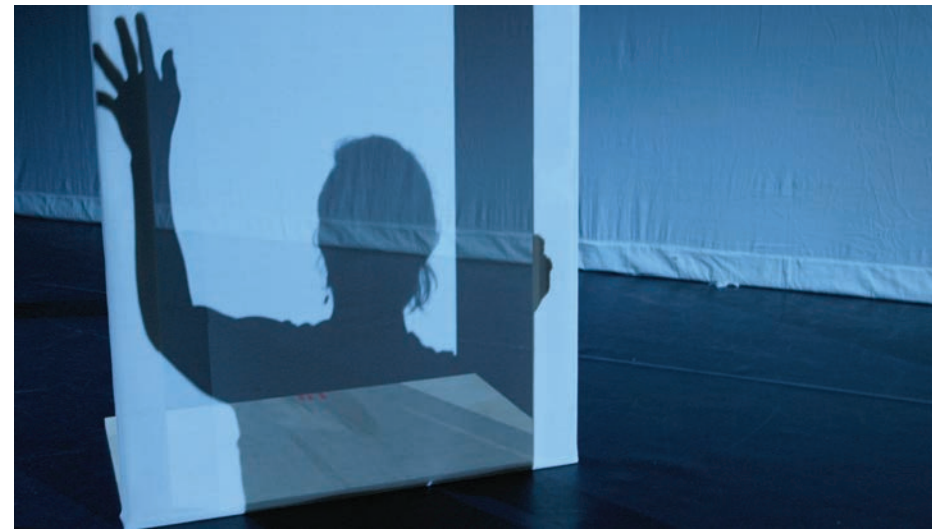
AG Talking is really the core of our practice, which I see as a kind of productive antagonism between us, where we incorporate our disagreements and conflicting desires into the work itself.

As an example, with our recent project *La distancia entre Pontresina y Zermatt es la misma que la de Zermatt a Pontresina*, Carla had been sitting on a translation and essay by Esther Leslie, of the last letters exchanged between Theodor W. Adorno and Herbert Marcuse published in *The New Left Review* in 1999. We discussed the material for around a year before really beginning to pin down what we wanted to do. By that time we had secured the interest of Cuahatemoc Medina and Alejandra Labastida at MUAC in Mexico City to commission the video and series of sculptures. In making such a complex work, there is always a process of both practical consensus (without which nothing could get done) and this productive antagonism between us where we incorporate our disagreements and conflicting desires into the work itself. While making that project, we had a series of arguments about shooting locations. Some were too clichéd when it came to shooting in Mexico. But to affirm the cliché allows us to dig further into complicating it, treating its presence as a *cliché* and building from there. In making such a complex work, there is always a process of both practical consensus, without which nothing could get done, and this productive antagonism.

I think this is the real benefit of dialogue in our practice. Including something one doesn't necessarily agree with can be a liberation; working together in this way gives us a healthy distance from the work. Each work we make is a collage.

While talk is the real driving force of our work—mostly what happens in the studio is the two of us drinking coffee or wine and

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Still from *The Situation*, video by Camel Collective, 2016. Image courtesy of the artists.



talking—there is a division of labor. Whereas Carla hates writing, I take a lot of pleasure in it. She takes much more pleasure and is really far more adept at the social aspects of the work such as working with actors. We have found that an allocation of roles develops out of what we would prefer not to do—to echo *Bartleby's* phrase—and our work develops out of that.

MRS Tell me about the distinction you make between collaboration and collective.

AG A rough distinction we make is that collaboration can refer to any and all kinds of working together that does not necessarily imply any political or ethical position. The word collaboration itself contains a question about who one is working with, for example in being a collaborator during a war. Collaboration is valorized as a virtue *in itself* by everyone from Google to WeWork, to arts programs, etc. I think the term makes us forget that it is also a term for exploitation and the alienation of our labor in an extractive economy. That is to say, we are often collaborating under less than ideal conditions for

wage labor, the surplus of which we never see. I've been surprised when discussing social practice with my students at how often the notion of monetary compensation comes up. I've heard numerous times from students that there is a number at which it is ethically reasonable to demand almost anything from a collaborator. The very notion that financial compensation is what ethically mediates any collaboration, or even participation in an artwork, should give us pause.

For Carla and I, collectivity means that we share the same fate and take equal risks, equal consequences, in terms of the authorship of our work. In that sense we kept the name Camel Collective for two reasons, the first being that "Camel" had come to designate something that had become and could only be constituted by the two of us, while "Collective" named a fiction that society had yet to live up to, but that could be sustained if just as the signifier of a possibility. It would not be enough for one small group to create a false collectivity, we're interested in the collective's present impossibility. In that sense our fiction states the truth of our present condition.

Observations on Collective Cultural Action

Critical
Art Ensemble

With this double-feature, Lumpen gives the avid reader a solid load of what "Togetherism" is about.

Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) is a collective of five tactical media artists formed in 1987. CAE explores the intersections between art, critical theory, technology, and political activism. Through tactical media actions, interventions, installations, and books, CAE has addressed biotechnology, necropolitics, economic inequality, environmental safety and other subjects of technopolitical contention.

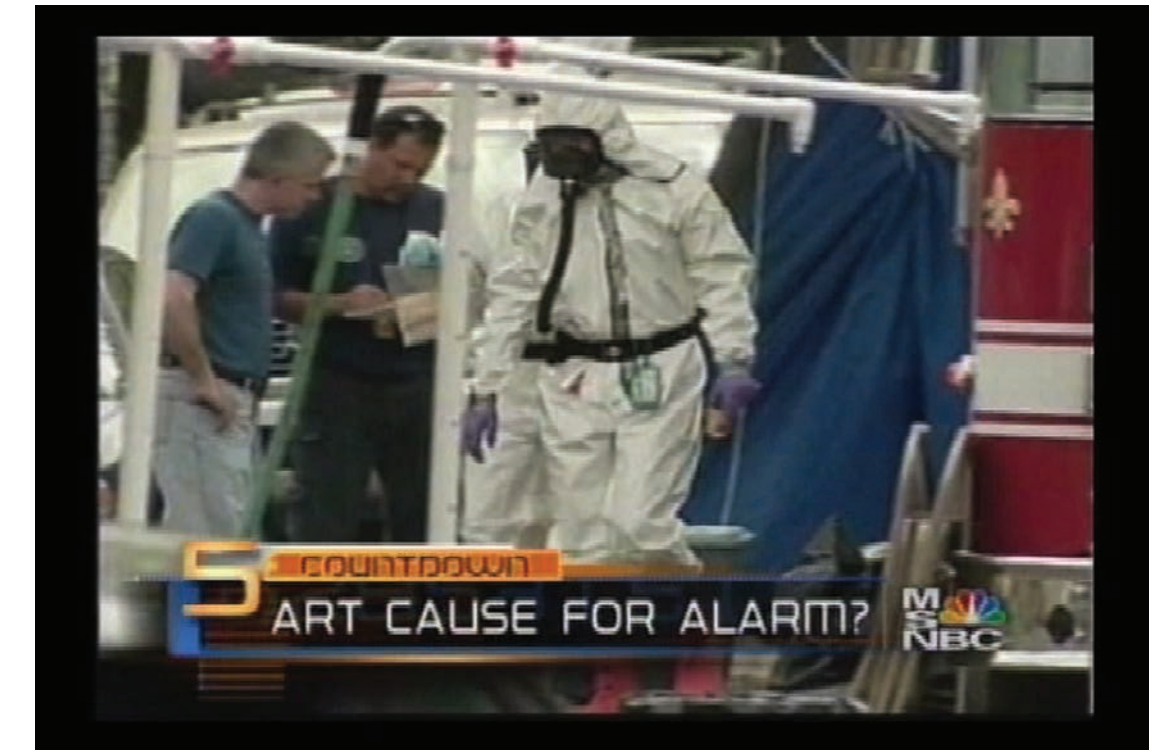
Critical Art Ensemble's contributions form the centerpiece of this publication.

The enduring art collective has two pieces in this issue of Lumpen Magazine: an excerpt from their 1998 paper on collective cultural action, and an interview where we revisit their thoughts from twenty years ago.

In excerpts from their extended interview, CAE and Marina Resende-Santos delve deeply into many of the questions that motivate the "Togetherism" programming season organized by Public Media Institute and this issue of Lumpen.

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Critical Art Ensemble, still from the video *Evidence*, 2004. Courtesy of the artists.



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How does collective art-making size up against the myth of the individual genius and the conventions of the art market?

What can artists and organizers do as a group that they can't do solo? And what does it take to work together? How can people balance interests, relationships and abilities when working together under the same name?



The following essay is an excerpt from "Observations on Collective Cultural Action," a paper by Critical Art Ensemble originally published in *Art Journal*, vol. 57, no. 2, summer 1998.

Excerpt: Observations on Collective Cultural Action

The Double-Edged Sword of Market Demands

After reviewing the current status of the U.S. cultural economy, one would have to conclude that market demands discourage collective activity to such a degree that such a strategy is unfeasible. To an extent, this perception has merit. Financial support certainly favors individuals. In art institutions (museums, galleries, art schools, alternative spaces, etc.), the Habermas thesis, that Modernity never died, finds its practical application. In spite of all the critical fulminations about the death of originality, the artist and the rest of the entities named on the tombstones in the Modernist cemetery, these notions persist, protected by an entrenched cultural bureaucracy geared to resist rapid change. If anything, a backlash has occurred that has intensified certain modernist notions. Of prime importance in this essay is the beloved notion of the individual artist. The individual's signature is still the prime collectible, and access to the body associated with the signature is a commodity that is desired more than ever—so much so, that the obsession with the artist's body has made its way into "progressive" and alternative art networks. Even "community art" has its stars, its signatures, and its bodies. This final category may be the most important. Even a community art star must do a project that includes mingling with the "community" and with the project's sponsor(s). Mingling bodies is as important in the progressive scene as it is in the gallery scene. This demand for bodily comingling is derived from the most traditional notions of the artist hero, as it signifies an opportunity to mix with history and interact with genius.

The totalizing belief that social and aesthetic value are encoded in the being of gifted individuals (rather than emerging from a process of becoming shared by group members) is cultivated early in cultural education. If one

wants to become an "artist," there is a bounty of educational opportunities—everything from matchbook correspondence schools to elite art academies. Yet in spite of this broad spectrum of possibilities, there is no place where one can prepare for a collective practice. At best, there are the rare examples where teams (usually partnerships of two) can apply as one for admission into institutions of higher learning. But once in the school, from administration to curriculum, students are forced to accept the ideological imperative that artistic practice is an individual practice. The numerous mechanisms to ensure that this occurs are too many to list here, so only a few illustrative examples will be offered. Consider the spatial model of the art school. Classrooms are designed to accommodate aggregates of specialists. Studios are designed to accommodate a single artist, or like the classrooms, aggregates of students working individually. Rarely can a classroom be found that has a space designed for face-to-face group interaction. Nor are spaces provided where artists of various media can come together to work on project ideas. Then there is the presentation of faculty (primary role models) as individual practitioners. The institution rewards individual effort at the faculty level in a way similar to how students are rewarded for individual efforts through grades. Woe be to the faculty member who goes to the tenure review board with only collective efforts to show for themselves. Obviously, these reward systems have their effect on the cultural socialization process.

On the public front, the situation is no better. If artists want grants for reasons other than being a nonprofit presenter/producer, they better be working as individuals. Generally speaking, collective practice has no place in the grant system. Collectives reside in that liminal zone—they are neither an individual, nor an institution, and there are no other categories. Seemingly there is no place to turn. Collectives are not wanted in the public sphere, in the education system, nor in the cultural market (in the limited sense of the term), so why would CAE be so in favor of collective cultural action?

Part of the answer once again has to do with market demands. Market imperatives are double-edged swords. There are just as many demands that contradict and are incommensurate with the ones just mentioned. Three examples immediately spring to mind. First, the market wants individuals with lots of skills for maximum exploitation—it's a veritable return to the "renaissance man." An artist must be able to produce in a given medium, write well enough for publication, be verbally articulate, have a reasonable amount of knowledge of numerous disciplines (including art history, aesthetics, critical theory, sociology, psychology, world literature, media theory, and history, and given the latest trends, now various sciences), be a capable public speaker, a career administrator, and possess the proper diplomatic skills to navigate through a variety of cultural subpopulations. Certainly some rare individuals do have all of these skills, but the individual members of CAE are not examples of this category. Consequently, we can only meet this standard by working collectively.

Second is the need for opportunity. Given the overwhelming number of artists trained in academies, colleges, and universities over the past thirty years, adding to what is already an excessive population of cultural producers (given the few platforms for distribution), the opportunity for a public voice has rapidly decreased. By specializing in a particular medium, one cuts the opportunities even further. The greater one's breadth of production skills, the more opportunity there is. Opportunity is also expanded by breadth of knowledge. The more one knows, the more issues one can address. In a time when content has resurfaced as an object of artistic value, a broad interdisciplinary knowledge base is a must. And finally, opportunity can be expanded through the ability to address a wide variety of cultural spaces. The more cultural spaces that a person is comfortable working in, the more opportunity s/he has. If designed with these strategies in mind, collectives can configure themselves to address any issue or space, and they can use all types of media. The result is a practice that defies



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Size Matters: Cellular Collective Construction

One problem that seems to plague collective organization is the catastrophe of the group reaching critical mass. When this point is reached, group activity violently explodes, and little or nothing is left of the organization. The reasons for hitting this social wall vary depending on the function and intention of the group. CAE's experience has been that larger artists/activists groups tend to hit this wall once membership rises into the hundreds. At that point, a number of conflicts and contradictions emerge that cause friction in the group. For one thing, tasks become diversified. Not everyone can participate fully in each task, so committees are formed to focus on specific tasks. The group thus moves from a direct process to a representational process. This step toward bureaucracy conjures feelings of separation and mistrust that can be deadly to group action, and that are symptomatic of the failure of overly rationalized democracy. To complicate matters further, different individuals enter the group with differing levels of access to resources. Those with the greatest resources tend to have a larger say in group activities. Consequently, minorities form that feel underrepresented and powerless to compete with majoritarian views and methods. (Too often, these minorities reflect the same minoritarian structure found in culture as a whole). Under such conditions, group splintering is bound to occur, if not group annihilation. Oddly enough, the worst case scenario is not group annihilation, but the formation of a Machiavellian power base that tightens the bureaucratic rigor in order to purge the group of malcontents, and to stifle difference.

Such problems can also occur at a smaller group level (between fifteen and fifty members). While these smaller groups have an easier time avoiding the alienation that comes from a complex division of labor and impersonal representation, there still can be problems, such as the perception that not everyone has an equal voice in group decisions, or that an individual is becoming the signature voice of the group. Another standard problem is that the level of intimacy necessary to sustain passionately driven group activity rarely emerges in a mid-size group. The probability is high that someone,



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specialization (and hence pigeonholing). CAE, for example, can be doing a web project one moment, a stage performance at a festival the next, a guerrilla action the next, museum installation after that, followed by a book or journal project. Due to collective strength, CAE is prepared for any cultural opportunity.

Finally, the velocity of cultural economy is a factor. The market can consume a product faster than ever before. Just in terms of quantity, collective action offers a tremendous advantage. By working in a group, CAE members are able to resist the Warhol syndrome of factory production with underpaid laborers. Through collective action, product and process integrity can be maintained, while at the same time keeping abreast of market demand.

These considerations may sound cynical, and to a degree they are, but they appear to CAE as a reality that must be negotiated if one is to survive as a cultural producer. On the other hand, there is something significant about collective action that is rewarding beyond what can be understood through the utilitarian filters of economic survival.

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Critical Art Ensemble, *A Public Misery Message: A Temporary Monument to Global Economic Inequality*, 2012. Courtesy of the artists.

B

Critical Art Ensemble, *Radiation Burn*, 2010. Courtesy of the artists.



for emotional or idiosyncratic reasons, is not going to be able to work with someone else on a long-term basis. These divisions cannot be organized or rationalized away. Much as the large democratic collective (such as WAC) is good for short-term, limited-issue political and cultural action the mid-size group seems to function best for short-term, specific-issue cultural or political projects.

For sustained cultural or political practice free of bureaucracy or other types of separating factors, CAE recommends a cellular structure. Thus far the artists' cell that typifies contemporary collective activity has formed in a manner similar to band society. Solidarity is based on similarity in terms of skills and political/aesthetic perceptions. Most of the now classic cellular collectives of the 70s and 80s, such as Ant Farm, General Idea, Group Material, Testing the Limits (before it splintered), and Gran Fury used such a method with admirable results. Certainly these collectives' models for group activity are being emulated by a new generation. However, CAE has made one adjustment in its collective structure. While size and similarity through political/aesthetic perspective has replicated itself in the group, members do not share a similarity based on skill. Each member's set of skills is unique to the cell. Consequently, in terms of production, solidarity is not based on similarity, but on difference. The parts are interrelated and interdependent. Technical expertise is given no chance to collide and conflict, and hence social friction is greatly reduced. In addition, such structure allows CAE to use whatever media it chooses, because the group has developed a broad skill base. Having a broad skill base and interdisciplinary knowledge also allows the group to work in any kind of space.

Solidarity through difference also affects the structure of power in the group. Formerly, collective structure tended to be based on the idea that all members were equals at all times. Groups had a tremendous fear of hierarchy, because it was considered a categorical evil that led to domination. This notion was coupled with a belief in extreme democracy as the best method of avoiding hierarchy. While CAE does not follow the democratic model, the collective does recognize its merits, however, CAE follows Foucault's principle that hierarchical power can be productive (it does not necessarily lead to domination), and hence uses a floating hierarchy to produce projects. After consensus is reached on how a project should be produced, the member with the greatest

expertise in the area has authority over the final product. While all members have a voice in the production process, the project leader makes the final decisions. This keeps endless discussion over who has the better idea or design to a minimum, and hence the group can produce at a faster rate. Projects tend to vary dramatically, so the authority floats among the membership. At the same time, CAE would not recommend this process for any social constellation other than the cell (three to eight people). Members must be able to interact in a direct face-to-face manner, so everyone is sure that they have been heard as a person (and not as an anonymous or marginalized voice). Second, the members must trust one another; that is, sustained collective action requires social intimacy and a belief that the other members have each individual member's interests at heart. A recognition and understanding of the nonrational components of collective action is crucial—without it the practice cannot sustain itself.

The collective also has to consider what is pleasurable for its members. Not all people work at the same rate. The idea that everyone should do an equal amount of work is to measure a member's value by quantity instead of quality. As long as the process is pleasurable and satisfying for everyone, in CAE's opinion, each member should work at the rate at which they are comfortable. Rigid equality in this case can be a perverse and destructive type of Fordism that should be avoided. To reinforce the pleasure of the group, convivial relationships beyond the production process are necessary. The primary reason for this need is because the members will intensify bonds of trust and intimacy that will later be positively reflected in the production process. To be sure, intimacy produces its own peculiar friction, but the group has a better chance of surviving the arguments and conflicts that are bound to arise, as long as in the final analysis each member trusts and can depend on fellow members. Collective action requires total commitment to other members, and this is a frightening thought for many individuals. Certainly, collective practice is not for everyone.



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A Critical Art Ensemble, tactical media poster.

B Critical Art Ensemble, poster for *Flesh Machine*, 1997-8

The preceding excerpt was originally published in Critical Art Ensemble's paper *Observations on Collective Cultural Action* (1998). Twenty years later, Lumpen revisited the paper and spoke with CAE about new conditions for collective action.

Critical Art Ensemble talks about building trust and distributing work as a group, and distinguishes between coalitions, collectives, and communities. Following the interview, CAE tells stories from their encounters with other famed collectives of the 90s.

Interview with Critical Art Ensemble

Interview by
Marina Resende Santos

Marina Resende Santos (MRS)

You refer in the essay to the “pleasure” that must factor into collective action, and to the need for care, trust and commitment to the group. You say that “passionately driven group activity” depends on intimacy. Can you tell us more about what you mean by “commitment to other members” of the group?

Critical Art Ensemble (CAE)

There are two interrelated questions here. One concerning pleasure and another concerning commitment. The first often leads to the second. Critical Arts Ensemble (CAE) was a friendship network before it was a collective. For a few years, we knew each other as people we hung out with simply for the fun of being with one another (although Steve and Hope Kurtz were already partners.) It was through late night conversations at parties that we realized we had similar ideas about politics and culture, and they could be turned into action. Steve Barnes and Steve Kurtz started making videos, and other future members were often in them. It was during this time that we made up the name Critical Art Ensemble, as a way for everyone involved in the production to claim credit. So much of the origins of CAE came out of personal amusement. There is also the pleasure of accomplishing a task together—sharing significant life moments.

Commitment emerges out of the solidarity rooted in friendship and shared causes and goals. Nothing tests commitment like crisis. When Hope died and shortly thereafter Steve was arrested by the FBI for “bioterrorism,” we found out very quickly what the level of commitment was, because nothing good was going to come for all who were involved. And here we are, still standing.

MRS What does the process of gaining trust in each other and their capacities look like? How did you arrive at the engine you described in 1998?

CAE A reasonable amount of trust should be established from the beginning. We imagine it would be very hard to start from scratch. As mentioned above, we had that from our friendship network. Then it's just a matter of repetition, and very soon members will all get comfortable. Full disclosure: The first time we tried to formalize CAE it did not work out. By the end of the first year everyone quit except Steve Kurtz and Steve Barnes. When we regrouped, the two Steves were a little wiser. For the second year we did a better job at selecting members. The group was relatively stable after that.

Critical Art Ensemble formed in 1987, and it wasn't until 1996 that we figured out what we wanted to do and how we wanted to do it. What we consider our first mature project (where the theory, the collective structure, and the project all perfectly lined up) was “Flesh Machine” in 1997. That's ten years of learning on the job. At the time there wasn't so much as a single art or humanities course in higher education on what interested us in terms of practice or organization, so we had to learn everything by trial and error. For the first 8 years or so, we were really using an ensemble method of organization—much like a jazz ensemble. We would choose a theme and then let the different specialists riff on it. But our discovery and increasing adoption of project-based production changed our methodology, and made us a more integrated collective. We found a way to produce that integrated the specializations in a manner that was greater than what any of us could achieve on our own. We were truly all working at maximum intensity together.



We would never write rules.

MRS Your description of the rate of work that is satisfying and pleasurable for each person is a very helpful shift to understand how capacity and workload can be divided in a project. But it seems that if that is not agreed on, people might resent that work and dedication are uneven. How did you get to this understanding?

CAE As you say, if the understanding is not there, the group is not going to survive. This question also has different layers. One, we are generally tactical, meaning we choose the right tool for the job. If you are the person with expertise in using that tool, you will be working more. Two, we all have to pay rent, and the kind of art we do isn't going to cover that. Some members have more demanding jobs or more personal responsibilities than others in the group. Those with less often do more. And finally, some like doing the work more than others. For the most part, we have sympathy with each other's life demands and personal dispositions, and this arrangement has worked, although not perfectly. For example, when Dorian [Burr] left the group she said there was too much travel and too many deadlines, and these gave her anxiety. The pleasure died for her, and she quit. We all supported her decision in spite of how sorry we were to see her go.

We would never write rules. That kind of rational-legal authority has too high a probability of becoming a weapon. We are a collective of exceptions and tools—not rules. You can't write rules for individuals—each is their own unique case. You have to count on that indescribable feeling of empathic understanding between members. Resentment is a death blow to collectives.

MRS Your 1998 essay already responds to new conditions of communication. You talk about Nettime and the possibility of international coalitions and networks. But this is perhaps the realm that has seen the most dramatic changes in the past 20 years. Digital technology and the Internet have arguably created new numeric and geographic dimensions for abstract collectivity. At the same time, it is common to associate Internet culture to isolation and individualism. Would you say there are new possibilities for collective action that you haven't accounted for in the essay? And are there any that you would no longer hope for?

CAE We are not sure that collective actions and network actions are the same thing. We think that collective action requires embodiment, with maybe the exception of software building collectives. There are more tools for marketing products, and faster and broader ways to call for action, but it's also harder to rise above all the digital noise. The only real change is quantitative, but it has a qualitative outcome, which is that people of a certain level of wealth spend most of their time in front of a screen. The virtual social fabric is replacing the real social fabric. This keeps people off the streets and out of the gene pool. Political activism cannot be done online in totality. For this kind of work, life is still a constant meeting. For cultural activism, there needs to be more than memes, games, challenges, fundraisers, and rants. While new technology is contributing to the emergence of many types of new or transformed social constellations, we don't think it is having a profound impact on collective structure.

Consider the words you are using—"global coalitions," "international solidarities," and "collectivity." The former two are only possible because of digital technology, but they are not collectives. Collectives require embodiment in ongoing real-life circumstances, particular lived contexts, and a multidimensional experience of other members. Or to put it plainly, it's living together, playing together, working together. It's getting to know the various member's friends and families. It's eating and drinking and loving and hating together. Isn't "together" the operative word here? You can stare into a screen for eternity but you will not get to "togetherness," any more than you can staring at a hammer. Information and communications technology is just a tool, not a life. Collectivism is one essential way to organize life.

MRS In a part of the paper we are not reprinting, you take issue with the concept of "community." You claim that it is an empty term, that there are no real communities but that instead the word is used as a euphemism for "minority." I think that this polemic would still cause debate today.

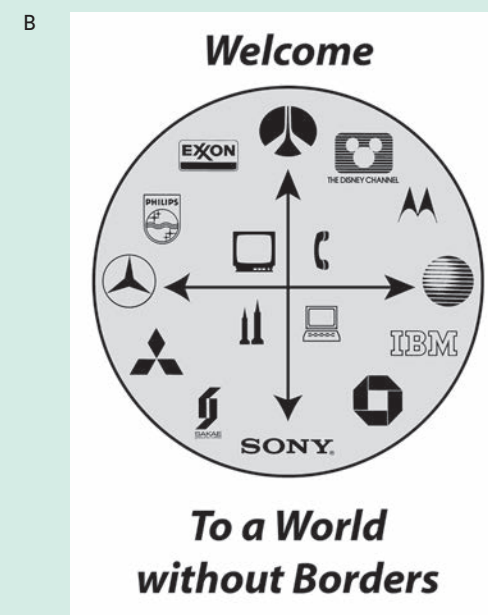
CAE Critical Art Ensemble has been debating the "community" issue since the days of Mary Jane Jacob and "community art" back in the early '90s. The idea of community is nonsense in a complex division of labor. Communities do exist in rural areas in the United States, but not in urban areas and intercultural zones.

"Community" is just a rhetorical form—a placeholder for a social constellation we don't know how to name (like "the law enforcement community"), or a positive linguistic gesture toward a specific demographic that we identify with or feel empathy for.

So let's look at it from a sociological point of view. Community, in its meaningful sense, can be found in rural areas. It is defined by solidarity through sameness—or in other words, a common notion of who is inside and who is outside the community; intergenerational connection to place/land; similarity of religion, norms, and mores; political similarity, and a tendency toward extended family as the basic social unit. If you live in a city of high population density, you will not find a block like this. Or, take the example of "the LGBTQIQ community": There is so much diversity within it that it is not possible to say what this aggregate looks like. It can't be simply represented, and the norms, beliefs, and ideologies are not in any kind of harmony. How many LGBTQIQ folks have you known that came from a rural community and their primary ambition in life was to escape it (and with good reason)?

Although community has exceptionally positive connotations around it as a linguistic term, CAE wonders whether its application it is at all desirable. Who wants to be a part of a social constellation based on sameness and exclusion? CAE prefers difference and inclusion. That would seem to be much more useful and just given the division of labor, class structure, and the interculturality we have today.

Lessons from a generation: CAE meets other collectives



Gran Fury

In the late 1980s, CAE was working with Gran Fury. We had asked them to come to Florida for an exhibition we were doing on the AIDS crisis (with the hopes of gathering enough support to transition some of the crowd into an ACT UP chapter—very tough to do at that time in the South, although somehow we pulled it off). We happened to be in NYC before the show and they invited us to one of their meetings to make a pitch. Our request was a small item on the agenda. There were ten or so designers at the table and each thought they had the best idea for every project. A very spirited discussion between the Gran Fury members ensued, to put it diplomatically. Even our request was debated with vigor. We came out of the meeting emotionally exhausted. Somehow they made this method work for a while, but for CAE, it completely confirmed that we should not replicate specializations in the group, and that a productive, floating hierarchy was helpful if not necessary.

Group Material

When CAE first met Group Material in the late '80s, they were in transition. Tim Rollins had recently left the group. Group Material was doing very prestigious shows by then—Documenta, the Whitney Biennial, and so on. The art world could not take a collective being famous as it messed with the sales narrative of the individual genius. So a counternarrative started that it was Tim Rollins and Group Material, because there had to be some individual leader who was really the visionary behind it all. Tim did the right thing and left the group. CAE thought we had better be careful that that didn't happen to us. Then when Steve got arrested fifteen years or so later, it started to happen to us, and we had to go along with it because we would do anything to keep Steve from going to jail. Happily, it did not stick, and we returned to equilibrium.

Botschaft

While in Austria in the mid-'90s we met a very interesting fellow named Pit Schultz. He had recently left the famed Berlin collective Botschaft. Now, this story is hearsay, given that what we are recounting is what Pit told us, but even if skewed in the telling and retelling, it may still be enlightening. Botschaft structured itself in a very traditional collective form. The idea was for a number of artists to come together to share tools and space, and hopefully, in aggregate, produce enough prestige capital that the art scene would take notice. This was a collective of convenience. There was no person-to-person investment. One individual in the group did get famous, so all the visits, phone enquiries, and offers went to this one person. This caused jealousy and resentment, as members felt they were all working to advance this one person's career and, needless to say, the collective didn't last.

The Wild Bunch

Critical Art Ensemble is very fond of the New American Cinema classic *The Wild Bunch*. The film is very informative about collective action. It's about a gang of robbers. At the peak of the film, having successfully pulled off a lucrative job that will finally allow them to retire, one of the gang members runs afoul of the local authority and his army. The authority tortures the gang member. The rest of the gang can either retire with the money and leave their friend to die, or they can try to take him back via a suicide mission. Tough decision? The leader of the gang walks into the room where the rest of the gang members are resting and says, "Let's go." Another gang member replies, "Why not." All the members know what they should do, and what they are going to do. They are an exceptionally functional collective, if a tad nihilistic. Even tough decisions do not require a lot of debate when there is singlemindedness of purpose among the group.

A Critical Art Ensemble, installation view of *GenTerra*, 2001. Courtesy of the artists.

B Critical Art Ensemble, tactical media poster.

Sarah Skaggs

So much of my experience in life and work taught me that endings meant failure, the process-based nature of Goat Island's practice always held space for change.

When I was finishing graduate study at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, I discovered and became moderately obsessed with Goat Island's final performance *The Lastmaker*. Goat Island was a Chicago-based collaborative performance group that made and presented work from the mid 1980s until 2009. When they decided to stop making work as a group, they embarked on a final performance together exploring ideas of lasting, lastness and how to say goodbye.

In my discovery of *The Lastmaker*, I felt relief and connection. So much of my experience in life and work taught me that endings meant failure, that they should be resisted, and that endings are all bad. This was the first time I encountered a collaborative project that rejected the narrative that endings must be fought against and that they happen to us.

In a 2008 Newcity Stage review by Valerie Jean Johnson, Goat Island company member Matthew Goulish is quoted: "We decided this as a company early, prompted by Lin's suggestion. She felt we could make one more piece together before our work would begin to suffer from repetition of an unexciting sort. I think she felt compelled to force us

into the unknown both in terms of what might come after the company, and what the procedure of making a last piece might produce. I think we surprised ourselves with our own creative exuberance."

Then, amazingly, last year I was invited to serve as the registrar for the exhibition *Goat Island archive—we have discovered the performance by making it* at the Chicago Cultural Center. I was eager to dig deeper into the work of Goat Island. The exhibition, expertly curated by Nicholas Lowe, focused on the idiosyncrasies of the material in the collective's archive and how these materials might present a nuanced ecology for a broad and complex practice. The items on display changed nine times throughout the exhibition to move chronologically through the life of the company. In the end, we displayed more than 1,000 pieces of ephemera, research material, props, and costumes. In describing the concept, Lowe wrote, "This exhibition has grown from the idea that the nine performances of Goat Island are missing. Like lived experiences of all kinds the event becomes a memory. In this remembered form the work of Goat Island continues to exist in the bodies of those who performed it and in the memory of those who saw it."

We found that articulating quickly all that Goat Island was presented a challenge. The work doesn't fit into one genre, and the way of working was particular, careful, and unique. Over time, we began to talk about it in the following way: In 1987, Goat Island was founded by Lin Hixson, Matthew Goulish, Greg McCain, and Tim McCain. The composition of the ensemble evolved over time and eventually the ensemble was articulated in two distinct layers of membership. Core members in the final composition were Karen Christopher, Matthew Goulish, Mark Jeffery, Bryan Saner, Litó Walkey, and Lin Hixson (director). Earlier core members were Greg McCain, Timothy McCain, Joan Dickinson, and Antonio Poppe. Associate members were Cynthia Ashby, Lucy Cash (formerly Lucy Baldwin), CJ Mitchell, Judd Morrissey, Margaret Nelson, John Rich, Charissa Tolentino and Chantal Zakari. Members contributed to the conception, research, writing, choreography, documentation, and educational demands of the work. The company performed a personal vocabulary of

movement, both dance-like and pedestrian, that often made extreme physical demands on the performers, and attention demands on the audience. The nine completed works are *Soldier, Child, Tortured Man* (1987); *We Got A Date* (1989); *Can't Take Johnny to the Funeral* (1991); *It's Shifting, Hank* (1993); *How Dear to Me the Hour When Daylight Dies* (1996); *The Sea & Poison* (1998); *It's an Earthquake in My Heart* (2001); *When will the September roses bloom? Last night was only a comedy* (2004); and *The Lastmaker* (2007). Most notable publications include *Schoolbook 1* (1997); *Schoolbook 2* (2002); and *Small Acts of Repair* (2007). The live performances were accompanied by publications, film and video projects, workshops, summer schools, lectures and symposia, inventing a complex institution of interconnected processes bigger than the individual works. The work of Goat Island might be understood as an object with many parts, as a complex institution, and the work of that institution as a series of interconnected processes rather than as a single project.

Because we decided to show as much of the archival material as possible, Lowe and I spent nearly a year reading closely through twenty-four banker boxes packed full of paper material, looking at photos, reading journals, reassembling props, and folding costumes. What struck me was the focus and dedication of the artists to ideas and to each other, always through the production of the artwork. Each new work was built on a structure meant to hold the needs of the collective. This was done in timing and sequence, in relation to space, or with specific content. I realized that the process-based nature of Goat Island's practice always held space for change. So when Goat Island decided to stop making work together as a group, it made sense that they would embark on one final performance together, *The Lastmaker*.

As with all Goat Island projects, material was gathered and created by the company members in response to a prompt from the director Lin Hixson: "Construct a last performance in the form of a human foot that weighs two tons and remains in good condition." In part inspired by the wooden mold used in shoemaking, called "a last," this prompt began as a starting place for generating content in the performance. Goat Island was known for exploring and challenging accepted notions



The Sea And Poison, rehearsal Documentation (1998) Featuring (left to Right) Mark Jeffery; Matthew Goulish; Bryan Saner; Karen Christopher. Photo by Nathan Mandell. Goat Island Archive, John M. Flaxman Library Special Collection, The School of The Art Institute of Chicago.

of dance. *The Lastmaker* used hybrid mathematics to compose a sequence of movements where performers converge and diverge to a regular beat with irregular measures. Istanbul's Hagia Sophia, a building that began as a church, later in history became a mosque, and is now a museum, offered an architectural metaphor for transience over time and an image of the layering of histories.

I was fascinated that a group of artists could use the making of a performance to serve multiple needs. First, conceptually exploring "the last" as a construct, how we say goodbye, and what does it mean to remember, are compelling ideas in their own right. But it also served as a space for both the company members of Goat Island and their audiences to process the ending together. To me, this acknowledged the community aspect of making work, the investment we all make in each other. The work has a self-aware humor that seemed to offer a space for the artists to celebrate what Goat Island had become over time. The rehearsal notes and artist notebooks in the archive point to the time as bittersweet. New ideas and paths of discovery revealed themselves while making *The Lastmaker*. Somehow, in remaining focused on

the collaborative process one last time, each artist seemed to be able to begin to imagine what would come next.

In my conception mindset that all endings are tragic and to be avoided, I had limited what I could see as possible outcomes and never trusted the potential of the unknown. The continued, vibrant and divergent careers of former Goat Island members offer a longer narrative that illustrates how an ending might be the beginning of a new chapter. When working collaboratively, managing relationships is an essential aspect of the work, and we tend to see the ending of collaborations as the breaking down of relationships. But what if that is not always true, or at least doesn't have to be the case? What if an ending is an indicator of success, of growth, and not a failure that casts a shadow on all that precedes it?

I began to understand that, as artists, we are not beholden to the decisions we make earlier in our practice. This was liberating, thinking now about the ethics and methods of my practice as "a last" or shoe mold: the projects and collaborations are the shoes that are built onto it, meant to be removed one day to make something new. Now, when presented with an inevitable conclusion or conditions

that restrict my vision for a project or collaboration, I attempt to re-frame them as creative constraints, as places for conceptual inquiry or exploration of the unknown.

The exhibition gave me the opportunity to meet most of the former Goat Island members, many of whom still teach together and work collaboratively in various modes all over the world. Early in the exhibition-making process, I ran into Bryan Saner at an event. Earlier that day I had found notes from the rehearsal where the company discussed their ending. The page mentioned a comment from Bryan that he was afraid he would never find a community like Goat Island again. I mentioned it to him and how he had gone on to maintain his relationships with the artists and even extend that sense of community in the work he was doing now. His eyes welled with tears, lost in thought. He said that he couldn't have imagined, then, the richness and potential that was ahead of him on that day more than a decade ago.



on endings

Authority, Emotion, and Exclusion

"In a moment defined by our collective inability to transcend simplistic conflict, the project of witnessing and reckoning with difference in groups is of the utmost urgency. This is a time to train a difficult but crucial skill: the ability to witness our social dynamics, and to speak to what we see. When we speak our most uncomfortable feelings and observations, we see that the world does not fall apart, and that we can account more fully for its complexity. The Authority, Emotion, and Exclusion project trains these skills for people involved in shaping institutions of higher learning."

This was our hook for recruiting members for a Group Relations Conference in January of 2019. Group Relations is a pedagogical form that invites experimentation with group dynamics. For several days in a row, members learn together in a space that is simultaneously strict and unnervingly open ended. After a brief opening event where members are told what to expect, they enter a room of chairs and sit, waiting together in silence. Group Relations Consultants join them quietly. The group may sit in silence for several minutes as they attempt to begin the work, which has been described by conference staff with the deceptively simple directive: "the task is to examine dynamics unfolding in the group in the here-and-now."

At its core, Group Relations creates a container for members to see and experiment with how they show up in groups, with limited consequences on their actual lives. Members are invited to experiment with different ways of taking up leadership and followership. Rigid boundaries around various Conference

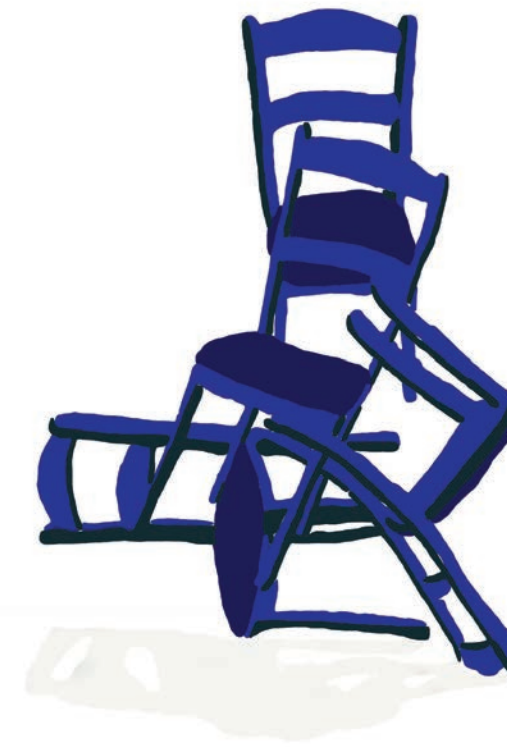
Netta Sadovsky and Fred Schmidt-Arenales

rules, like event timing and staff roles, are explicitly designed so that members will chafe against them. One common theme is the emergence of friction between members who want to work within the boundaries of the Conference, and those who want to destroy them. In Authority, Emotion, and Exclusion, the Conference was held within an institution with its own rigid set of boundaries, the University of Pennsylvania, of which many of the members were already critical or even defiant. Furthermore, the Conference was recorded by two of its staff members, with open-ended intentions of using the recording for projects in the future (such as this piece of writing). These two factors: the membership's relationship to UPenn, and their relationship to being recorded, exacerbated tension around authority and boundaries and made for a heightened sense of anxiety around the structure's ability to care for its members.

The following are three transcript excerpts from the Authority, Emotion, and Exclusion Conference. These excerpts are published here on the condition of anonymity.

Authority, Emotion, and Exclusion was organized by Netta Sadovsky and Fred Schmidt-Arenales, with the support of the Sachs Program for Arts Innovation.

Netta Sadovsky and Fred Schmidt-Arenales are partners of the "Togetherism" programming series organized by Public Media Institute in fall 2019. As part of the program, the artists designed and facilitated a workshop inspired by the experience of a Group Relations Conference to Co-Prosperity Sphere in October 2019.



A

The task is to examine dynamics unfolding in the group in the here



A

Blue Chairs
Courtesy of the artists

Members

Long silence

Does anybody know if there are people missing from the room? Like someone that you saw earlier that's not present.

↓
Hmm, two empty chairs over here.

↓
Yeah, I'm just wondering if there's people that we're waiting for right now.

↓
For ability's sake, could everyone speak up a lot louder than you think you need to?

↓
That would be great.

↓
Because it's a little hard to hear, thank you.

↓
I just realized the mics are up there.

↓
Oh, we're being recorded.

↓
I think there's another player in this dynamic, that this space is being surveilled, or there's a different type of witnessing happening. Perhaps some of us are feeling that we need to be a little bit more careful on how we sound, what we say. We talk about trust, and I don't know if that level of trust is present in the room when there's microphones to record what is being said.

Consultant

I think this group is using quietness, and the notion of inability to speak more loudly, to keep parts of the group, or parts of themselves, from becoming visible inside this room.

↓
Well, the hearing, of physical, auditory sound is the biggest barrier to participation, and that's what it sounds like a lot of people's gripes are at the moment.

↓
But can't people speak for themselves?

↓
Maybe they can't because of the sound, because they can't hear, is what we're saying. This is the topic, this is the very first problem in our communication.

↓
And the ambivalence is probably also because

it feels hard to speak to yourself in this way, because you don't want to take a side, you don't want to feel like you're being ableist by saying, I actually just don't feel like moving cause I'm tired and don't want to actually disrupt the space. That is an okay feeling to have and it can still have the impact of being perceived as ableist, but, those two can exist and do exist often. You know, I don't want to build a ramp but I understand that you can't get in the building, you know, that is a common feeling and that's not, it's okay.

↓
I would also say that if somebody is having a difficult time hearing, there's an open chair and it is quieter over there.

↓
If people are having problems hearing I would be willing to give up my chair.

Consultant

I would also point out that the chair arrangement has actually expanded and yet everybody seems to be hearing each other well.

↓
I wouldn't make that assumption, did you ask everybody if they could hear well?

Staff

Door open or closed?

↓
Closed.

↓
How are you feeling?

↓
Stressed...

↓
Stressed about what?

↓
Little details like, is there enough coffee? What do we do if there's not? How do you even gauge that? Am I coddling? There's only so much money, at some point you just cut people off. I don't know how to decide that. And I'm hyper-focused on the food and drink because it's my area. I'm trying to regulate, I'm feeling really disempowered. I was noticing when Jackie asks logistical questions of us, she doesn't look at me. And also other people, often I felt like they were glancing at me to be polite.

↓
So they're placating you.

↓
Yeah. Not everyone, but yeah.

↓

This is interesting because when I was talking about stuff in the staff room, most of what I was talking about was between me and you. And I was wondering if anyone noticed that.

My idea about it is that you're compensating for the power imbalance by focusing your attention on me.

I think I'm paying attention to you because I want to engage with the emotion and you hold a lot of it in our group.

I do feel really emotional. I was really wiggling out last night and I was experiencing myself to be massively overreacting. I feel really delicate... Last night I didn't know how to hold power besides tantruming. I don't know how to express it calmly.

Why does it have to be calm?

It doesn't feel powerful if I'm also feeling like a child.

You know, during the directorate meeting, that's exactly what I said. I don't get to be emotional and also claim power. So it's in the system. I think in my mind authority means that I don't show emotionality. I catch things before they play out, not after. And it would be shameful if they played out before I caught them. And I'm thinking, am I stripping myself of authority by not allowing myself to be emotional? Also I keep thinking about the boundaries and sexuality and intimacy, why does this feel so reactive to me? I'm thinking about my reaction to the bed in the gallery, like "woah, that's rapey" and also my dream about incest. And I think I hold a lot of fear, like "will I damage somebody, is it safer to go on the withholding side than to go on the other side." I'm going to do damage either way, so what's the most protective?

Members

Yeah um, I'm afraid of the group.

I don't hear that fear.

I'm probably masking it.

I mean—I'm afraid of the group in the sense that the group is very powerful as a collective...

What do you mean that you don't hear his fear? It's his fear.
I wasn't hearing his fear, I was hearing bland talking that didn't have an emotion.

Yeah, I've been told that several times.
I'm so afraid of speaking in this group because I'm afraid of being misinterpreted, but I also really want to make space for that misinterpretation.

That comment about not reading the fear is upsetting to me as well, because we all communicate in such different ways.

Yeah and I'll turn that around... that statement felt very aggressive, but you might not mean that as well.

Aggressive?

Yeah.

Yeah I felt that as well.

Yeah, I feel an aggression that is like, we're not feeling enough. I think other people feel that too.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I think that's actually "I'm not feeling enough."

That makes me mad.

My heart's beating, I'm having a hard time speaking, I'm feeling a lot.

To me it's like, how dare you demand that I show myself to you?

It makes me want to hide.

And also that the way that you want me to feel is about you and not at all about me.

Well, hold on now. I feel like he is holding the frustration that a lot of people have communicated, it's not... when people communicate it's cerebral and again, that doesn't mean that everything that everyone shared is that way, but that is what I'm feeling.

I think people need a scapegoat.
I have an invisible identity but that doesn't mean I have to enclose on the space. To close someone else's space to take up space, you know?

I don't have to take up someone's space in their identity just because people can't see mine.

Is there finite space? Is there more terrain to travel through?

Everyone is talking about how they need more processing, like they need more brain space. How much space are we going to give each other's differences so that we can all communicate in this perfect way, where we're all emoting enough for the group. Like we're all having these emotions but we're not giving each other the perfect space. I've taken other people's space and I don't...

I feel very afraid at the moment because I want to express how angry I am that I don't know how to aid the people in the group that don't have space, but I also don't want to express that anger because I'm afraid that I'll be rejected for it, as I have been in the past.



The Watershed In Your Head: Mapping Anthropocene River Basins

Brian Holmes



The evolving cartographies presented by this project are an invitation to get involved, as if you weren't already.

Jenny Kendler + Jeremy Bolen's *Lounging Through the Flood* sculpture floating at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Part of Deep Time Chicago's *Confluence Ecologies* project and the HKW's *Mississippi: An Anthropocene River*. Photo by Marina Resende Santos



A previous version of this article was published on the website of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in the context of the organization's partnership in the project *Mississippi: An Anthropocene River*, with activities led by Brian Holmes and the collective Deep Time Chicago. The current text has been edited by the author to expand on the themes of Togetherism.

The biogeochemical transformations of the twenty-first century demand a new analytic of society: not political economy, but political ecology. It is the study of the technological powers, organizational forms, and decision-making processes whereby human groups reshape their environments. But it's also a more difficult and sometimes incalculable approach to the multiple forms of agency exerted by non-human others, whether on themselves, on us, or on any other component of the living world. Political ecology mingles nature and culture in an unlimited feedback system at planetary scale, with consequences in all directions. How to achieve at least a beginner's literacy in its manifold concerns? How to express them with the exactitude of science and the passion of direct engagement? And how not to exclude the crushing banality of economics, which continues to produce so many unwanted changes in the earth system? Finally—it's no mere detail—how to inject the uncertain wonderment of art into this devastating panorama of ecological overshoot? The questions are immense, but that's the point. It's time to develop a cultural critique of too-late capitalism, *aka* the Anthropocene.

I'm going to give it a try in the first person.

I used to be involved in the critique of political economy and the practice of tactical media—a cultural cycle that had kicked off back in the '90s. Then in 2015 I began work on a serious reboot, mixing public science, environmentalism, and open-source cartography. The idea was to produce a web-based map about pipelines and oil infrastructure, under the title *Petropolis*, to be shown in an exhibition called *Petcoke: Tracing Dirty Energy* at the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago. Taking an open-source, open-access approach, I wanted to learn contemporary

reality in public, by locating fossil institutions in lived rural and urban spaces that could expand out to continental scale, but that could also be explored close up, by groups deliberately convened for experiments in collective perception. *Petropolis* was intended, and continues to be used, as a departure point for territorial experience in Chicago and the larger metro area, which is connected directly by pipeline to the devastation of the Tar Sands in northwestern Canada.

Yet the confrontation with petroleum infrastructure is paradoxical. On the one hand, it's absolutely necessary, because the crucial power-generating structures of Anthropocene society remain out of site, largely invisible, concretely unimaginable by most people, posing obvious barriers to any conceivable change. But at the same time, petroleum infrastructure is just plain deadly; it's the epitome of instrumental rationality divorced from any form of human or ecological interdependence. When you examine it up close, you become terribly conscious that the stakes of this economy do not lie contained within its sprawling infrastructural footprint. Instead they're elsewhere, everywhere, in a fundamental entanglement with no end in sight. Political ecology has to begin with that condition.

To go further in a positive way I reached out to a friend with extensive experience in grassroots eco-advocacy: the artist and activist Alejandro Meitin, known for his work with the Argentinean group *Ala Plástica*. When we first met he saw immediate parallels between his own work and a group to which I belonged, the *Compass Collaborators*, whose 2008 *Continental Drift through the Midwest Radical*

Cultural Corridor had launched a practice of “cartography with your feet.” Alejandro and I had an opportunity to do a project together in the context of an exhibition called *The Earth Will Not Abide*, organized by Compass member Ryan Griffis, about industrial agriculture and land-use change in the Americas. So we launched an “interbasin collaboration” which continues up to the present. The aim is to explore watersheds as laboratories of governance. The first results took the form of a double map and multimedia archive entitled *Living Rivers/Ríos Vivos*, comparing two major watersheds in North and South America.

Alejandro brought twenty-five years of knowledge and experience to bear on the Paraná River and its vast drainage basin, the Río del Plata watershed extending from the middle of Argentina to Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil. As a comparative greenhorn, all I could do was throw myself body and soul into the political ecology of the Mississippi River and its tributaries, which cover roughly 40% of the continental US. Both of us were focusing on the accelerated land-use change brought by a single phenomenon that also dates back twenty-five years: genetically modified grain planted in endless monocrop fields and sprayed from the air with glyphosate, which is the active ingredient in Monsanto's RoundUp. This weirdly industrial use of the tranquil countryside has exploded over the last quarter-century, due especially to the telluric pull of the Chinese soybean market, and more broadly to the rising global demand for grain-fed meat. How could urban publics, far away in their bubbles of prosperity and entertainment, begin to perceive and talk about such things? Artistically we were



attempting to combine embodied experience, social experimentation, political engagement, and earth system science, expressed through the vector of geographic information systems augmented by multimedia archives and written narratives.

The English-language version of the map, *Living Rivers*, draws a contrast between idealized natural *biomes* and contemporary *anthromes*, or anthropogenic biomes, whose biophysical characteristics have been reworked by extensive human intervention. The Spanish-language version, *Ríos Vivos*, develops a further opposition between recent Latin American coups (*golpes*) and age-old relations of reciprocal care (*mútua crianza*). The political concerns are specified and articulated by the satellite mapping kit, whose capacity to integrate diverse forms of perception and analysis is both fulfilled and critiqued by the multimedia montage of situated viewpoints—or so we hope anyway. *Living Rivers/Ríos Vivos* is a first step toward the representation of political ecology. It's an attempt to help institute a new imaginary of stewardship.

After the relative success of that first collaboration, I started trying to figure out what just happened. Was some kind of aesthetic or cultural access to political ecology really emerging? Could a hybrid cartographic art become an initiatory pathway for social subjects faced with glaring contradictions between their own life-activities and the

viability of the earth system? Or were these just more vague ideas—a watershed in your head, with no verifiable connection to politics or ecology?

Keep it Real

Living in the United States under rapidly decaying political conditions, it seemed essential to find, not just “principles of hope” (we burned through those with Obama), but instead, tangible processes of socio-environmental change that involve broad publics and create new governance routines at regional scale. Only one place in the US seemed to fill that bill: the Pacific Northwest, including Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. There, generations of inhabitants had absorbed the lessons of countercultural figures such as Gary Snyder and Peter Berg, who put the term “bioregionalism” into circulation in the late 1970s. Bioregionalists insist on locally identifiable watersheds as the most appropriate units of governance. Some extend beyond the watershed model to larger territories, including the one called Cascadia: a more-or-less coherent ecozone transgressing the boundaries of all the existing political units named above. Back in Illinois, where I live, there's no comparable movement, nor



B

any such audacious attempt to redraw existing borders. So I set out on a new cartography project in cahoots with a Portland-based artist and curator, Mack McFarland. Drawing our inspiration from dozens of partners and collaborators, we called the project *Learning from Cascadia*.

As it turns out, Cascadia is also the name that contemporary urban planners give to the megaregion that sprawls from Eugene, Oregon, to Vancouver, British Columbia. I wanted to construct the map as a perceptual field stretching between these two imaginary figures, the megaregion and the bioregion. In the middle there would be a third outline: the scientifically established boundaries of the Columbia River watershed, which extends north into British Columbia and serves as an administrative framework for the region's hydroelectric dams. This more neutral frame could be applied not only to state administration, but also to the activism of civil-society groups like Columbia Riverkeeper, with whom we directly collaborated. The thing is, there's nothing neutral about the political debates that have arisen in the Columbia watershed. Most of those struggles stretch way back to colonization, whose long shadow still hangs over the future.

For settler capital, the river is a watery highway permitting the transport of wheat, fertilizer, and coal. Its last two hundred kilometers are deepwater ports where fossil fuels can be shipped off to Asia. Its very current is not water, but electricity. Meanwhile, the dams that make the river navigable literally drown and silence many of the cascades and waterfalls on which Native American life formerly depended. Through their deadly effects on charismatic regional species, especially the Pacific Salmon, the dams bring home the consequences of industrial modernization during the twentieth century. Knowledge like that can lead to action. Ecological concerns, with all their historical underpinnings, are live political issues in Cascadia.

A

B

Map of the Cascadia bioregion
Map of the Columbia watershed

Both maps from:
Learning from Cascadia
cascadia.ecotopia.today



Here's a discovery I made: both the Mississippi and Columbia watersheds became part of the technological and organizational complex of the wartime state, by way of parallel “engineer districts,” Oak Ridge and Hanford. Located in remote areas near ample supplies of cooling water and electricity, both sites were used for the production and enrichment of weapons-grade nuclear materials during the Second World War, and then onward through the Cold War. What's more, in both regions massive aluminum smelters were installed to take advantage of the cheap power provided by the dams. Late twentieth-century economic development came at that price, and the thing I never realized before was that it came straight out of the rivers. It's sobering to realize that the “clean energy” of hydroelectricity was one of the crucial technological factors behind what's now called the Great Acceleration of the 1950s. That explosion of capitalist economic growth now threatens the existence of all species.

The Hanford site, in particular, has been a focus of tenacious citizen and tribal activism aiming to insure that costly remediation programs are not simply abandoned in favor of cheaper stopgap measures. This is a tragic struggle waged on the terrain of a lavish technocracy, the multibazillion-a-year nuclear cleanup gang. It takes long-term courage to embrace such a difficult cause within such an ambiguous context, but people do it and they sometimes win.

In any case it's not invisible radiation, but the vanishing salmon runs that have been the greatest spur to action. Attempts to save the fish and their ecosystems have led to complex collaborations between native tribes, traditional conservationists, and modern-day ecologists seeking the restoration of species diversity in riverine environments. The tribes have often taken leadership of the process, using their limited but real sovereignty to bring new issues to the negotiating tables. All this has led to original forms of political representation and governmental action, including the transformation of an old bioregional dream, the watershed council, into an official institution of the state of Oregon. The lesson is clear: only large-scale social movements, underwritten by the circulation of shareable cultural traits and empowered by new forms of ecological expertise, can gain the capacity to challenge the fossil institutions of industrial modernism. As the map/archive shows, such movements breathe political life into the abstract contrast between megaregional and bioregional patterns of development.

Learning from Cascadia demonstrates the scope and intensity of a contemporary bioregional politics. It uses interviews and artistic collaborations to flesh out the ecological restoration and stewardship practices that lie at the heart of the bioregional imaginary. Yet something vital was still missing from our mapping project: the capacity to directly involve social subjects with the world-making potentials of political ecology. Mack McFarland and I decided that was the next thing to be learned. An inkling of how it could be done—and an approach to the still-unfolding work of *Mississippi: An Anthropocene River*—is provided by the last project that I'll discuss at length, which is again a collaboration with Alejandro Meitin.

Take it to the Islands

Like the Mississippi and the Columbia, the Paraná River is conceived by the corporate state as a watery highway, a *hidrovía*, to be dredged, dammed, and managed for the needs of barges and deep-sea freighters carrying national commodities to the world market. Unlike the Mississippi, however, the Paraná has not been walled up with levees for the needs of floodplain agriculture. Instead it retains a natural delta about 300 kilometers long and up to 60 kilometers wide, consisting of braided river channels and densely vegetated islands—an emerald ecoregion, visible as such from the air. Anyone familiar with the stark divides between water and land imposed by the Mississippi levees, or with the emaciated, sediment-starved delta areas around New Orleans, cannot help but gasp with wonder at this grandiose world of wood, mud, and water, which is also home to very particular forms of human existence.

After the dispossession of the area from its original inhabitants, the Paraná Delta became a refuge for impoverished settlers without land or employment, known as *isleños*. They built wooden houses on stilts that could survive the floods, and developed simple economic practices in tune with the surrounding environment. Yet the Pampa Húmeda through which the river flows is one of the most productive agricultural regions on earth, and local environmentalists have clearly identified the risk of massive land-use change, which they call “continentalization.” To guard against it—and to gather forces for long-term struggles against the damming and draining

of the great Pantanal wetlands at the headwaters of the river—Latin American activists have been experimenting with new forms of mobilization, including the kind of territorial artistic activism that Alejandro Meitin is now developing at Casa Río, a small house located on the edge of the Río del Plata estuary that connects the Paraná to the open ocean.

In mid-2018, Alejandro, myself, and the artist Graciela Carnevale—internationally known for her participation in the '68-era activist project *Tucumán Arde*—began preparing a unique kind of exhibition project, to be staged in a three long, brick-lined tunnels that formerly served as warehouses in the grain-exporting city of Rosário, located along the banks of the Paraná. The show combined the works of *The Earth Will Not Abide*, where the collaboration between Alejandro and I had begun, with a selection of artifacts and documents from earlier ecological art experiments in the region. At its heart, however, was a more unusual program, which prefigures the Anthropocene River project which was just getting started at that time.

What the organizers did in Argentina did—on a somewhat smaller scale than the Anthropocene River project, but with the extraordinary degree of social cooperation that prevails among the country's grassroots organizations—was to put together five groups, each including inhabitants, environmentalists, and artists, to carry out five exploratory campaigns at different sites in the islands and along the estuary. After that, each group set about producing an artistic representation of their experience, which was sometimes expressed by the professional artists, or in other cases turned into a social experiment among various kinds of people.

Maps
mississippi.rivertoday.org
mapa.casarioarteyambiente.org
cascadia.ecotopia.today
ecotopia.today/livingrivers/map.html
environmentalobservatory.net/Petropolis/map.html

Websites
deeptimechicago.org
anthropocene-curriculum.org
casarioarteyambiente.org
regionalrelationships.org/tewna
midwestcompass.org
ecotopia.today

The resulting works were installed in the central tunnel of the old warehouse complex where they became the stage-set for a two-day conversation bringing together around forty significant figures from the delta conservation community, including inhabitants, environmentalists, NGO activists, experts from both government and civil society, and artists who had participated in one of the five campaigns. Much of the conversation revolved around current problems facing the delta, as well as future actions to address them. In this way the whole thing became a kind of community milestone within a far larger cultural and political process, which neither began nor ended with the show.

My own role at Casa Río was to curate the Spanish-language version of *The Earth Will Not Abide*, which was made in hopes of sparking exactly this kind of collaboration. But in addition to that, during the preceding year I had discovered the work of a Seattle-based group called Mapseed, which is developing some exceptionally useful collaborative software for ecological and social issues. Their stuff, which is open source and can handle almost any kind of complex cartographic data, turned out to be modeled on a project entitled *¿Qué Pasa Riachuelo?*, made in the early 2010s for citizen oversight of a river-cleanup process on the edge of Buenos Aires. In fact, the authors of that map, from a group called M7red, were participating in our project! The Mapseed team generously agreed to work with us on a shoestring budget, and we developed something like a multimedia geo-blog focusing on the five campaign sites, but open to unstructured community input. The theme was “collaborative territories” (*Territorios de colaboración*). Obviously there was one big question: Would anybody use it? But once again, the willingness to collaborate and contribute was impressive. One day I opened the map and saw that a wetlands enthusiast from the Rosário area had gone out to the islands in a small boat to film a bulldozer engaged in the illegal drainage of public property for private agricultural use—an elemental expression of the process of “continentalization” decried by the environmentalists.

Now it all seemed to be coming together: coalitions of diverse groups, multiple intersecting forms of knowledge, avenues for grassroots participation. This was the kind of cartography that Felix Guattari used to theorize: not just a tactical media machine, but an emergent social form at grips with matters of political ecology.

Back to the Big Muddy

“Where you at?” the bioregionalists used to ask. They wanted to know where your water comes from and where your garbage goes, what soil series you're standing on, which wildflower blooms first in your area. Today we again want to know those kinds of things, which have become the artistic and cultural preoccupations of a generation. But the concept of the Anthropocene asks about the irrevocable fusion of nature and humanity, and about the consequences it brings. “Where you at?” still involves knowing the names of local plants, but they're also industrial plants, such as factories, refineries, sewage-treatment facilities, etc. For US citizens conscious of the damage our corporate and military state is currently doing to the rest of the world, there is an urgent need to understand the patterns of so-called development here at home. An “interbasin collaboration” with watersheds in Europe could also help, because most of those American patterns emerged through the long history of European colonization. White supremacy, or the refusal to recognize and co-inhabit with the other, is a shared cultural trait whose dissolution is the key to any viable future.

So finally I'll bring in the first person plural.

Mississippi: An Anthropocene River is a continental-scale project organized by the Haus der Kulturen der Welt and the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, which have both become thoroughly entangled in collaboration with a multitude of artists, researchers, institutions and grassroots groups in the United States. The project includes five separate “field stations” scattered along the length of the river, plus a canoe voyage that links them all, closing with an Anthropocene Campus event called *The Human Delta* in New Orleans. The idea is to constitute an experiment in collective perception that reaches the scale of earth system phenomena, not only through abstract concepts and totalizing representations, but also through embodied experiences that resonate between localities. We're doing all this right now in the flesh. For all the groups involved—including Deep Time Chicago, which has been in it from the very start—this project marks a summation of previous efforts, and the opening up of a new, more widely shareable territory.

Like the previous endeavors, this one includes a map, designed along the collaborative lines first developed with Casa Río. Yet, like the preceding ones, the Mississippi project is not just a map but an emergent social form. We take the Big Muddy both as a geographical frame for artistic proposals and as a determinate object of scientific examination and cultural critique. Yet we all know that such an “object” cannot be held at arm's length, because even more so than artworks, the river has always already gotten under our skins. This is a political ecology where the observing subject is part of the observed. As in every deep collaboration, the roles are inherently unclear, and the actors gradually transform both themselves and what seemed to be their context. In truth, that context, or “environment,” is a tangled skein of agents of all kinds—mineral, vegetal, animal—co-evolving under precarious conditions, radically exposed to each other. “We” might be a much larger entity than any particular artistic, scientific or literary collaboration.

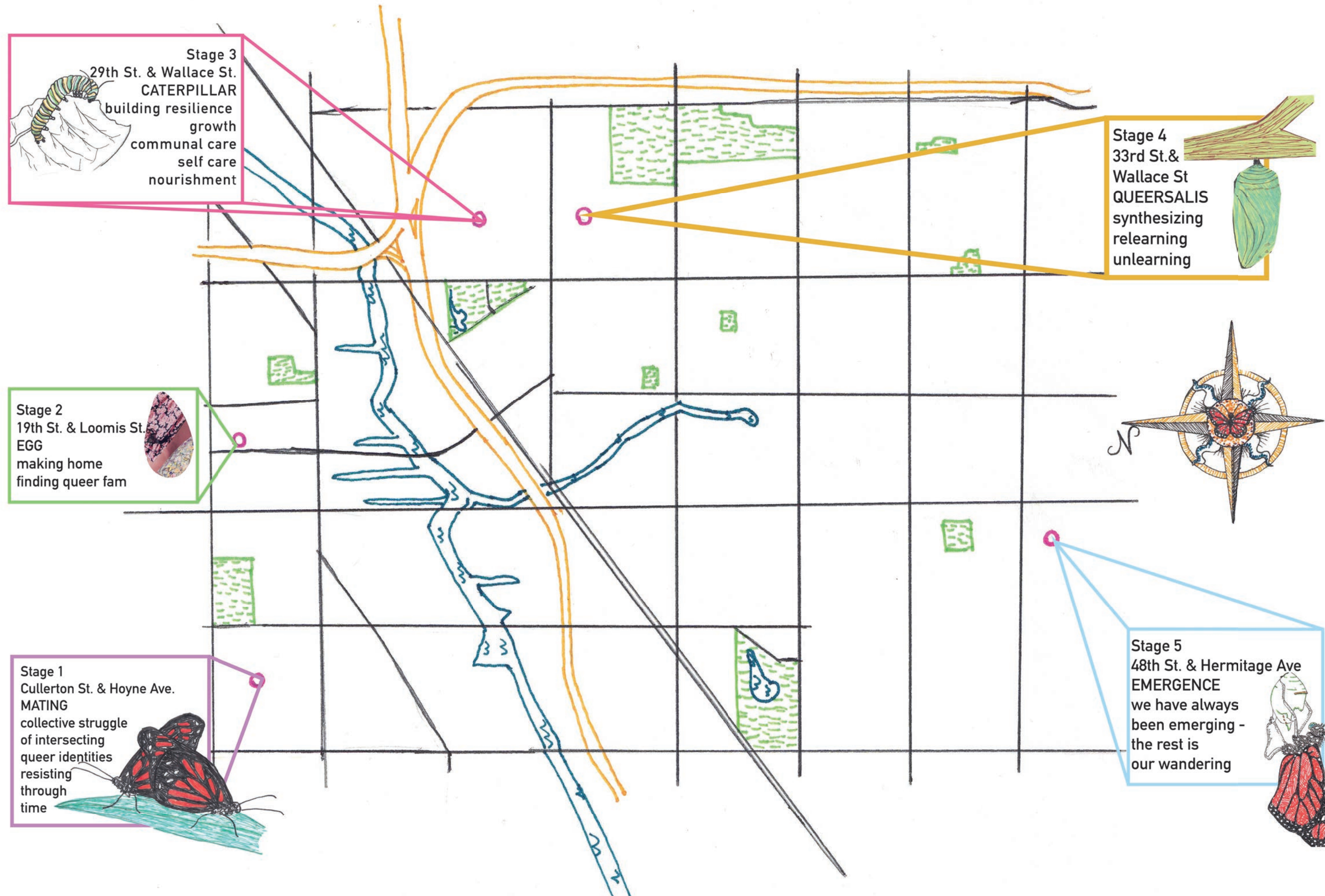
Murky waters are living ones. The evolving cartographies presented in this text are an invitation to get involved, as if you weren't already. “Put it on the map” seems like such a simple action, without any knock-on effects. But the watershed in your head doesn't just stay there.

So let's change the map, very respectfully, very precisely and very soon, before everyone loses the territory.

Brian Holmes is a member of the art and research collective Deep Time Chicago, a partner of the “Togetherism” programming season organized by Public Media Institute in fall 2019. On September 15, Deep Time and Rachel Havrelock (founder of the Freshwater Lab at the University of Illinois-Chicago) led a tour and discussion of the human transformations along the Chicago River over the boat taxi ride between downtown Chicago and Ping Tom Park, in Chinatown. PMI also brought Chicagoans to Southern IL for Deep Time's *Confluence Ecologies*.



Mapping



Metamorphosis

mapping metamorphosis, Marimacha Monarca Press Xicágo, 2019, illustrated collage

Illustration inspired by an oral hxstory with our collective about our beginnings and trajectories in creating, sustaining, and honoring our QTPOC creative spaces.



Postcommodity On Collaboration

Postcommodity is an interdisciplinary indigenuous art collective known for installations that probe contentious geographies where systems of power destabilize communities.

Postcommodity, currently comprised of members Cristóbal Martínez and Kade L. Twist, was formed in the American Southwest. Their projects have engaged in indigenous relations to land and histories of brown and Black labor in the United States, while referencing global migration and habitation across temporal and geographic scales. Postcommodity seeks to create metaphors that mediate complexity without resorting to oversimplifying logics, and to promote constructive discourses through indigenous forms of knowledge production.

Postcommodity gained international attention with their land installation *Repellent Fence* (2015), located on the US-Mexico border between Douglas, AZ and Agua Prieta, Sonora. The collective has since become a strong voice of colonial critique in the global art community, working with cultures and economies of migration and histories of colonized labor in their installations at the 2017 Whitney Biennial, *documenta14*, and the Carnegie International in 2018.

At the end of a conversation in July 2019, Postcommodity gave *Lumpen Magazine's* Marina and Graham two powerful answers on the nature of their collaboration.

Marina Resende Santos and
Graham Livingston (LPN)

How do you work together, and how do you see collaborative work in the arts?

Kade L. Twist (KLT)

Our inbox is our studio. We talk a lot on the phone. We know when not to talk, and when to give each other space. I definitely do violate that more than Cristóbal, because I get itchy about stuff. But to me, it comes down to this: there is an idea that you have, you throw it there, and if it stays on the table long enough, it will be devoured and remade through the collaboration process. And if you're not up for that, then don't collaborate. But if you're up for it, you see that maybe you threw half of an idea up there, or three quarters of it, or a quarter of it, and you can track the DNA of that idea, and just see it become something so much more beautiful. The work becomes a much stronger vessel to contain and carry an idea. To see that happen is one of the best

Interview by Marina Resende Santos and Graham Livingston

human experiences, because you can see the ingenuity of humanity. You know it exists; you know, at least on a small sample size, that you can realize the greatest strengths we have as humans through art collaboration.

Cristóbal Martínez (CM)

Kade and I have always understood that collaboration requires us to be amenable to the transformation of the self. I am fully amenable, as Kade's collaborator, to emerging as a person under the influence of our conversations and work together. And it's the other way around as well. Acts of reciprocity are so important to our collaboration. It's not a hierarchical structure, in that way, but together we are constantly in pursuit of some form of consensus. I often view consensus as a sort of loosely embodied idea, that exists not in my mind and not in his, but as an organism that flows through us. Lastly, our collaborative outcomes become something much bigger than us, as they become part of people's lives, anyone who wishes to engage our work.

So: to self-implicate, to make oneself vulnerable—these are hard things to do, but they're something that we're fully committed to. And after having done it for so long and then, you know, you try to go to your studio and you make a work of art as a solo artist? It's really not that interesting.

It's just flat, things just fall flat, and it's lonely.

And that goes back to how we were raised, and where we come from—which is to be part of a community.

LPN So that influenced how you collaborate?

CM I think so, for sure. Where I'm from, in Northern New Mexico, we have to share water. In a high desert, where water is limited, people learn to help each other out. In my grandfather's time, the whole pueblo would schedule out what days to work each others' fields, to get all the work done so that all the food could get divided out as equitably as possible. So everybody had what they needed for the winter. And that's a very different worldview, a very different way of thinking than the kinds of capitalism and forms of individualism that we experience today. Looping back around, I think that collaboration is in my blood—and the same for Kade.

In *Postcommodity*, we aspire not to base our individuality on competition. In other

words, in *Postcommodity* my individuality emerges based on how I behave in the collaborative situation. For me and Kade, beauty is called when we are productive via consensus, teaching, learning, and sharing. It's not about my authorship, or me as a person, it's about how do I come to know myself based on my capacity for being a generative person. And how do I come to be critical about the world based upon my capacity to be critical of myself. So that is what we do for one another—we hold each other accountable, which is difficult work for the both of us.



With Each Incentive (2019). Concrete, cinder block, and steel rebar. Installation on the Bluhm Family Terrace at the Art Institute of Chicago. Photo courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Interview with Related Tactics

Interview
by
Marina
Resende
Santos

Related Tactics is an artist collective working with issues of race and cultural production through artworks, curatorial projects, and platforms for public participation. Related Tactics members Weston Teruya, Michele Carlson, and Nathan Watson have each their own busy combination of individual practice, curatorial work, and teaching careers. The group was formed in the Bay Area, where they have realized most of their projects; in 2019, Michele Carlson relocated to Washington, DC, stretching the collaboration eastwards.

In a written exchange with *Lumpen Magazine*, Related Tactics chose to pitch in individually to answer—and used today's tools of collaborative editing (that is, a Google doc) to create a conversation between themselves. Not so different from how they work on their own art projects these days, as they reveal in the Q&A below.

In the original document, each artist used a different color to reply: Weston wrote in pink, while Michele used green and Nathan used orange.

This publication features cards from *No Matter the Intentions: On Equity in the Arts*, presented at the Adobe Books Backroom Gallery in San Francisco (2017). The exhibition displayed posters with statements interrogating strategies of inclusivity in art and cultural production, leaving space for visitors to add on to the conversation.

Marina Resende Santos (MRS)
What is collective action to you?

Weston Teruya (WT)

For me, collective action is a lot about the dialogues and relationship building before (and after) the action; the stuff that is far less visible or sexy. It's a negotiation of shared values and agreeing on tactics. It's also about histories: how do we understand these actions in relation to our ancestors and communities who have done this work before us?

Michele Carlson (MC)

I totally agree with Weston and would add that it's hard to read this question and not read 'action' from a capitalist position. Today, action often implies production or some sort of tangible and legible outcome and/or impact. Admittedly this might be a byproduct of my day job as an Executive Director and Professor but also as someone who has significant engagement with arts funding in many different capacities. I appreciate that Weston has started us off by prioritizing the immeasurable parts of collective action. Our "output" or projects only exist because of hours upon hours of trust that has been built over 15 years.

**You have trust to build.
No matter your intentions.**

**Hire people of color
into your staff/organization
and not just in
education, community
engagement departments,
or culturally specific areas
within the institution.**

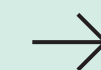
**Long term decision-making is power
and it matters. If you do not have
people of color on staff, serving on
your board, and in leadership
positions, your organization is not
diverse, inclusive, nor equitable.**

**It does not matter how many artists
of color you show or what signs you
hang in your window.**

**We all struggle for funding.
But the programs and the
funding you pursue that expand
out into surrounding
neighborhoods in "placemaking"
efforts can overshadow and
push out resources that
those neighbors need for
their own cultural work.**

**Is your funding the very form of
gentrification you resist?**

Related Tactics (Weston Teruya,
Michele Carlson, and Nathan Watson)



We work very hard together to support our differences, communicate with care, and position an earned trust at the center of all dialog. Yes, this isn't sexy, but it is what keeps us a unit and allows us to then do the continued hard work on the ground and in community.

Nathan Wilson (NW)

My feelings are very similar in really appreciating the dialogues and less visible things as well as the production component and the years of relationship building as being critical to defining collective action. I might also add a very simplistic read on the question by defining the work that we do together as a catalyst for identifying critical issues, creating impactful moments, and producing an output that has an effect beyond our immediate relationships with each other or even the artworld in which we all participate. By considering how ideas are consumed and by pulling other artists, artist groups, and the greater community into a shared and communal action, we are by definition working collectively.

MRS What is your process? How do you work together on a project?

WT Text messages and Google docs! We're still in the process of figuring out all of those details. It's taken a few projects to hash out what feels right for us. At first, we thought this might be a collective platform and something that could host individual projects, but I think increasingly this has become something that is driven by consensus. We throw out ideas and then have to go back and forth to reject them or hone them into something that feels right for all of us and isn't necessarily something that one of us would do on our own.

MC Yes, we definitely text a lot, a lot, a lot. I would say 80% of our projects get done via text messaging and then try to get in "the room" together as much as possible which most of the time means a video chat. We're all super busy and now I live on the East Coast so standing meetings and in-person studio sessions don't always work for us. But we also try not to be so hard on ourselves and manage our expectations about how we think we ought to be working in order to try to embrace a workflow that allows us to get stuff done even if it sounds wild to other folks.

Our work is often project-driven, so an opportunity will cross our path and we'll chat about the fit—sometimes an idea comes from this, or someone will have a concept that eventually finds a home. Because Related Tactics is a way we work that is in addition

to our own artist, writer, curator, director, teacher, funder hats we don't really maintain an ongoing studio practice for the collective.

Our labor is divided by capacity and expertise. While we have many overlaps, there are particular skills and histories of experience, knowledge, and network we all bring to the table. For example, Nate is a glass artist by training and an accomplished builder with over a decade's worth of professional, museum-level installation and handling experience. There's no way I'm being left to install our projects if he's around, but if he is unable to for any particular reason, Weston and I are there to contribute. This resourceful and supportive sharing of knowledge, skill, and capacity is exactly what makes collective work appealing.

MRS *No Matter the Intentions* (2017), the project we are excerpting in the publication, is a particularly dense situation of collaboration. Besides being a project of your group, it collects material from conversations with people of color in the art industry, then asks for visitors' feedback to be added on to the wall. How did you make *No Matter the Intentions* together?

MC *No Matter the Intentions* literally developed from a personal text thread between Weston and I expressing frustration over an abundance of professional grievances centered around concepts of equity in the art world. We sort of realized as we were texting that maybe we should be writing these down formally. We transitioned immediately to a Google doc and a few texts quickly became 30 bullet points. Part way down the page we realized this could be a Related Tactics project and brought Nate in. We all furiously added and revised points together in the doc.

MRS Why work together?

WT Our individual practices are linked to some of the same issues we explore as a collective, but they're also very invested in questions of material and formal practice, poetics, our particular research threads, and varying degrees of abstraction. As a collective, I think we work very hard to strip away all of those things to be as direct in our intentions as possible. A question we come back to often is, "what can we say as a group that we can't always say as individuals?"

Each of us also wear so many hats in the broader arts community—as educators, administrators, writers, cultural organizers, advisors, planners, etc.—and it can be very

challenging to narrate our practices ("So what do you do?"). But as a collective, some of that falls away and having a fully legible artmaking practice doesn't matter quite as much. Those experiences are part of what we bring to the table to help inform what we say and who we can invite into dialogue with our work.

MC Weston brings up a good point in that our work as a collective isn't about creating a more closed system but creating enough capacity in order to think and act expansively and so we may be nimble enough to respond in time if we choose. Our first project together *Declarations for the New Year* (2016), at Southern Exposure in San Francisco, CA, we included over 50 artists and cultural producers of color to offer brief text-based declarations that were printed on posters, buttons, maps, and postcards that audience members could take home. We gathered this list, invited participants, and had an almost entirely full roster in almost two weeks. This sort of project wouldn't have happened without the community and capacity of the three of us working together.

WT It's funny to think about capacity in terms of output as a collective, because there are ways it can be much harder to produce because we're busy people trying to come to a loose consensus on things—which takes a lot of time. But that's where Michele's response to the first question matters so much: I've often fallen into the trap of saying that we actually have less capacity, but that's only if you view it through that capitalist, art world perspective on exhibition output as the only measure of action.

NW I think that working in a group or collective is the very definition of compromise and therefore begs the question, what is the absolute most necessary and important thing that must be said or done. In my own practice I'm asking these questions constantly, but I'm limited by my own perspective, my own history, my own position, experiences, biases, race, gender, and body. Michele and Weston help me get over and beyond myself and into a space of both confidence and risk taking because more questions have been asked before the work ever gets out.

MRS How does collective work relate to your mission? How do you see the critical or radical potential of collective work in the arts?

MC The work of white supremacy is suppor-

ted by a neoliberal radical individualism that is rampant, particularly in academia, art schools and departments, and the art world itself, which often manifests as the lone (white, male) artist genius myth still at the core of art-making and professionalism. Given today's socio-political climate and the undeniable gutting of and attack on the arts on a national level, but also the history of disenfranchised peoples, it's foundational that the more we act together the more impact we have. If we consider the art world a microcosm of the world-at-large, not something separate or distinct because it's not, then it is equally as urgent we work together, share knowledge, and pool resources. This, by no means, is to suggest every artist needs to form an official collective or that individualism is harmful, but seeing other artists as part of an ecosystem that will be sustained and strengthened by us all, not just through the lens of unhealthy competition and division.

WT I just had the opportunity to help bring together a discussion between artist collectives in Vietnam, especially Saigon. One of the points we bounced around was that in many ways artist collectives are the neoliberal art world version of the US government shunting social services to non-profits rather than sustain those resources themselves. Sometimes it feels like the art world fetishizes collectives because it believes we can help absolve some kind of responsibility to community while still commodifying artistic labor and shifting the championing of genius from individuals to small groups.

MRS Besides the collective, each of you has your own individual practice as curators and artists. How has your collaboration affected your individual work?

MC The collective offers me a creative and community outlet for work that is more politically legible and straightforward. I often articulate the difference between the work I do with Related Tactics and my own studio practice are giving myself room to speak about the now but also to imagine a new future. It is one of the things that is so important about art and artists. While there is a sudden shift for art work to take on social and political work, I don't believe our job is to always to protest, speak out, or find solutions, or that it needs to manifest in expected or even legible ways. Sometimes it is just as urgent to imagine a new future or to create a space where to do this. Related Tactics allows for me to do both.

MRS You describe yourselves as a platform for both collaborative projects and individual work. So how do you see authorship in your work?

MC We approach authorship collectively, meaning if it's a Related Tactics project then Related Tactics is the voice behind it. While one person might bring an idea to the table, this or that, there are few projects that don't require at least two people working substantially together. This contribution, therefore authorship, is measured as a whole and it takes significant care and trust to keep this calibrated. No one's authorship is prioritized but that doesn't mean this just happens because we say so. Working with people is hard and there's no need to romanticize it. We try to never assume and always seek collective buy-in or permission. We let each other say no and voice concern. We do the one-on-one work required to maintain this relationship. We all know that Related Tactics projects wouldn't and couldn't occur without us all, so authority is not really a point of view that we humor—aside from the fact I jokingly say I'm the boss often and Nate and Weston laugh.

MRS For the artist Bertha Husband, who often worked with her collaborator Michael Piazza, a "third hand" acts when artists collaborate, making something neither could have made independently. Others have talked about an organism that exists between the individuals, and about the group as a larger entity that transcends, or cannot be described as just its members.

Ideas and projects are also no one's original vision, but rather get reworked, often in ways difficult to describe, to become something that is proper of the group's combined creativity.

How would you describe agency in your collaboration? What is the group, with relation to the individuals and expertise involved?

MC I think Nate, Weston, and I are a bit too practical for this framing, though I appreciate the sentiment. We're proud of the work we do together but like our name, we think about this production as strategic and tactical. As mentioned before, working together enables a particular mode of production and positioning—yes, agency—that working individually doesn't. Or perhaps it's better to say it does so differently. I think we all also acknowledge

that this work can be exhausting, trying, and takes a really different kind of acting than when you work alone. The core of collectivity is cooperation, and because we believe the outcome of this cooperation is productive right now, we are willing to do this work to achieve it.

When we formed Related Tactics, many other collectives grounded in disenfranchised histories or underrepresented communities had developed. Many of those collectives no longer exist. Like the ideas and work itself, collectives require a lot of maintenance and rethinking. They are living, breathing entities that are in constant draft stage. Not everyone can make work under these conditions, especially over time. We don't talk about Related Tactics in forever terms, but in immediate ones—after all, it is the practice that allows to respond now.

MRS How did you answer these questions?

MC Weston was the point person for this interview, so he set up a Google doc with the questions. Right now, I'm in Pittsburgh, where it's almost 10AM EST— Weston is in Vietnam where it is 9PM the next day, and Nate is in San Francisco, 7AM PST. I'm responding with my portion and narrating those responses via the Related Tactics text-thread as Weston responds with pictures of his sightseeing in Da Nang and poor Nate is probably still trying to sleep. This is basically how all Related Tactics projects get done.

WT With every project there's a bit of herding that goes on behind the scenes to get us all to the finish line!

We definitely text a lot, a lot, a lot.



Screen Breach

Videokaffe is an international artist collective that explores concepts of the tangible and intangible by linking kinetic sculptural installations between remote locations. We explore the intersection of handcraft and modern technology through exhibitions, art residencies, public projects and our signature Screen Breach protocols that connect artists' ateliers worldwide.

The term Videokaffe was coined by founder Sebastian Ziegler. The name refers to Tanzkaffee—spaces that sprung up in post-WWII Germany where groups of young people came together spontaneously in the daytime or early evening for coffee, cake, and milkshakes, and to dance together. Early on, many of the artists working in the collective primarily used video. Ziegler is based in Turku, the former capital of Finland, which has a big Swedish-speaking community. In Turku, when bus drivers are between shifts, the message on the bus reads “kaffepaussi,” more poetic way of saying “out of service”—ergo, Videokaffe.

The Screen Breach technology connects Videokaffe member studios and allows us to collaborate across distances and time zones. Videokaffe developed this tool to help collapse the physical and temporal distance between disparate locations, and to establish new protocols for how artists and designers work together. Screen Breach is a networked studio system using web cameras and projectors to broadcast audiovisual signals from the studio of one Videokaffe member to another. In this fashion, Sebastian in Turku appears to be clambering on a chair on Mark's wall in Stamford, Connecticut, while both are observed by an audience in Japan. Light dependent resistors (LDR) placed in the projection area enable an artist in Turku to trigger an event in Chicago by changing the value of the pixel brightness where it intersects with the sensor.

For example, when a device in Turku crosses the area occupied by the sensor in Chicago, a servo motor in Chicago is activated, moving a mechanism which in turn affects something in Stamford, and so on. In this fashion, it is possible to connect spaces to develop and maintain working relationships, feedback, critique sessions, meetings, and performative happenings.

The idea grew from a project in 2013 at Titanik Gallery in Turku. Videokaffe invited other artists to work together using a studio

workshop installed in the gallery. The presence of a workshop in the exhibition space encouraged everyone to focus on process, experimentation, and sharing skills to make art together, not just showing a finished work and going home after the opening. Videokaffe also placed an advertisement in the local paper asking people to come to the gallery to collaborate on producing work for the exhibition. This spirit of generosity had a profound and lasting effect. The artists who participated in the exhibition wanted to develop a way to keep the collaborative spirit growing.

This idea grew further during a multisite Videokaffe allegory project in 2014, called “Transatlantic Dialogue,” happening between Wassaic, New York, United States, and Turku, Finland. Videokaffe members built two autonomous sculptures at the Saari residence in Finland, one from steel and the other from wood, representing two brothers. The wooden sculpture took on the form of a bird and was brought to New York, whilst the metal sculpture took on the form of a fire pit and tower with a large bellow attached at the top. It stayed in Finland. The storyline was that one brother flew from Finland to the US in the form of a bird, and the other brother stayed behind because he was made of steel and could not fly. We communicated with each other using visual tracking, so the actions of one brother would affect the movements of the other. When the bird flapped its wings, this movement was tracked and the signal activated the bellows of the metal brother to produce a plume of fire. A live video feed of the Finnish brother was projected on the wall behind the bird in New York, and vice-versa in Finland, so that the audience on both sides could witness the communication live. The goal was to have sculptures visually and autonomously communicating with each other across the Atlantic.

Exploring video conferencing software became necessary as a means to keep the group together. Rather than being tied to the computer screen and keyboard, with the Screen Breach model, Videokaffe members can communicate through non-verbal, non-textual forms, using images, painting, drawing, sculpture, and performance to interact and develop new ways of thinking and making.

Through a Screen Breach, we explore the nexus of physical craft and digital technology: the tangible and intangible. The craft

The craft of connecting is not quite as simple as it sounds.

of connecting is not quite as simple as this sounds. In fact, this is quite a clumsy way of communicating. Screen Breach is similar to a CB radio connection—you have to find a strong signal and learn not to get frustrated. Fluctuating internet signals, traffic, dropped packets, and lost connections are but one area of possible problems and stress. Time is another big challenge, as we work in real time across time zones and oceans: late afternoon in Chicago is midnight in Helsinki. We overcome these obstacles and really respect that everyone is in the conversation.

We must take in the stress and still find ways to make art. This shared experience builds strong bonds. The real magic is usually short-lived and difficult to achieve, but when it happens, we all feel it, and it keeps us going. When it works, we get glimpses of a future when we will work seamlessly with colleagues who will seem to be in the same room, but may in fact be halfway around the world.

We hope to develop working connections with artists from around the world, using our Screen Breach protocols to facilitate new dialogue and to share ideas and process. We will present our research at Art Teleported, a Brooklyn conference organized by CICA Museum (South Korea) early in 2020. Videokaffe has also been invited to produce a new installation for “Studio System,” a project the Torrance Museum of Art in Torrance, CA in the summer of 2020.

Artists interested in learning more about “Screen Breach” and participating in the system are invited to contact us via our website: <http://videokaffe.com>

The members of Videokaffe are Heini Aho (FIN); Mark Andreas (USA/GER); Stas Bags (RUS); Andrew Demirjian (USA); Jenny Mild (FIN); Olli Suorlahti (FIN); Jack Balance (FIN); Erno Pystynen (FIN); Thomas Westphal (GER/FIN); Sebastian Ziegler (GER/FIN/USA); and Tom Burtonwood (UK/USA).

Videokaffe members Tom Burtonwood, Sebastian Ziegler and Mark Andreas

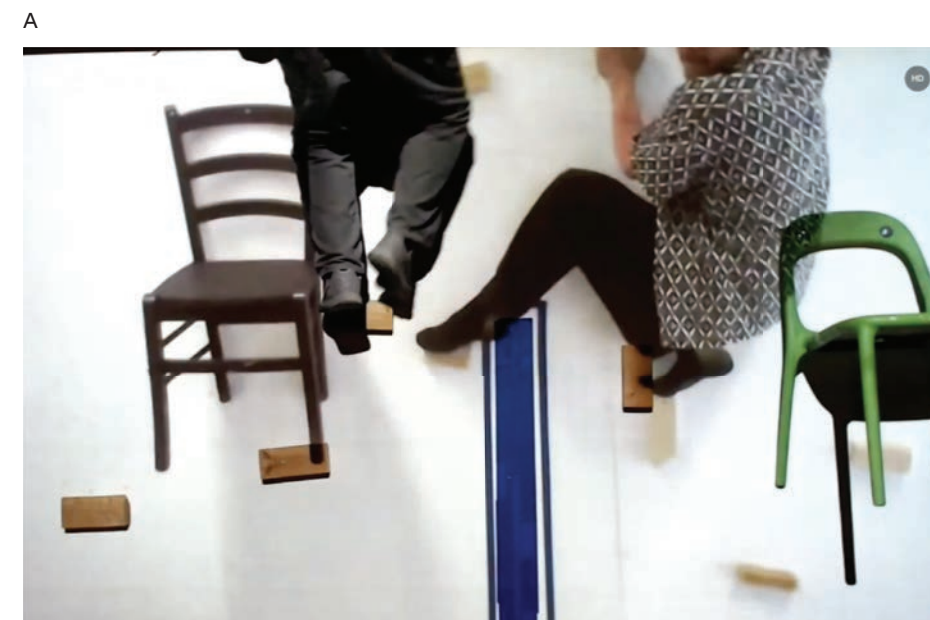
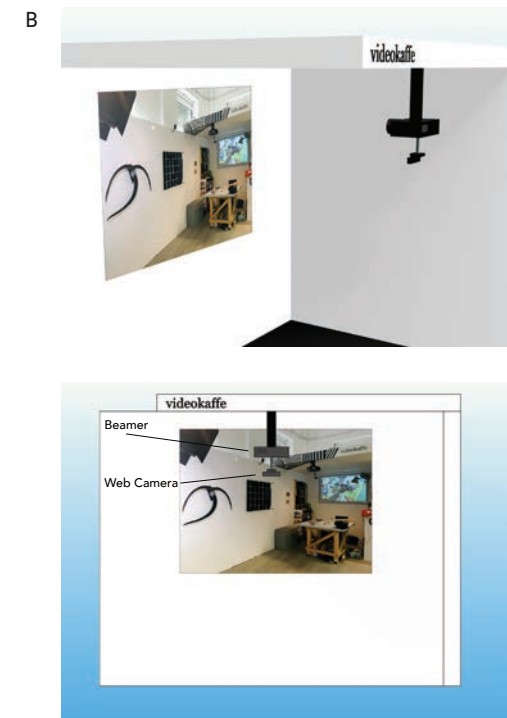
How “Screen Breach” works:

We use a combination of video chat software and Open Broadcasting Software (OBS), plus a custom Arduino setup designed by Videokaffe member Jack Balance. This Arduino rig has an LDR that controls the flow of current around the circuit. A series of relays turns the power on or off depending on the amount of light received by the LDR.

The typical Screen Breach set-up works by first using video chat software and aligning the camera and projector. Then the LDR sensors are placed on the wall within the throw of the beamer and connected to the Arduino rig, which in turn is connected to a servo motor or

other type of actuator. We log into the group chat and start working and interacting. When we reach a nice moment, we might screen record the audiovisual activity.

Sometimes, Videokaffe members will leave our Screen Breach open for extended periods of time, so that the ateliers are always connected and it is possible to just interact with people and get inspiration outside of the more formalized collaborative happenings. Working as a group, we don't need to understand how to do everything ourselves—we can fall back on each other for help and support.



A

Still from a Videokaffe “Screen Breach” between Sebastian Ziegler (Turku, Finland) and Mark (Stamford, CT), presented in Kobe, Japan, 2017. Photo by Sebastian Ziegler.

B

Videokaffe setup. Images courtesy of Videokaffe

C

Screen Breach between Helsinki, Turku and Brooklyn. Open Source Gallery in Brooklyn New York, 2018. Photo by Mark Andreas

Sleeping Near the Mound

Willy Smart

Where can we look for an example of ideal collective action? How about a termite mound? I can't say I am in a position to understand the turmoils of termite society, but at least I can point out that the architecture of termite society outlasts those human-made structures that are so regularly razed. And surely architecture says something about the shape of togetherness. Tens of millions of termite mounds, some upwards of 4000 years old, continue to be occupied in the scrubby *caatinga* forest of northeast Brazil. The authors of a paper on this ecosystem compare these termite constructions to a human feat of dubious collectivity: "Each mound is composed of approximately 50 cubic meters of soil that required the excavation of over 10 km³ of earth, equivalent to roughly 4000 great pyramids of Giza—making this the greatest known example of ecosystem engineering by a single insect species."¹ And here are the dual currents that fold into human fantasies of insect life: the termites are *engineers*, which is to say planners, designers, premeditators; but at the same time, that which they've planned is akin to the pyramids of Giza, which is to say something long ago completed by a perhaps barbaric and nonetheless vanished culture. The contradictory logic is not limited to insects, of course. This is the logic of settler colonialism whose memorializations and plaques are one arm of its project of displacement and disappropriation.

Yet there is some glimmer of collectivist possibility in the termite mound, isn't there? And on at least two levels: first, the termite is a kind of image of what I am not, and as such is a ready medium for far afield fantasies of togetherness; and second, the termite really does seem to live durably collectively. In other words, the termitary is a fantasy and the fantasy is also real. The light shuffles among these levels.

Though humans have imposed rankings on the roles different termites take on, from "worker" to "queen," entomologists are yet to find evidence of property deeds, debts, or dollars in any termitary. And may they never! How then to understand the shape of this society? If we follow Marx, the lack of a record of termite language is no problem—for we

should "set out not from what [termites] say, imagine, conceive, nor from [termites] as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at [termites] in the flesh. We set out from real, active [termites], and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process."²

What then do termites do? They build residences from a mixture of their excrement and soil or wood, which, judging by the apparent harmoniousness of their society, makes a much sounder structure than the extractive residences of humans. Happily though, I don't set out to understand anything, and therefore I'm free to examine fantasies, metaphors, and all the other forms of consciousness Marx made secondary. And happily, neither did Ursula K. Le Guin, who, in a 1974 short story offers fictional excerpts from the "Journal of the Association of Therolinguistics."³ (Thero, from the Greek *ther*, meaning "wild beast.") "No known dialect of Ant," notes a linguist in the story, "employs any verbal person except the third person singular and plural and the first person plural." That is, collectivity is baked into the language of the ants. That's not to say that ants are *limited* by their grammar. The theory of linguistic relativity that claims that a language determines what can be thought is dubious, ignoring as it does the generativities of fragmentary and poetic language. Noam Chomsky famously claimed there are no "6.2 word sentences." But of course there are, even within the limited scope of sentences produced by humans; and as Fred Moten notes, "to be interested in art is to be concerned with the constant and irruptive aspiration, beyond the possible and the impossible, of the 6.2-word sentence."⁴ Now replace "art" with "insects." Toward the end of Doris Lessing's novel *The Golden Notebook*, her protagonist, Anna, comes up against an impasse: "So I can't write any longer. Or only when I write fast, without looking back at what I have written. For if I look back, then the words swim and have no sense and I am conscious only of me, Anna, as a pulse in a great darkness, and the words that I, Anna, write down are nothing, or *like the secretions of a caterpillar that are forced out in*

ribbons to harden in the air."⁵ (456) I italicized that—if only my words too would harden like a caterpillar's secretions! That might be one beginning for imagining a collective language: the caterpillar's secretions, like the termite's, form the very material of their residences, the structures that they live in together. (And if the caterpillar's cocoon is not a cooperative housing complex at least it is a chamber for transformation.) It is a real mistake to nominate certain termites as workers and others as queens, but worst of all to call their mounds "colonies!"

Perhaps the question of what termites do is more complex than I've allowed for.⁶ Termites live collectively, yes; but do they act collectively? While termites do carry out discrete actions—building mounds, farming fungi, marking pheromone trails—it is the communal nature of termite society that animates human fantasies of an insect good life. That is, the collectivity of termite society is a matter of living rather than acting. Clearly termites don't "work." No such thing as labor in the termitary. But perhaps as well, and more fundamentally, there's no such thing as action either in the termitary. Termite grammar is not one of doing but living. Termite pleasure too then is taken not in what one does but in the shape of one's life. In his often reprinted manifesto, Bob Black called for the abolition of work as a corollary of the abolition of the state.⁷ Wonderful. And we might then push further with the example of the termitary toward an abolition of doing.

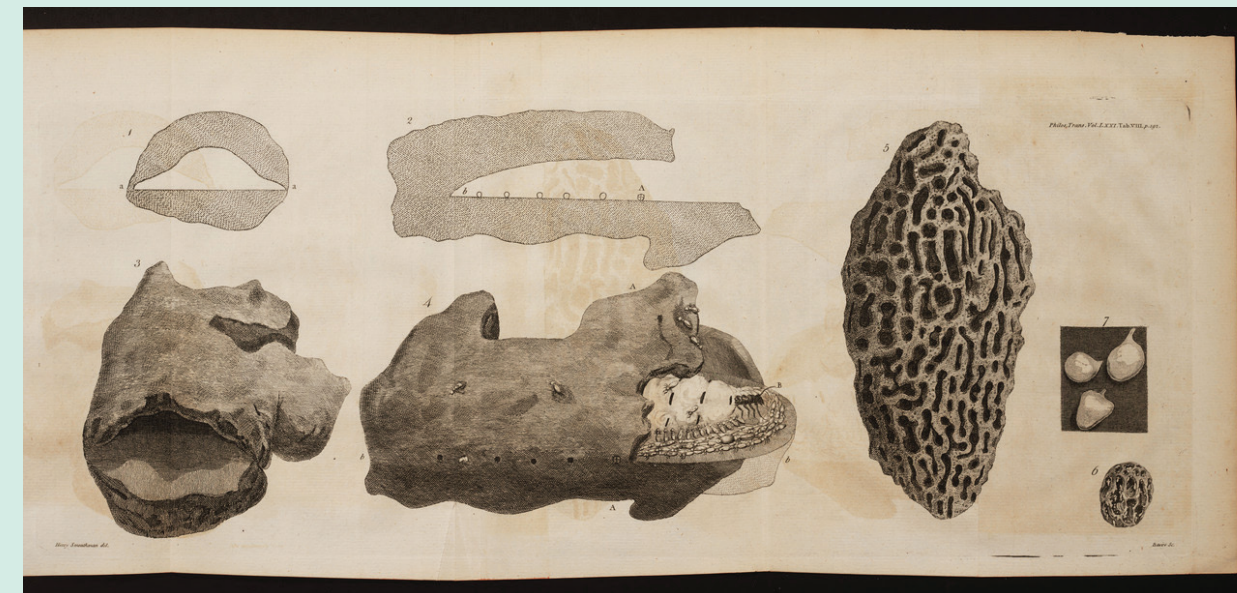
So the termite apparently lives happily, collectively. Yet, "it does not seem as though any influence could induce a man to change his nature into a termite's," writes Sigmund Freud. "No doubt he will always defend his claim to individual liberty against the will of the group."⁸ The *will of the group*: isolated, this sounds like the dark side of collectivity, like "groupthink." But the example is offered as an exception to the human rule of social discontent. Here again is the double pull in the fantasy of the insect: on one side, the insect is imagined as a civilization without discontents; and on the other, as a class of unthinking primitives. Freud's comment glides with a kind of obviousness: of course we would be happier

living as do termites, but ah, if only. What is it that we imagine we have that keeps us from the contented collectivity of social insects? It is of course our mythical intelligence.

According to Henri Bergson, the human philosopher of duration and intuition, the insect realm is governed by instinct, and in turn the human realm by intelligence.⁹ This is a recurrent delineation—of the kingdoms of instinct and of intelligence—especially in late 19th and early 20th century attempts to understand insect life. That a fixation on automatism crops up then isn't a major surprise but I'm not after historical determinations here. Intelligence, the other of instinct, is for Bergson the affordance of choice: the ability to fashion new tools, to use old tools in new ways. In instinct on the other hand, there is no possible variance: the insect's body is its tool, and this tool's function is perfect and fixed. Bergson's insect then is a being in closer contact with its environment than we intelligent and adaptable (and hence abstract) humans ever are. This is the rationalization then: we are too intelligent to be termites! And so, to what realm does collective action belong? Not intelligence.

The point isn't that intelligence is overrated (of course it is), nor that humans aren't as intelligent as imagined (of course we aren't), but that the instinct we imagine determining the lives of insects is lit with the same spark as that under the fantasy of human collective action. Or said differently, the darkness of instinct is aspirational. The search for extra-terrestrial intelligent life is a displacement of an attraction to terrestrial unintelligent life. The aliens won't say "take me to your leader." Nor "take me to your workers," for that matter. It might not be quite right to say the termite is unintelligent, but that's far better than the alternative of trying to rescue the insect with concepts like collective intelligence. We don't want to understand. We want to sit by the mound together in a quiet state, half veneration and half stupefaction. Better, we want to sleep near the mound. We want to drift off to soft gnawing at our wooden bed frame. We want to be undermined, we want to tip into whatever tunnels are down there, together!

A



No known dialect of "Ant" employs any verbal person except the third person singular and plural and the first person plural.

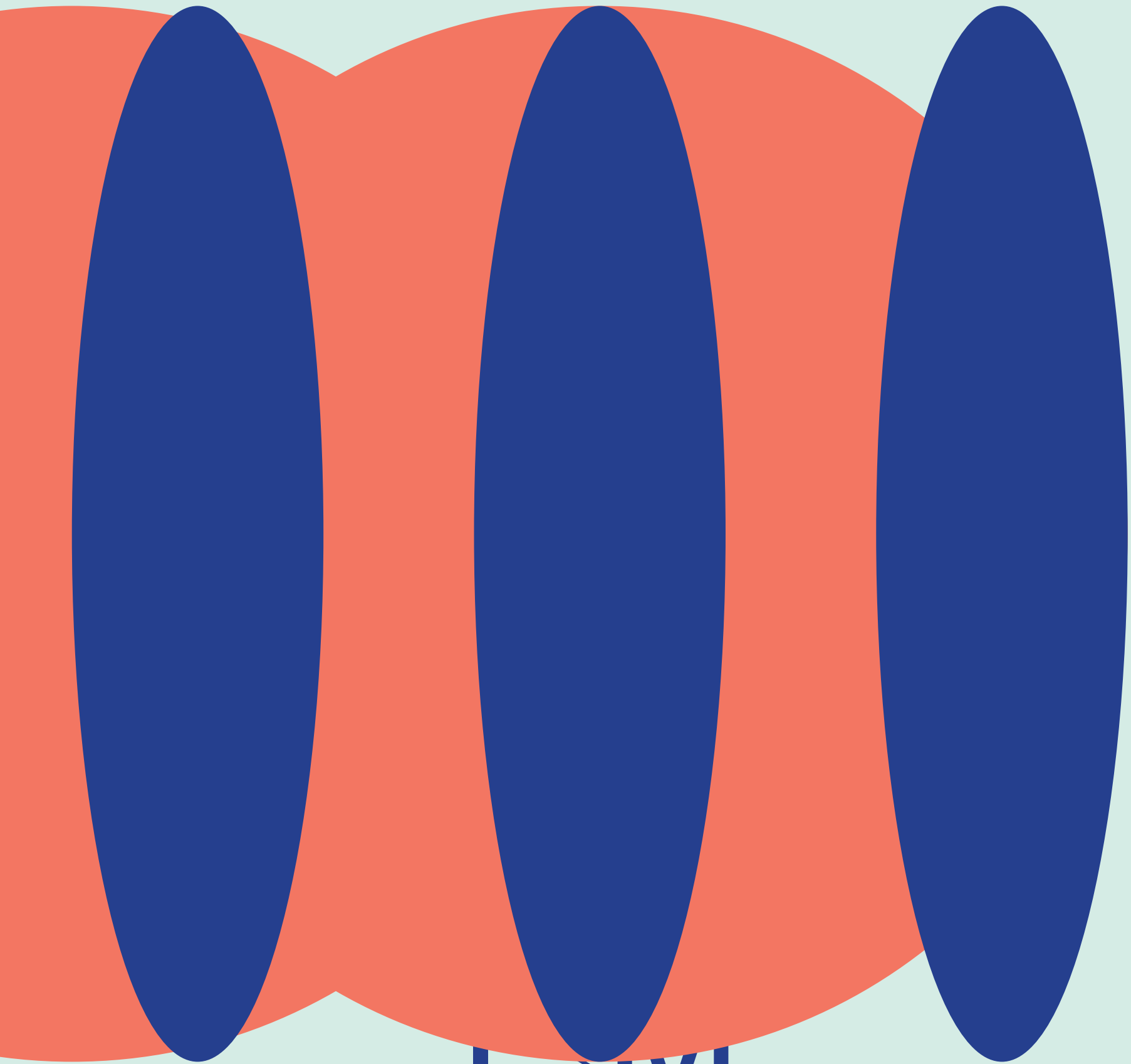
- A Engraving from Henry Smeathman's "Some Account of the Termites which are found in Africa, and other hot Climates," (1781) source: <https://www.linda-hall.org/henry-smeathman/>
- 1 Martin, Stephen J., Roy R. Funch, Paul R. Hanson, and Eun-Hye Yoo. "A vast 4,000-year-old spatial pattern of termite mounds." *Current Biology* 28, no. 22 (2018): R1292-R1293.
 - 2 Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The German Ideology*. Vol. 1. International Publishers Co, 1970.
 - 3 Le Guin, Ursula K. "The author of the Acacia seeds and other extracts from the Journal of the Association of Therolinguistics." *The Compass Rose* (1984): 11-19.
 - 4 Moten, Fred. "Jurisgenerative grammar (for alto)." *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies* 1 (2016): 128.
 - 5 Lessing, Doris. *The Golden Notebook* (1962): 462.
 - 6 Thank you Marina Resende-Santos for your comments on the differentiation of collective action and collective living.
 - 7 Black, Bob. *The Abolition of Work and Other Essays*. Port Townsend: Loompanics Unlimited (1986).
 - 8 Quoted in Ray, N. J. "Interrogating the human/animal relation in Freud's Civilization and its Discontents." *Humanimalia: a journal of human/animal interface studies* 6, no. 1 (2014): 10-40.
 - 9 Bergson, Henri. *Creative Evolution*. 1911. Trans. Arthur Mitchell. New York: Dover (1998).



AN ISSUE

ON

TOGETHER



TOGETHER

COLLABORATION
&

COLLECTIVES
&

COLLECTIVE
ACTION

LUMIPEN

TOGETHER
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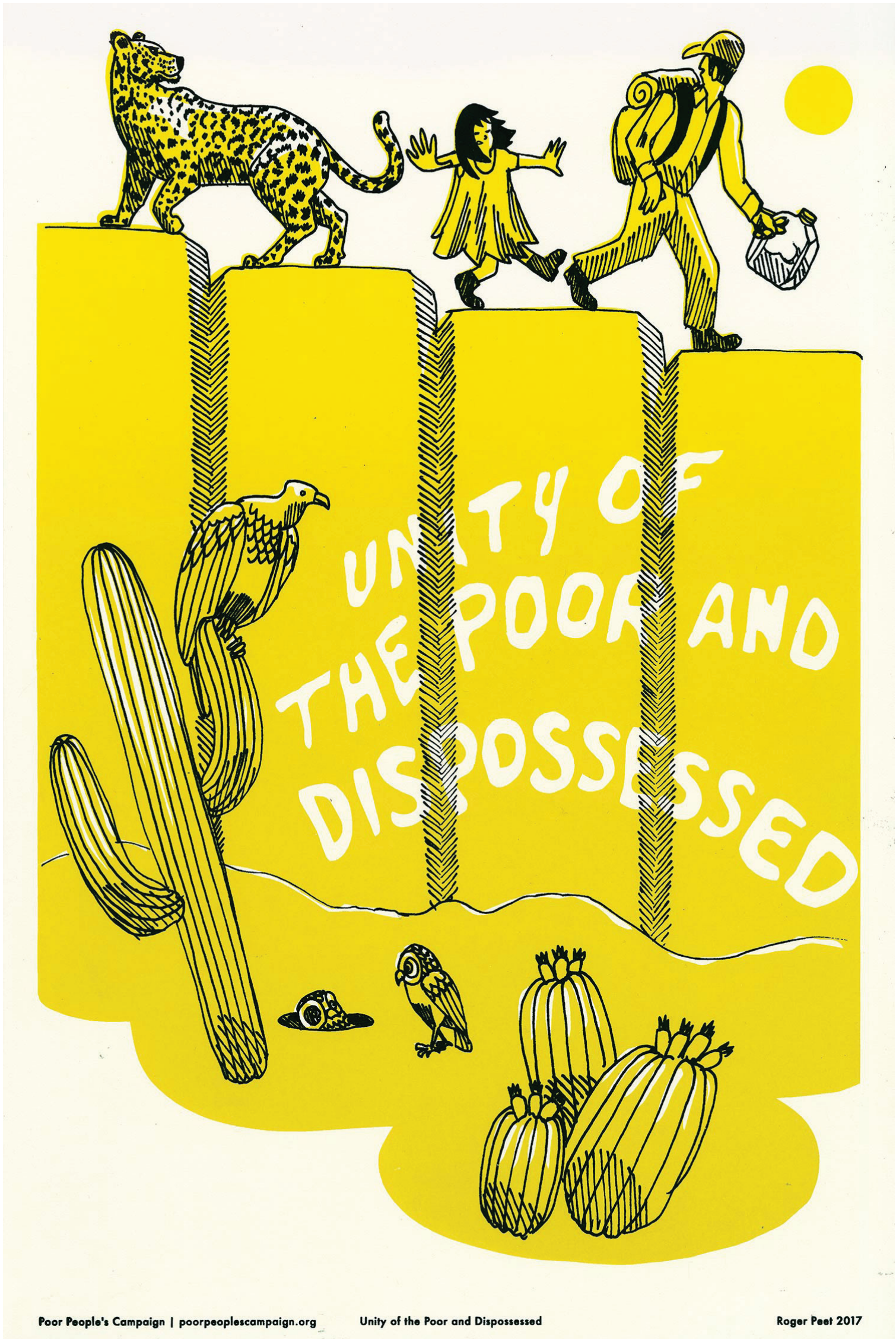
MORE
ON

COLLABORATION



CBD Elixir
Botanical
Seltzer

Flower
Power



Being in Groups

Being in groups is a fundamental component of being a person, and, without an impossibly huge number of people using and creating language before us, we wouldn't have these letters or words with which to communicate. Even a hermit needs a group of people from which he may be isolated in order to be what he is. When there is more than one hermit, we have "hermits." Like countless words in English, simply adding an "s" turns an individual into a group. The English language is incredibly nuanced when it comes to describing the multiplicity of ways in which human beings group themselves or others. English speakers have also adopted many words and expressions from other languages to describe groups, such as *ménage à trois*. This list is partial and is intended to give a sense of the variety, complexity, and frequency of human groupings.

We wrote the above text and created this collection of terms (and the supplemental collection of quotes) in 2007 for the book *Group Work*, published by Printed Matter and edited by AA Bronson, who invited us to make the book. At the time, Temporary Services was a group of three people: Brett Bloom, Salem Collo-Julin, and Marc Fischer. Salem left the group in 2014 and Temporary Services continues as a group of two with other collaborators who participate in our work on a per project basis.

In 2008 we formed Half Letter Press as a publishing imprint and online store for our work and the work of others. As our work becomes more focused on our press and publications and less on exhibitions, our creative community and network is increasingly focused on others in the world of artist publishing. It is there that we encounter more collaboration and group work than in other arenas of visual art. As many young artists embrace publishing as a means of sharing

their work, the number of book fairs and events has dramatically increased all over the world and it is common to see small teams of artists sharing the labor of staffing tables to promote their co-created work as well as the publications of their peers.

At the time that *Group Work* was published, there was a surge of artists working in a formalized way under group names. Some of those groups continue, and new groups have formed, but many of the groups that started working in the early 2000s have since dissolved. Many friends report that their students often work collaboratively, though not always with a group name, and we continue to see art spaces run by groups and publishing imprints run by multiples of people. Groups or collectives that exist primarily to share resources, such as a Risograph duplicator or to administrate a shared working space are also common. Loose knit groups of volunteers share the organization of regular or annual workshops, symposiums, events, or residency programs. As has always been the case, groups are constantly being created for activist causes—some connected to the arts but more commonly around particular issues outside of artistic culture. The rise of social media since *Group Work* was published has also seen the creation of numerous groups that exist on these platforms—many of which also stage in-person meet ups or events.

We are very happy that interest in our 12+ year old thoughts around group work remains and that our work may still be useful to younger generations of artists and creative workers who are thinking about collaborating in groups. We are grateful for this invitation to share them, particularly through the events of Togetherism and at Co-Prosperity Sphere, which was the space where we launched Half Letter Press and celebrated the 10th anniversary of Temporary Services back in 2008. Our relationship with Printed Matter remains a happy and positive one as well and we are indebted to its current Director Max

Temporary Services

Schumann for allowing us to recirculate these excerpts, as well as to allow for the free download of the entire book as a PDF (the paper version is long out of print).

You can find that document here:
temporarieservices.org/served/Group_Work

In the spirit of collaboration,
Temporary Services
(Brett Bloom & Marc Fischer)
August 2019

Excerpts from *Group Work*
(Temporary Services, 2007)

Everything in the world we want to do or get done, we must do with and through people.

Earl Nightingale. *The Strangest Secret*.
Keys Company, Inc., 1996.

The idea of collaboration among visual artists is rarely entertained by the public. The perception of the artist as a loner confirms the generally accepted notion of the solitary genius... This impression, however, does not seem to apply to other creative professions.

Abram Lerner. Foreword to *Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Cynthia Jaffee McCabe. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984.

I think that art is not something you do totally on your own, because the process of bring- ing about the actual work of art involves more than one. There is always a friend, a handyman, or a colleague who enriches the idea in a general sense.

Marco Castillo of Los Carpinteros, quoted in "Conversation/Interview with Los Carpinteros (Alexandre Arrechea, Marco Castillo and Dagoberto Rodriguez) on July 15, 2003, in Havana, Cuba" by Margaret Miller and Noel Smith. *Los Carpinteros: Inventing The World/ Inventar El Mundo*. Chicago Cultural Center brochure. January 2006.

Immaterial labor is increasingly a common activity characterized by continuous cooperation among innumerable individual producers. Who, for example, produces the information of genetic code? Or who, alternatively, produces the knowledge of a plant's beneficial medical uses? In both cases, the information and knowledge is produced by human labor, experience and ingenuity, but in neither case can that labor be isolated to an individual. Such knowledge is always produced in collaboration and communication, by working in common in expansive and indefinite social networks—in these two cases in the scientific community and the indigenous community.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2004.

Out of the threads of interrelationships, the fabric of art history, like that of life, is spun. Camaraderie, friendship, mutual interests and ambition, the dynamism of nascent art movements, and proximity amid wartime and other disruptive conditions are all incentives toward the creation of collaborative works of art.

Cynthia Jaffee McCabe. "Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century - the Period Between Two Wars." In *Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Cynthia Jaffee McCabe. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984.

With collaborative art we can no longer assume we are having an aesthetic and private meditation on the distilled sensibility of another person. When we look at a collaborative work of art, we are examining a dialogue or a conversation between artists.

Robert C. Hobbs. "Rewriting History—Artistic Collaboration Since 1960." In *Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Cynthia Jaffee McCabe. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984.

Even when artistic production is a more "individual" activity as in painting or writing a novel, the collective nature of this activity consists in the indirect involvement of numerous other people, both preceding the identified "act" of production (teachers, innovators in the style, patrons, and so on), and mediating between production and reception (critics, dealers, publishers). Secondly, the ideas, beliefs, attitudes and values expressed in cultural products are ideological, in the sense that they are always related in a systematic way to the social and economic structures in which the artist is situated. Without accepting any simplistic theory of reflection, it can be shown that the perspective (or world-view) of any individual is not only biographically constructed, but also the personal mediation of a group consciousness. And to that extent, too, what the author or artist says in the work of art is actually (or perhaps one should say also) the statement of a social group and its world-view. Styles and conventions of literary and artistic construction confront both artist and ideology, and determine the modes in which ideas can be expressed in art.

Janet Wolff. *The Social Production of Art*. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 1981.

The test of a successful collaboration is when both people feel like they said what they wanted to say. My idea of collaboration is not about compromise, it's about both people doing what they want to do. That's really the critical thing—neither participant should feel like they had to give up a lot to get what they wanted. When you think about a collaboration you really have to look at it as a range of activities. There are also unacknowledged collaborations—the institution is always a collaborator, as the curator often is. You're always also somehow collaborating with the architecture of a space. You have to negotiate that. There are all kinds of contextual elements, like curatorial concepts involved if you're creating some kind of site-specific installation as opposed to sculpture or painting. One great thing about collaboration is that it's like taking a vacation from yourself, if you're honest about it. I have a way of doing things and other artists have their way of doing things, and I learn a lot from that. Sometimes methods are very contradictory and it has to be their way or my way. It can be a struggle, things turn out differently. If I design a collaboration and it comes out exactly the way I thought, then it wasn't a productive collaboration. If it looks nothing like how I imagined it would look then it is really successful. The best test for me, personally, is how much the idea evolves with the influence of another person. My collaborators have always been strong personalities with definitive positions, and, so while it is always rewarding, it is not always easy. Some collaborations are also simply good excuses to travel and spend productive time with friends. We enjoy working together even if it is a challenge.

Mark Dion. "Collaboration: A Conversation." In Mark Dion: *Collaborations*. West Hartford, CT: University of Hartford, 2003.



Scientists are beginning to realize that the theoretical framework which underpins contemporary physics can be adapted to describe social structures and behavior, ranging from how traffic flows to how the economy fluctuates and how businesses are organized.

Philip Ball. *Critical Mass: How One Thing Leads to Another*. New York: Heinemann/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.

There were various conditions and shared purposes that led to the formation of the group. A lot of us had just come from art school, where we were trained to develop a “unique” artistic voice. We were also trained to believe that after school you then can go exercise this voice in the so-called real world. This seemed to be pretty much of a false promise considering the limitations and biases which accompanied market principles and the commercial art system, and, many of us were not interested in making objects, but in collaborative processes.

We were collectively intent on combining our social and political motivations with artistic practices, which is more common now than it was at that time. Then, the lines between art and politics were more clearly drawn and that delineation was commonly supported, often with the stated interest of preventing the contamination of art with politics.

Julie Ault of Group Material. From a presentation at La Generazione Delle Immagini, a series of conferences held at the Milan Triennial, Milan, Italy, 1997.

We were a group of about twenty friends who decided to not sit around smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee, and complaining about how awful the commercial art world was. We pooled our money instead: everyone put in fifty dollars a month—about all we had—to rent a space on a block on East Thirteenth Street, between Second and Third Avenues, that many people were afraid to walk down then. It cut into my disco money, big time. We painted the gallery red and called it Group Material Headquarters, and we organized exhibitions that weren’t about works of individual artists or groups, but addressed social themes and subjects like alienation, consumerism, fashion, music, and gender. One of my favorites was “The People’s Choice (Arroz con Mango),” in 1981, for which we asked everybody on the block to bring in an object that had special value to them. That’s when I realized: This is how you do it. This is what democracy might look like. It was full of fantasy and surprise and joy and humor and with—all the things so often lacking in “political art”.

Tim Rollins of Group Material, interviewed by David Deitcher. “David Deitcher on Tim Rollins.” *Artforum*. April 2003.

Scientific knowledges too are produced in wide collective networks that are hampered by private ownership and unitary control. The productive realm of communication, finally, makes it abundantly clear that innovation always necessarily takes place in common. Such instances of innovation in networks might be thought of as an orchestra with no conductor an orchestra that through constant communication determines its own beat and would be thrown off and silenced only by the imposition of a conductor’s central authority. We have to rid ourselves of the notion that

innovation relies on the genius of an individual. We produce and innovate together only in networks. If there is an act of genius, it is the genius of the multitude.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2004.

When two artists create a work, it is as if we have given birth to another character—an entirely different artist—who makes something neither of us could have made independently. There are works by Michael Piazza and there are works by Bertha Husband; and the works of the collaboration are created by the Third Hand. For this Third Hand to emerge, there has to be a willingness from the two collaborators not to individually force things—a willingness to give up personal solutions and a willingness to wait and see what arrives.

Bertha Husband. From her eulogy for artist Michael Piazza, May 2006.

If you have someone that you can work with, make a commitment and work through the differences. Make a commitment to supplement the gaps with your own contributions. Pay no attention to those who will tell you not to work with your friends. It is an insurmountable work to be an artist. It is shallow to rely on your own energy. Ideas like to be cross fertilized. The bonding that happens between artists working together produces an integrity that reads into the work... is visible in the work... communicates to the audience and viewer.

Goat Island. “Letter to a Young Practitioner.” In *Schoolbook 2*, edited by Goat Island. Chicago: Goat Island and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2000.

I like everybody workin’ together. You chip in for a meal together. One guy goes to the store, one guy cooks, one guy washes the dishes. A common goal. We got a lieutenant there, he says the fire department is the closest thing to socialism there is.

Tom Patrick (fireman), interviewed by Studs Terkel. In Studs Terkel. *Working*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

I want to have dialogue, argument, and to be corrected when I am wrong. Collaboration forgets the errors, remembers the success, and disputes the end. I go to sleep knowing that my concerns are being mulled over by those I trust, admire, and aspire to be compared to.

Lucky Pierre, e-mail message to Temporary Services, March 2006.

The terms of collaboration are very practical, and they become important, once you decide that you are not working solo. You share your ideas and sign under a common name, which is what unifies the collaboration and gives authorship. You’re working within a community of people with similar interests and there is no need to know the author of the idea. The idea in our case is to receive the benefit of what we are creating as a team...

Alexandre Arrechea of Los Carpinteros, quoted in “Conversation/Interview with Los Carpinteros (Alexandre Arrechea, Marco Castillo and Dagoberto Rodríguez) on July 15, 2003, in Havana, Cuba” by Margaret Miller and Noel Smith. *Los Carpinteros: Inventing The World/Inventar El Mundo*. Chicago Cultural Center brochure. January 2006.

We would all have been miserable doing a 9-to-5 thing. We figured the only way for us to do music would be to do it on our own. That also meant that we had to be like the Manson family and just all live together. But there was no other way for these particular people to do it.

Dez Cadena of Black Flag, quoted in “Their War” by Jay Babcock, 2001. *Arthur Magazine*, March 13, 2013. <https://arthurmag.com/2013/03/13/their-war-black-flag-the-first-five-years/>

In SRL [Survival Research Laboratories], compared to other machine organizations, we have a large number of women engineers, structural welders, forklift drivers, and women in general—having worked for other international machine arts organizations and had horrifying sexist experiences, I can tell you that SRL is the only place that gender does not matter, only ability. In SRL, we have a number of Canadians... Also, we have few card-carrying lesbians and gays, but the largest number of bisexual women and men in one organization I’ve seen outside a bi conference. Also a large number of vegetarians and motorcycle riders. And everyone is brilliant in their own field—women who weld the Golden Gate Bridge, men who collide atoms at the Stanford Linear Accelerator, stagehands at the top of their game, sign makers, programmers, inventors, an author, teachers, women and men who race motorcycles. Try to pin us down, and we blur your categories.

Violet Blue of Survival Research Laboratories performance group. Journal entry (November 18, 2003), available at: www.tinynibbles.com/archives/angst.html.

Any group of people of whatever nature that comes together for any length of time for any purpose will inevitably structure itself in some fashion. The structure may be flexible; it may vary over time; it may evenly or unevenly distribute tasks, power and resources over the members of the group. But it will be formed regardless of the abilities, personalities, or intentions of the people involved. The very fact that we are individuals, with different talents, predispositions, and backgrounds, makes this inevitable. Only if we refused to relate or interact on any basis whatsoever could we approximate structurelessness—and that is not the nature of a human group.

Jo Freeman. “The Tyranny of Structurelessness,” speech given to the Southern Female Rights Union in Beulah, Mississippi in May 1970. *The Second Wave* 2, no. 1 (1972): 20. Also available at: www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny

I think that people love [rock groups] more than solo artists maybe... because there’s something fantastic about four people being able to meld together in that way and move forward in one direction. Because that’s hard enough with two people, never mind four, and mathematically it must be increasing the chances of arguments by millions every time you add another person to the unit. And so people like to see that, because it makes us think better of ourselves... as a species.

Joe Strummer of The Clash, speaking in the documentary film *End of the Century: The Story of The Ramones*, directed by Jim Fields and Michael Gramaglia. New York: Magnolia Pictures, 2003.

Societies change and the arts can be a powerful way of expressing these changes. However, the arts are essential for helping individuals find their place within society and for shaping a collective cultural identity.

REPOhistory. From "Who is REPOhistory," introduction in REPOhistory's former website.

My mom had always wanted me to better myself. I wanted to better myself because of her. Now when the strikes started, I told her I was going to join the union and the whole movement. I told her I was going to work without pay. She said she was proud of me. (His eyes glisten. A long, long pause.) See, I told her I wanted to be with my people. If I were a company man, nobody would like me anymore. I had to belong to somebody and this was it right here.

Roberto Acuna (farmworker and organizer), interviewed by Studs Terkel. In Studs Terkel. *Working*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

In the common meal we find an increase ceremony of a special kind. In accordance with a particular rite each of the participants is handed a piece of slain animal. They eat together what they captured together. Parts of the same animal are incorporated into the whole pack. Some part of one body enters into all of them. They seize, bite, chew and swallow the same thing. All those who have eaten of it are now joined together through this one animal; it is present in all of them.

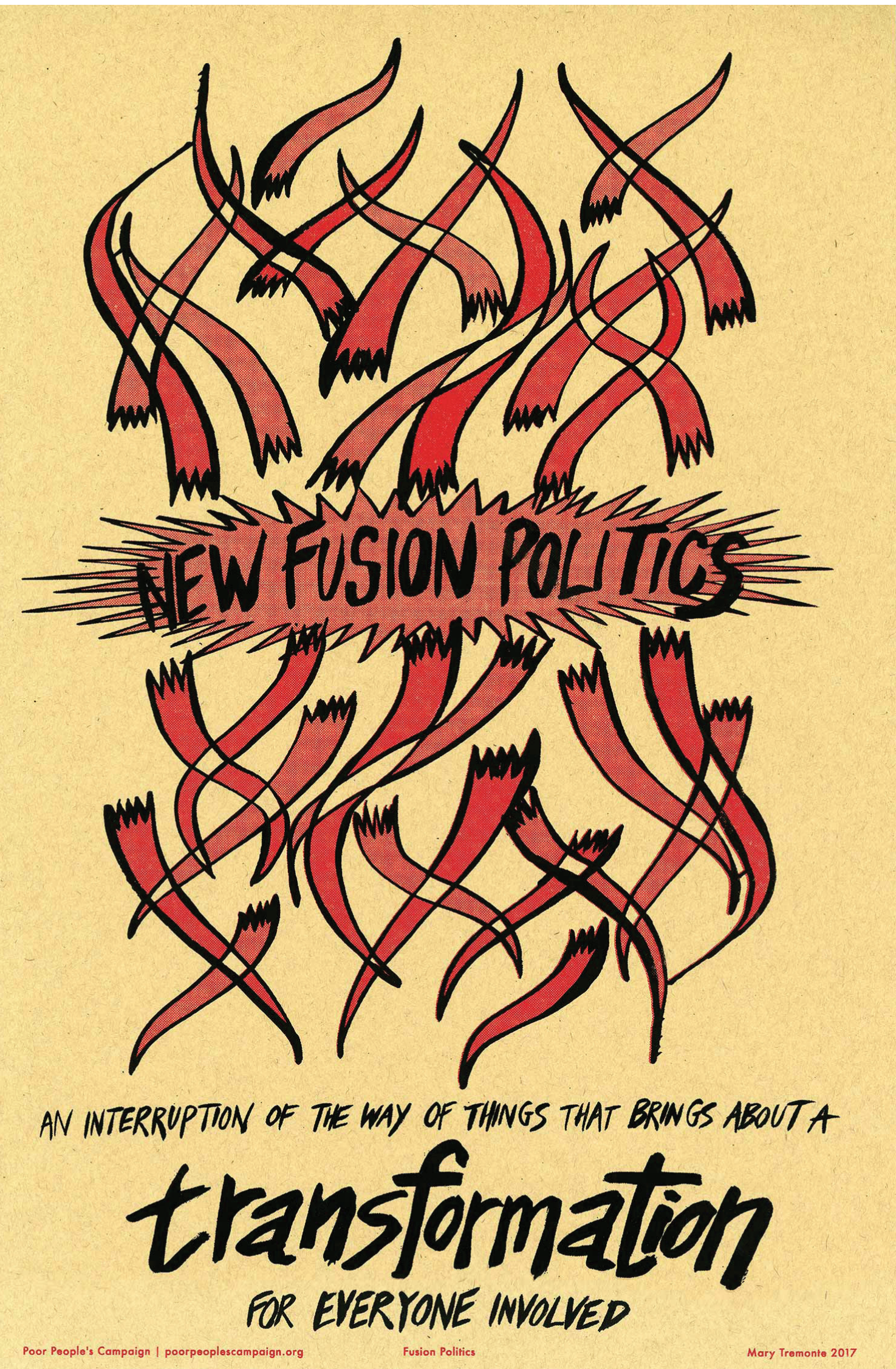
Elias Canetti. "The Communion." In *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984.

It's tough to be part of a band. Every band is ultimately doomed to fail. There are emotionally charged issues constantly cropping up that invite ridicule or shame, usually in a three against one scenario. A band demands of its members relationships more akin to family than to coworker, however, the lifelong experience at accommodation developed in family relationships is lacking. And on top of the vagaries of the musician's life itself, the work involved in writing, arranging, practicing, recording and performing music with others is more apt to bend egos than conventional jobs. Each individual player's ego is on the line to some extent at every little artistic decision. And generally there is one dominant personality in the band and so even the required accommodations are not equally distributed. Ideally the dominant personality is not a control freak and the others are not frustrated leaders. Still they should be more than simply hired guns and find satisfaction and stimulation in the mass of work necessary to write, arrange, record, and perform a band's work.

Joe Carducci. *Rock and the Pop Narcotic: Testament for the Electric Church*. Laramie, WY: Redoubt Press, 2005.

[When you] talk about continuity in the band, why we had that continuity—that musical ... that blend, that harmony, that balance, that psychic communication amongst...the chemistry, it's because we all came from the same place. The same little village. Same tribe. Same school. When you start putting more and more people together who are like-minded, what you create is another person. You create another consciousness. You have five people who are like-minded enough to liberate their thoughts—to let it become a collective thought. And a collective thought—once you start working it it's free. It takes on a personality of its own—which is beautiful. And that's where really really really good art comes from.

Dennis Thompson of MC5 speaking in the documentary film *MC5: A True Testimonial*, directed by David C. Thomas. Chicago: Future/Now Films, 2002.



What is Collaboration

Pete Railand
(Milwaukee WI, United States)

Collaboration is an agreement to take on the challenge of working together. Through collaboration we are able to integrate the skills, knowledge, perspectives, inspiration, and ideas of all participants involved to move our work often in unexpected ways. The benefits of collaboration ideally outweigh the difficulties that may arise, though this is something that can be difficult to quantify. Collaboration can take more work, more time, more patience, and more compromise, all of which may seem like a hindrance to those new to the process but generally make for a stronger experience on the whole. The relationships built, or evolved become THE work; the process of collaborating becomes as integral to the experience as any final outcome. We learn from our collaborators, we build trust, and we open our world view.

Roger Peet
(Portland OR, United States)

One of my favorite aspects of collaboration is the emergence of new ideas or messages from the combined efforts of the people involved in a project or a campaign. Nobody agrees 100% with anyone else so it's really interesting to see ideas merge and transmute under pressure. There's a practical quality to that that extends to all forms of social life but is particularly relevant in political spheres. The things that are most important to a partnership or organization are revealed during the collaborative process, or are reformed into something bright and novel.

I like to work with other people to create space within a project for new possibilities, for strange partnerships. Disparate participants sharing resources and access to resources with each other multiplies the scope of the thing attempted. Deemphasizing an individual vision in favor of something that emerges from a collectivity produces results that are in themselves a process as opposed to a phenomenon or product.

Chip Thomas
(Arizona, United States)

For me, as someone living alone in a remote part of the country, my endeavors are primarily self-motivated and driven. Working with like-minded artists has challenged me with letting go of my ego and accepting new possibilities. The final work often doesn't appear as I might have imagined but the process of creating has resulted in both strengthening and destroying

friendships by getting at the core of who we are as individuals.

Fernando Martí
(San Francisco CA, United States)

I see the question as being about collaboration with intention. All art and work draws from entire histories and context, so I don't think there is ever a sole authorship. But we bring our own talents and creativity, and we can do it either as a conversation that involves that broader community in some intentional way, or not. Collaboration can be any kind of co-creation—from conversations that result in a product, to collaboration in the actual art-making, to more loose participatory projects where the artist helps set the stage for the work to unfold. Even when my work is done for and with others, it's still often seen as my image. But in participatory projects, murals or seed altars that I've worked on, it really becomes a collective project, where we all claim "ownership" of the work. There's got to be a lot of humility and flexibility in that process—a great idea might inform the direction, but in the end may look nothing like it. I think this is especially important in public works—in creating public works we are shaping the public space in a very different way that affects the communities of those spaces in a very different way from a poster or other work.

Shaun Slifer
(Pittsburgh PA, United States)

A lot of collaborative work is about listening. Sometimes waiting. Compromise. Retooling an idea until it works for everyone involved, maybe even scrapping the idea if it can't work. Much of the work that I've been a part of that is the source of the most pride are projects that started with long periods of listening, processing, being with the idea in conversation with others.

I started collaborating with other people because it felt like the right thing to do so often, intuitively. One part of this was about rejecting a classic ideal of the artist as an Inspired Loner, and the other part is about an expression of my cooperative politics through action. If you can find people to work with who aren't invested in some bullshit competitiveness, you can get really far by sharing with each other. I forget how alien this idea is to so many people. Much of life in the US is built in opposition to this concept, although you find it thriving in the margins.

I think it's related to point out that, so often, it can be disingenuous to say that one is self-taught. Because in so many cases it's really that someone is in community,

taught by community, and often that process is diffuse, over time, a collaboration in itself. I hesitate to identify as a self-taught historian, for example, because ultimately the process by which I dig up histories and decide how to share them really came from being in community with storytellers of all kinds.

Alec I. Dunn
(Portland OR, United States)

I work together so I don't have to work alone. Collaboration involves surprise, growth, compromise, and self-reflection. I think it hones your skills and helps to develop a critical eye to your own work and the work of others. We make a conscious choice to directly collaborate with others. But we all collaborate with history, ideas, artwork, political circumstances, and social movements, whether we like it or not. With this in mind it seems silly to draw a box around your work and say this is me. I desire to be a part of the collective experience of living, sometimes, if I'm lucky, creating things (both individually and collectively) can help achieve this.

Kevin Caplicki
(New York NY, United States)

The collaborative projects I have participated in have been attempts of utopia. In projects like Justseeds, we get to explore and expand on anti-authoritarian forms of organizing. It is idealism but not ideal, we bring dynamics from highly inequitable and oppressive environments. However, it is an opportunity to examine the friction and complications of multiple interests in hopes of unifying towards common goal. In the space we hold for an installation, exhibition, portfolio, junk-raft trip on a river, rustic carnival in the woods, or an art build gives us the opportunity to create something larger than our individual selves.

My creative practice was born out of collective action; skateboarding, DIY Punk, alter-globalization summits, anarchist conferences, direct action campaigns, and rebel autonomous zones. I learned graphic expression and control of multiple mediums during these mobilizations and out of those movements grew the network of artists that would create Justseeds.

It continues to be my mentor. The members of Justseeds have taught me how to design, self-publish, screen print, cut stencils, carve relief, construct installations, organize, and so much more. It is in collaboration that I have learned how to harness my creativity, and express it. It is a truly social practice because it is based on our relationship to each other and the topical

moments we are responding to. I would not be an artist without collaboration and collective action.

Bec Young
(Pittsburgh PA, United States)

Collaboration is the only way forward; solving our collective problems is not possible any other way. The problem is that we haven't learned to collaborate, and we thought it would be easy. All of the training we receive as children, explicit and subconscious, is in hierarchical and patriarchal modes of relationships. We don't actually know how to work together as equals. We fail to ask the right questions. We listen passively or don't listen at all, so caught up in our own thoughts. We come to the table with proposals without first understanding or addressing the root concerns of others and the narrowness of our perspective renders the solution untenable. We struggle in this process, kicking and screaming like toddlers, which is the point. Our old, unconscious modes are leading us to destroy everything, including ourselves. Perilous as it is, we all need to consciously build our skills in collaboration. We need to learn to balance confidence with humbleness, open ourselves to new perspectives, and trust in the process. Each interaction, positive or negative, is a potential gift for the future in the form of a lesson. This is our training ground.

Geovanni Mendoza
(Ciudad de México DF, México)

colaborar es un principio para el trabajo de la gráfica social, no se puede hacer gráfica social sin tener colaboradores.

por es una forma de luchar y de resistir a un sistema que nos obliga a la individualización del trabajo cultural, por que aprendo de los demás por veo que mi trabajo sirve para generar otras formas de relacionarnos

si, pero también el trabajo colectivo o la acción se vuelve un instrumento mas potente y coherente en un discurso político y social de la gráfica.

es la significación social de la cultura, es el tejer lazos entre quienes participan, es expandirse en otros pensamientos, cuerpos y cuerpos y acciones, es crear acuerdos, es crear comunalidad.

es el incorporarnos y romper con lo roles no solo de la autoría, también de la representación y de discurso que adquiere un trabajo en que se colabora para lograr un objetivo común, demostrarle al sistema que estos nodos de trabajo son una forma desafiante de su hegemonía cultural.

to You?

Josh MacPhee
(Brooklyn NY, United States)

For me, collaboration is less a tactic, or a specific activity, but a life-long practice. Everything we do demands input and labor from others, whether we can see it or not, and recognizing—rather than externalizing—all our engagements allows us to be more full people. Capitalism demands that we always put ourselves above others, but this runs contrary to our core sociality, and limits what we can accomplish (without exploitation) to the scale of the individual. One of the most fabulous aspects of working with others is that we can benefit from all kinds of skill sets, without everyone having to learn and know the same things. In addition, when we work together and share our work as a collective production, it opens the door to further collectivity, standing in stark contrast to the hegemony of singular authorship we are embedded in.

Sanya Hyland
(Mexico City DF, Mexico)

I had some very delicious clam chowder over the summer, Cape Cod style. The flavors of a good cup of chowder are savory, creamy, with nuggets of sweet from the corn kernels, and with those potato chunks to really push it over the edge into comfort-food heaven. All the ingredients work together to create something amazing and unexpected. Clams and dairy products? Yes, it works. The point is, those clams aren't a lone genius of culinary creativity. They aren't going

to create the chowder all by themselves. Just like the clams, we need collaboration to truly realize our unlimited potential. The chemistry of collaboration creates flavors, aromas, and visions (if we aren't talking about chowder anymore) that have never existed before. New ways of seeing and doing is the recipe we need to grapple with the myriad of problems we face in our world at this moment.

Thea Gahr
(Portland OR, United States)

Collaboration like being an artist is innately human and has pushed the edge of conscious thought again and again. At its best, collaboration offers us the opportunity to put our light, our brilliance, together with others and create what has not been created yet. In collaboration we have a chance to work with others diversity of thought, multiplicity of ways both in doing and being, including relationship building, and trust all of which I see as necessary to positive social change.

Colin Matthes
(Milwaukee WI, United States)

Collaboration is working with my partner to raise our two young kids. Since becoming a father, I have not prioritized collaboration and community-based projects. I work full time, do not want to commit to added responsibilities, and do not want to put more of the childcare duties on my partner. My current artmaking is solitary and done late at night in small bursts.

Aaron Hughes
(Chicago IL, United States)

Working collaboratively allows projects to scale up in vision and scope not just through collective labor but also by bringing together perspectives, experiences, skills and networks that open up new possibilities. When considering the scale of the issues we face in our times collaboration is key to any kind of shift towards peace and justice. That said, collaboration is not easy and there is always an ongoing conversation about topics from power in a relationship to how decisions are made intentionally and unintentionally. There are also different visions, working styles and skills. These differences are an advantage and bring new depth to a project, but only when they are approached with patience, humility, generosity, curiosity, and clarity on vision, boundaries and needs of everyone in a collaboration. And it is impossible to always approach collaborations that way and as a result collaborative processes break down. These breakdowns can lead to conflicts that potentially can destroy a collaboration. Hopefully when this happens collaborators can take breaks, reset, and approach the collaboration anew with patience as they clarify vision, needs and boundaries.

Nicolas Lampert
(Milwaukee WI, United States)

Collaboration and working in cooperatives is a daily lesson on how to resist capitalism, hyper-individualism, and hierarchical structures. The difficult work of unlearning much of what is taught as normal in US society is a pathway towards cooperation and building new structures based upon equality.

Members of Justseeds

A



Justseeds Artists' Cooperative is a decentralized network of 29 muralists and printmakers committed to social, political, and environmental art and activism. Justseeds is a partner of "Togetherism," a programming series organized by Public Media Institute in fall 2019. The group brings three exhibitions to Chicago in October 2019: "Networks of Resistance" at Co-Prosperity Sphere, "Be Here Now! Chip Thomas" at Uri Eichen Gallery, and "Personal Expression & Collective Action: Artwork from the Justseeds Artists' Cooperative" at In These Times.

With help from member Aaron Hughes, Lumpen asked the Justseeds network a simple question.

A

Getting Into Step (1968)
Bill Mauldin, Poor People's Campaign

B

Consensus, Bec Young, October 2013, Relief Print, Letterpress print from papercut design, acid free textured recycled paper

B





Two cats work together to print a large screen print.

Screen Printing Synergy, Meredith Stern, Cooperation Cats Series, November 2014, Relief Print, 6 color Reduction Cut Linoleum Block Print

Compositions Game and Space Game

Created from a fascination with toys and games made by designers (like the Eames and Enzo Mari) Compositions and Space were games designed to explore and investigate color, composition and collaboration. Both utilize simple, geometric styled tiles, which when placed create unique compositions.

As we play-tested and developed the games, we were interested to find that they became more of a creative tool for those interacting with them. Although the games could be played competitively, more often than not they were played with a process of co-operation driven from a desire to build an aesthetically pleasing design.

Both ends of the spectrum of play produced visual results, which allowed the participants to step back at the end of a game and appreciate a new and unique artwork which they had built together. Whether as a conscious act or in the heat of the moment, these results allowed people to reflect upon other areas of their lives, and so function as a meditative process as well.

Videos demonstrating the games can be found on the Compositions Kickstarter page: [kickstarter.com/projects/sidehustlestudio/compositions](https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/sidehustlestudio/compositions).

Space

Game play and rules

A turn-based game for two people, or a creative practice for one person. This is an abstract tile game that facilitates the creation of a composition using positive and negative space.

Create space.

Players should take turns placing black and white tiles to create abstract forms of positive and negative space.

Players must determine what is positive space and who will act as positive or negative space for the duration of the game. These roles can shift when multiple rounds are played.

Create containment.

Points are scored by creating containment. Players should try to connect as much of their space as possible, while preventing their opponent from doing the same. At the end of a round, players can count how many of their tiles are connected. One point for each tile that connects a player's created space determines the winner of the round.

Compositions

Game play and rules

A fast-paced and colorfully abstract tile game based on color theory for 1-4 people. There are two main rules to the game. Further rules can be added, and are included at the end.

Rule 1

When a player turns over a Color Mode tile (a tile with a Color Mode symbol in the corner), that immediately changes the tile colors that are allowed to touch one another, reflecting that Color Mode:



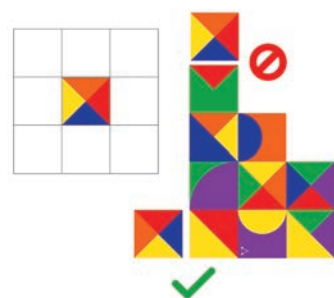
Analogous Complementary Triadic

Each Color Mode allows a color to match with two colors. As in the color wheels above, blue matches with green and purple in analogous, blue and orange in complementary, and yellow and red in triadic. These symbols appear on cards and immediately change the Color Mode the game is played in when revealed.



Rule 2

Each newly placed tile must have at least two other tiles adjacent to it. This encourages compact compositions and reduces long, snaking paths of tiles.



How to play

Decide on a Color Mode to begin the game. Find and place two Starter Tiles (a tile showing four colors) next to one another.



Turn all other tiles over, mix them up so that they can be drawn at random, and then divide the tiles by the number of players. Place any extras to the side.

A player starts by turning over one of their tiles and placing it next to the Starter Tiles, following the correct Color Mode.

The game moves counterclockwise, with player taking turns. If a player is unable to place a tile because it does not fit anywhere, they are able to switch their tile, but they forfeit their turn.

If a player places a tile incorrectly (with colors on the tile not matching the correct Color Mode), they must pick the tile up and forfeit their turn.

When a player turns over a tile with a Color Mode symbol on it, the Color Mode of the game immediately changes to that Color Mode.

The first player to place their last tile wins the game, although other players can continue until they have placed their tiles and finished the composition.

Additional Rules

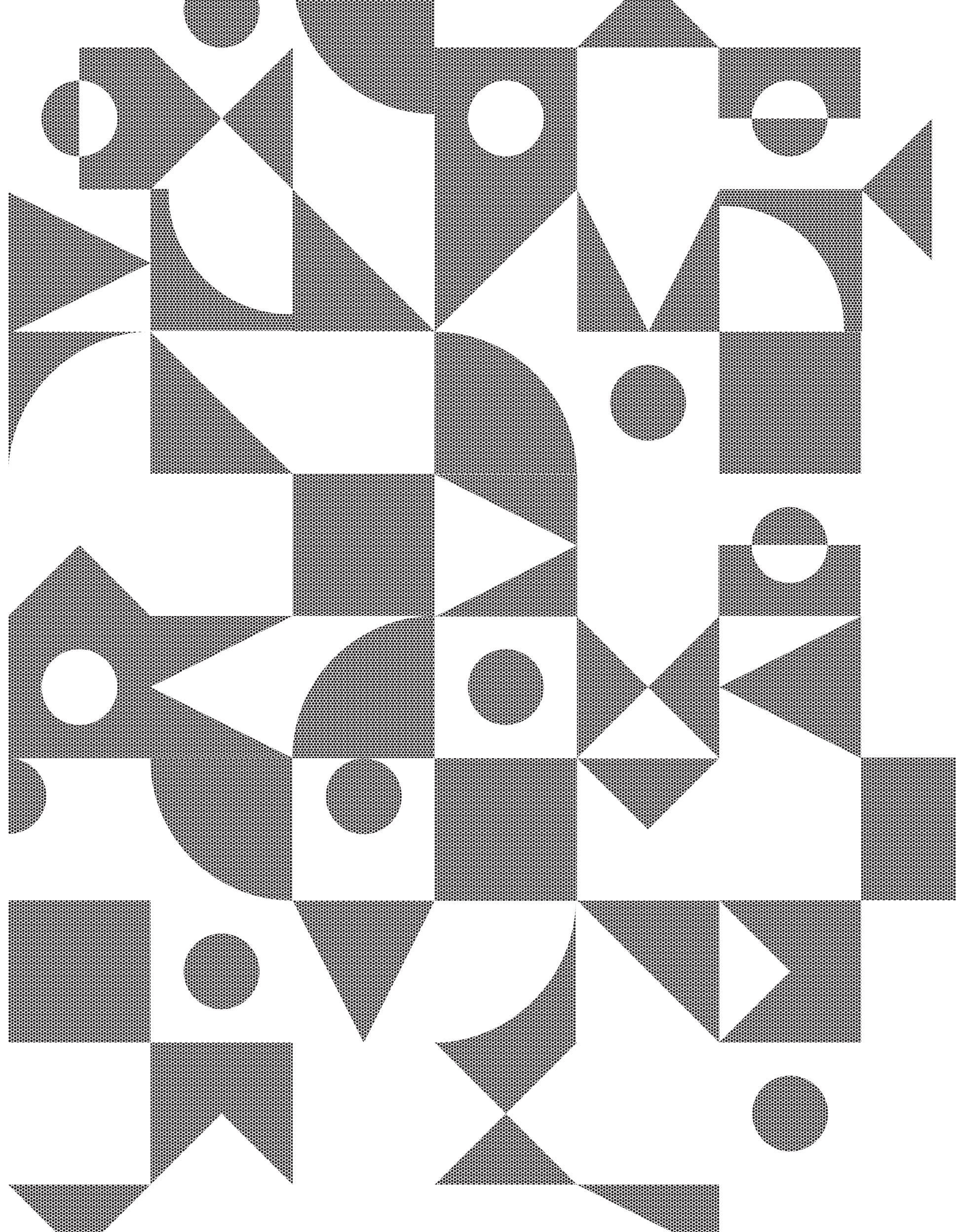
The game can be played with additional rules to increase competitiveness and difficulty:

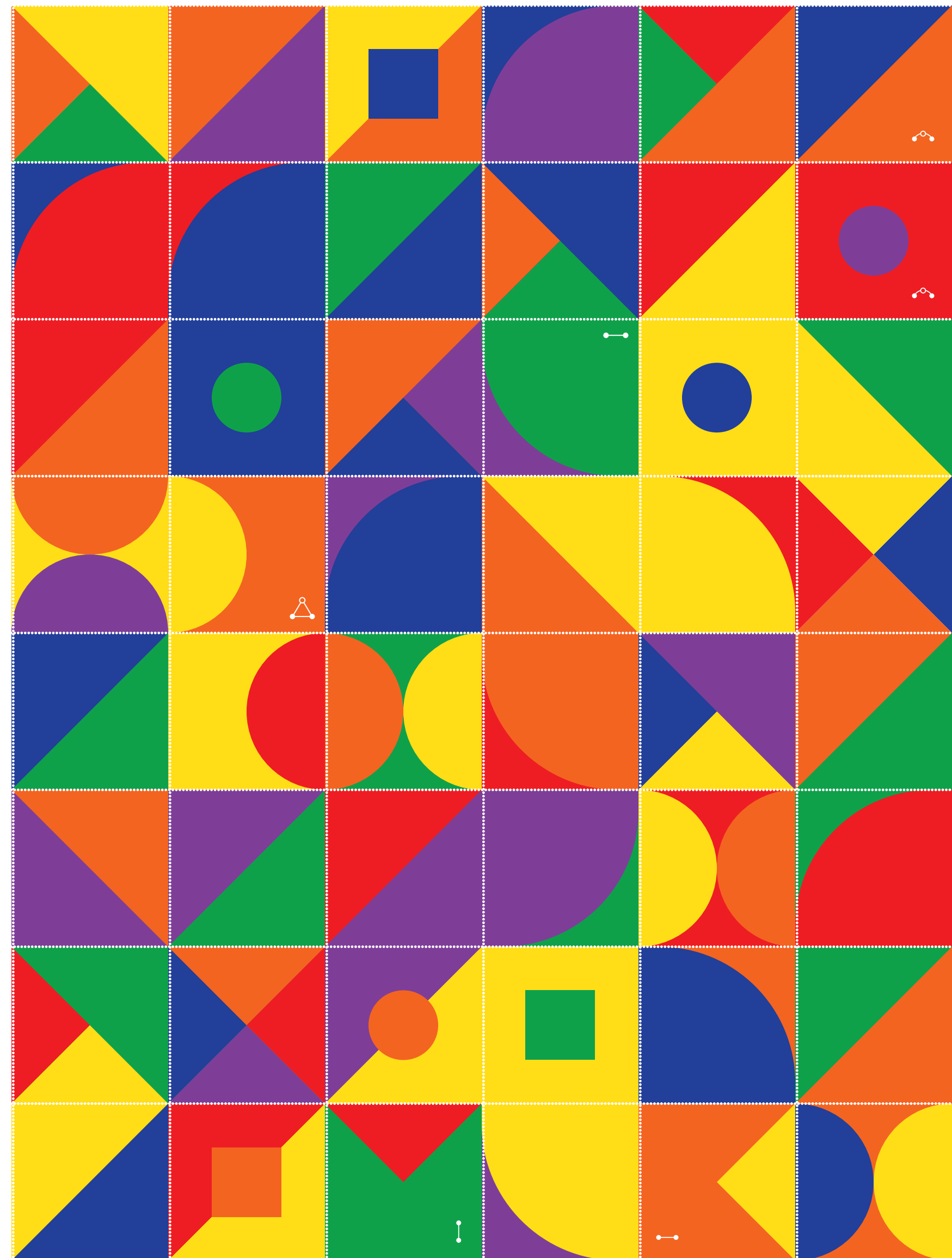
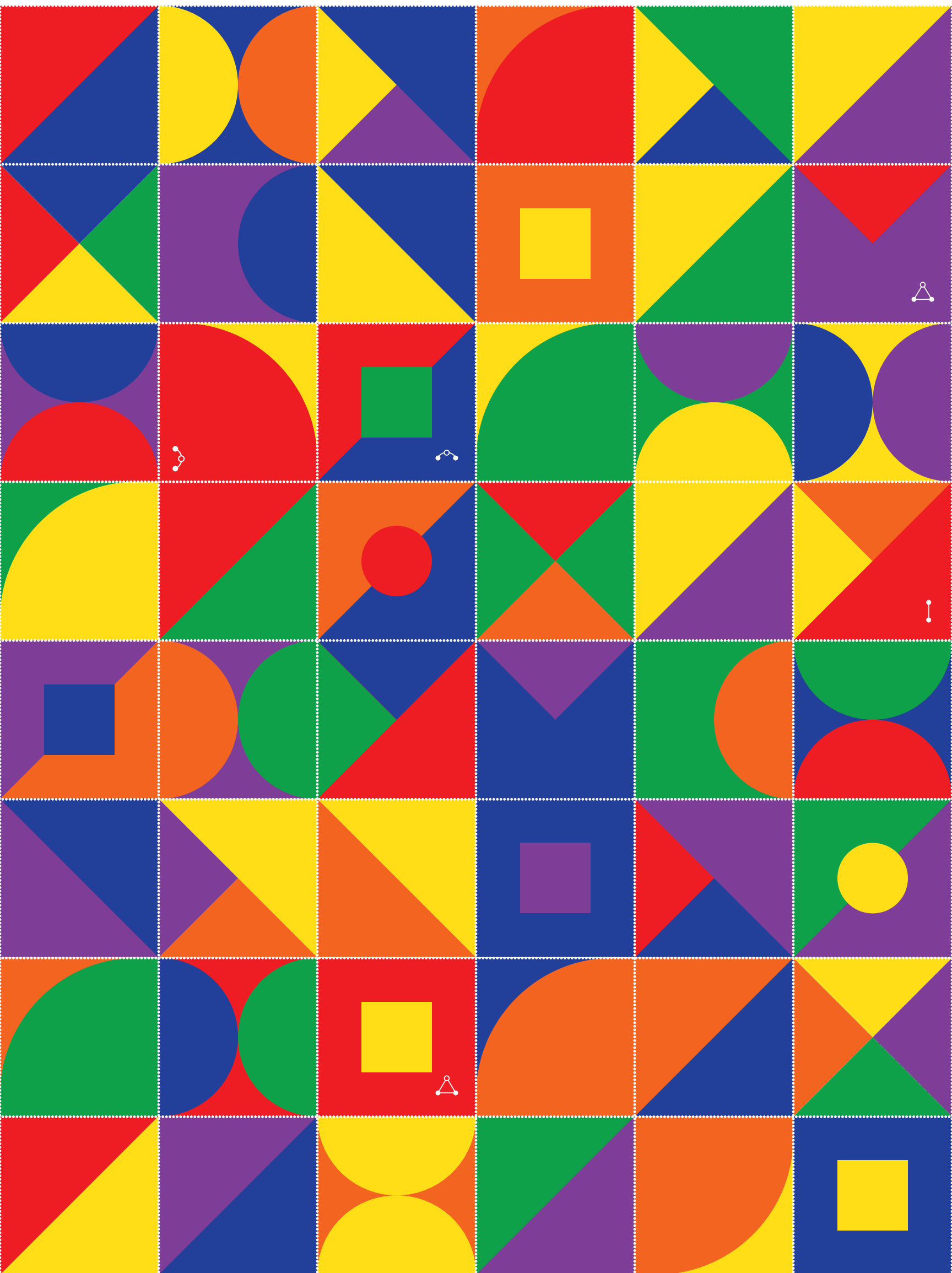
Rule 3

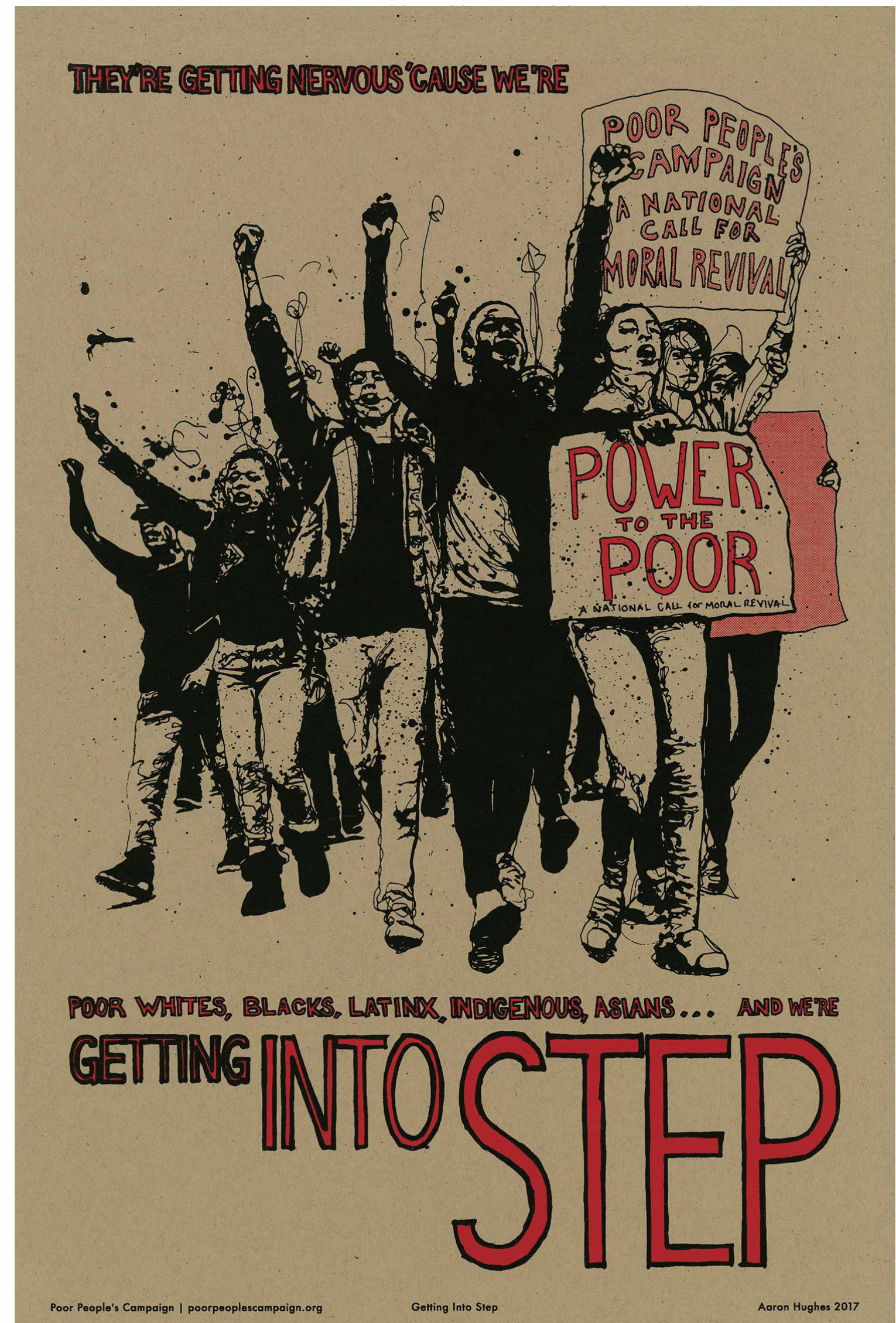
If a player places a tile with three or more other tiles surrounding it, they are able to give one of their tiles from their pile to another player.

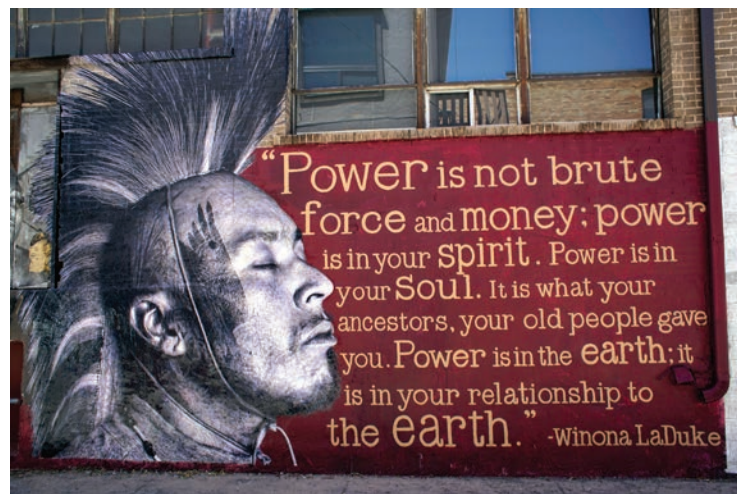
Rule 4

Each player is allowed 15 seconds per turn, and may place as many tiles as they are able to during that time. If a player fails to place a tile in this time, they forfeit their turn.









A

Chip Thomas: Painted Desert Project



B

A *Power is in the Earth*
Flagstaff, AZ

For this mural installed in summer 2018, Chip Thomas took and wheatpasted the source photograph of a grass dancer, Cheyenne Randall added the image of a pheasant, Winona LaDuke wrote the text, and Esteban del Valle painted LaDuke's words on the wall.

B *Tear Down The Walls*
Nogales, Sonora, Mexico

Collaborative mural for an installation during the School of the Americas Watch Encuentro in Nogales in November 2017. Photographer Chip Thomas took the source black & white photograph and wheatpasted it to the wall, and Thea Gahr, another Justseeds member, wrote the text.

Tear Down The Walls and *Power Is In The Earth* are part of Thomas's Painted Desert Project—a community building project that manifests as a constellation of murals across the Navajo Nation painted by artists from all over the rez and the world.

Roger Peet: *Endangered Species* *in New Mexico*



C

C *Endangered Species in New Mexico*
Silver City, NM

Artist Roger Peet collaborated with the students of Youth Murals in Silver City to paint a mural showing five endangered species in New Mexico. Covering two walls at the Western New Mexico University campus, the mural depicts the Mexican gray wolf, the Mexican spotted owl, the Gila trout, the Gila mayfly and the narrow-headed garter snake. The mural is part of Peet's Endangered Species Mural Project.

D *Are You Sure Sweetheart*
You Want To Be Well
Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA

Jess X. Snow painted this mural at the Harmony House with the Institute for Diversity in the Arts (IDA) at Stanford University, who worked on the design with students, faculty, staff, alumni, visiting artists and university arts leaders.

Jess X. Snow: Collaboration and Collective Liberation

D



Sex Militant Manifesto



A

Sex Militant is a partner of the “Togetherism” program organized by Public Media Institute in fall 2019. The exhibition “Sex Militant” running from September 1 to September 9 at Co-Prosperity Sphere, marked the group’s formal launch after their spokesperson Jex Blackmore’s departure from the Satanic Temple, citing its leadership’s inability to tackle its lack of inclusion and equity, and its refusal to adopt checks and balances and horizontal leadership structures. Asked why Sex Militant wasn’t promoting all members of the group, Jex noted that with this kind of work, there are often aggressive reactions, including death threat; having a singular, named spokesperson is an attempt to shield other group members from these threats. On September 7, the day after an event for the Sex Militant exhibition at Co-Prosperity Sphere, Catholic priests and parishioners protested outside the space and were aggressive with collective members. Two weeks before, on August 24, when Sex Militant’s window installation was already on view, others threw cinder blocks and intimidated our comrades in the Radical Visibility collective during their fashion show combatting transphobia, misogyny, racism and ableism.



B

There is no separation
between spectator and participant.
We are all participants.

Photo by Jex Blackmore
Photo by Leah Peacock

Sex Militant

A STATEMENT

Sex Militant is a conviction, action, and coalition developed by a collective of artists and activists committed to sexual revolution and liberation through performance, advocacy, and direct action. We believe that the free expression of sexuality is critical to our physical, emotional, and social well-being, and that each human being is entitled to full bodily autonomy and integrity. However, the State has sought to police sexual identities, reproduction, and sexual behaviors between consenting individuals through repression, marginalization, and punishment. Let us be clear: sexual oppression and discrimination is violence, and we are fighting back. The sexual rights of all persons must be protected, respected, and fulfilled.

To be Sex Militant is to be fiercely committed to the advancement of sexual and reproductive liberation. Sex Militants are networked for action and empowered to shamelessly advocate for the protection, respect, and fulfillment of sexual rights for all people. We are you, and you are us. We are no longer waiting for representation and permission to challenge the daily injustices levied against our bodies. We, who have limited power and resources, will innovate and develop tactics that meet our needs and engage in strategies that are justifiable in response to the force of those who seek to control us. We weaponize the perversion of our sexuality and our bodies as a liberating force. Power concedes nothing without a fight.

We recognize the need to employ a diversity of tactics, and believe that militancy is necessary, reasoned, and practical when pushing back against a power that has imposed and funded forced birth programs, tortured LGBTQ+ folks in conversion camps, and willfully condoned sexual violence against citizens—to name a few brutalities levied against the people. Society’s discomfort with public expressions of sexuality is a symptom of moral tyranny, and we threaten this tyranny through visibility, performance, and political confrontation. Action, directed and organized by the people, is necessary. The power structures which benefit and profit off of sexual oppression will be destroyed.

PILLARS

- + Each human being is entitled to exercise their sexuality free from discrimination, coercion, and violence.
- + We believe in the collective struggle and recognize the intersectionality of oppression and experience.
- + Religion has imposed great violence against our bodies. The politics of the Church is validated and supported by State power, and thus the State is an extension of religious violence against our bodies. Without secularism, sexual justice is not possible.
- + Tradition and norms do not define morality. Sexuality is not a moral issue; rather, moral and ethical principles apply to our relationships to one another.
- + Purity culture is a dangerous perversion. Virginity is a social construct. We reject the heterosexist proposition that virginity is a virtue.
- + Heteronormative sexuality is not an ideal, standard, or rule. All expressions of sexuality are valid, including asexuality and sexual play without orgasm.
- + Sex work is valid and deserving of dignity, protections, and regulations as defined by industry laborers. Exploitation of sex workers is indicative of labor abuse and an uneducated and unhealthy understanding of sexuality.
- + The forced-birth agenda is a means to political power rather than a belief in the sanctity of life.
- + All gender identities and roles as defined by the individual are valid. We are building a post-gender world.
- + We oppose those who possess the power to define and legislate shame.
- + Institutions and figures of authority are no more authentic than any other body or group of bodies.
- + Our beliefs and approach should never be dogmatic. We are open to critique and practice constant revolution.

OUR APPROACH

- + Society’s discomfort with expressions of sexuality is a symptom of moral tyranny; we threaten this tyranny through visibility, performance, and political confrontation.
- + We create models for engagement and personal liberation that are accessible to all, regardless of economic status or political capital.
- + The power to influence and inspire public opinion shall not be exclusively held by the elite and the elite must provide justification for their positions.
- + We value the lives, voices, and opinions of all impacted people. We are intentional in our approach and believe a diversity of tactics is essential to every movement.
- + We are accountable to ourselves and our comrades. We shall protect and nurture the sacred trust between ourselves and our collaborators.
- + The power structures which benefit and profit off of sexual oppression will be destroyed.
- + All are entitled to liberation, regardless of economic status, skin color, nationality, or social capital.
- + All public space is a platform for the people to dissent, celebrate, and affirm. We do not seek permission to speak truth in public.
- + There is no separation between spectator and participant. We are all participants.



Me to We

Grace
Needlman
and
Jeremy
Kreusch

Begin by crossing a threshold. In order for a collective to feel like one, it must begin with a shared emotional and physical experience. That experience requires a barrier to outsiders. It's what distinguishes THIS group HERE and NOW from the rest of your world and your life. Make a physical, emotional, verbal, interpersonal, symbolic commitment. Line up, one by one. Prepare to enter somewhere, one by one. Allow someone to take your hands in their hands. Look them in the eyes. Hear them say, "I am ready for something new." Turn to the person behind you. Take their hands into your hands. Look into their eyes. Say, "I am ready for something new." Really look. Really mean it.

At the end of every summer for the last nine years, a group of teenagers, two working artists, and administrative staff have convened at the Museum of Contemporary Art to spend a year together building community and hosting public events. To outsiders, the Teen Creative Agency (TCA) could look like any other youth program. They would be wrong. Teen Creative Agency is an otherworldly community, totally distinct from our regular schools and workplaces. We take the task of building community uncommonly seriously.

Adrienne Maree Brown writes, "Emergent strategy is how we intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated world we long for." We are longing for a just and liberated world, and we believe that growing practices of mutual trust and vulnerability, consensus, restorative practices, and healing are essential to the world we envision, and often completely absent from traditional learning and work environments.

Follow us, brave would-be collaborators, step-by-step, through the portal to collective agency, enthusiasm, and meaningful (real) connection! Pick up the pieces when personal drama, betrayal, and misunderstandings threaten to tear everything apart. Use these practices to help any group of strangers become collaborators.

Wonder why you're
here with strangers.
Wonder what magic is
set to happen here.

CREATING A COMMUNITY

Sit on a thin velvet pillow on a bright yellow floor in a circle of people. Look around. They are still strangers, all young people, as diverse as they are eccentric: sporting impossibly cool, hodge-podged thrift store ensembles or rare sneakers, delicately fanned eyeliner, too many chains or an elegant t-shirt. Chew a clementine. Munch a cheese puff. Hold hands with these strangers for the very first time. Pass a squeeze through your hands like pulse of energy. Wonder why you're here with strangers. Wonder what magic is set to happen here.

Establish Rituals.

Routine processes become monotonous without meaning, and novel experiences become lost without grounding. Repetitive actions become sacred when regarded with respect and administered as collective rites. Do them mindfully instead of simply out of necessity. Bringing everyone together in ritual, creates space for confident exploration.

INGREDIENTS:

- Consistency.
- Authenticity.
- Business.

PROCESS:

1. Begin every meeting exactly the same way. It should be useful AND special. Incorporate self-care and emotional check-ins, like asking everyone for a rose and a thorn (an emotional high and low from the past week).
2. End every meeting exactly the same way. It should be short AND special. Incorporate reflection and emotional check-outs.

Set Intentions: Me, We, and Them.

When people come from different backgrounds and experiences, take time to talk through and come to a consensus about how you want to work together. How do you want to feel together? What is the basis of your trust? What will you do when things go wrong? How do you want to grow together? Witness the personal values of each individual. Imagine the people beyond your circle who will be impacted by your work. How do you want to change the world together?

INGREDIENTS:

- People committed to growing together
- An Incisive Facilitator
- Time (more than you think)

PROCESS:

1. Write first.
2. Speak second.
3. Disagree until you agree.
4. Return and reflect as often as needed.

Take a Long Walk With Nothing To Talk About.

Create too much empty time with no way out. Give everyone the opportunity to run through their small talk routines, slog through awkwardness, and discover authentic connections with others in the group.

INGREDIENTS:

- (Basically) Strangers.
- Boredom.
- Time.
- A physical rhythm, a stride.

PROCESS:

1. Decide to walk to a festival in the park and vastly underestimate the time it will take you to get there.
2. Take the scenic route by the lake.
3. Walk for so long that people start to wonder if you've gone the right way.
4. Go the wrong way. It doesn't matter. Let go of that impulse to get somewhere.

Watch as one of you dons a clown nose and walks to an impromptu stage in front of the group. Wait as they breathe, back turned. Breathe. Prepare as they turn around, shake out their limbs, and assemble a stable posture. Stare, expectant, as they lock eyes, one by one, with every single person in the room until their eyes reach your eyes. Concentrate, as competing and confusing urges flood the gulf between your eyes and their eyes. Laugh if you want to. Cry if you need to. Look into their very being. Hold their gaze. Wonder why locking eyes is so intimate and so challenging.



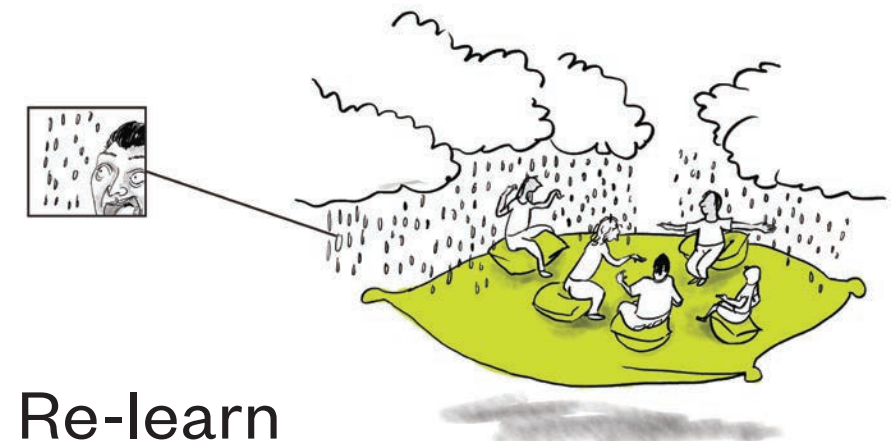
A

Creating a Community:
Why gather a group of strangers to sit in a circle? What magic is set to happen here?



B

Sustaining a Community:
When you get there, it will start to rain. Greet the unexpected thunderstorm with abandon and joy. We've learned to let go. We know plans are only as strong as they are flexible. We might as well dance.



Re-learn Facilitation with Flair.

Spaces where everyone's voice matters equally are rare. Learn how to actively unmake power structures together. Start with one of the many accessible resources for learning facilitation skills based in popular education (for example: the UK-based Seeds for Change, Mariame Kaba's "Something is Wrong Curriculum"). Then make it your own. Creating a space of belonging requires more than pre-packaged facilitation skills. It requires inside jokes and idiosyncratic communication—daily reminders that we are a part of something special.

INGREDIENTS:

- A Facilitation Guide.
- Inventiveness.
- Commitment.

PROCESS:

1. Review the Facilitation Guide together.
2. Take a close look at some of the concrete facilitation tactics: hand signals, non-verbals, and verbal probes.

3. Re-imagine those tactics. Keep their function, jettison their particular expression in favor of something personal to your group. (For example, instead of signaling agreement with snapping or silent applause, we "twinkle" by waving our fingers like we're shooting out sparkly magic.)

SUSTAINING A COMMUNITY

When March attacks with its hopeless gloom, when the cold grey sidewalk and cold white walls press in maliciously, when tensions pull and pull and suddenly snap, cancel your plans. When you see in each other's faces only leaden masks, throw out your deadlines and get cozy. Dig out a clamp light and a fan and a handful of orange and red gels and stage a campfire in the conference room. It's Saturday. There are no meetings today. Pull out all the pillows. Sit together in a circle as long as you need to mend your foundation.

Serve An Elixir.

When energy is low, provide an opportunity for collective rejuvenation. Sometimes, it is not enough to just have a party, take a break, or buy treats. In these situations, employ a ceremony that speaks to the body and the soul. Find herbs, spices, and teas with symbolic properties relevant to the group's intentions. Brew them and serve a drink as you renew your commitment to the collective.

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 different herbs, spices, or teas with symbolic relevance.
- 4 clear pitchers with water.
- 4 small strainers.
- Cups to go around.

PROCESS:

1. Sit in a circle.
2. Introduce each herb, spice, or tea. Allow it to infuse in a pitcher of water as you discuss what it symbolizes for the group. Synthesize that symbolism into one word. For example, fennel grows anywhere in the world and can survive harsh environments. Fennel = resilience.
3. Pass each pitcher and strainer around. Everyone should put all 4 infusions into their cup, one by one.
4. Go around and invite everyone to recommit to the four values symbolized: one by one, say them aloud and drink deeply.

Walk around the room, feel the energy of those walking around you, making eye contact. When you hear me strike the singing bowl, pause with whomever you're making eye contact with. You will support each other in this moment. Lean on your partner back to back. Find balance. Take a deep breath make a long, sustained hum. Feel the connection buzzing between your bodies. Take another deep breath, and on your exhale, turn around and hug someone.

Cultivate Disagreement

When a group has cohered enough to value one another's approval, but not quite enough to truly trust, beware the valley of conformity. Individuals may swallow disagreement for fear of threatening the spirit of community. Cultivate a taste for responsible disagreement. Use ridiculous talking pieces to encourage humor and humility. Invite people to put on different hats, literally, to remind one another that we are all more than one perspective or identity, so every decision or conversation is also full of joyful facets and contradictions.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 wig.
- 1 battery-powered candle.

PROCESS:

1. Use the candle as a talking piece to allow people to speak in support of a decision, to explain where it GLOWS.
2. After a time with the candle, switch to the wig. This is an opportunity to offer dissent, to make room for the perspective of the group to GROW.

Address Conflict

It exists. Ignore it and it will poison everything. Address it and create opportunities for the transformation of relationships.

INGREDIENTS:

- A conflict.
- People in conflict, isolated in painful reaction to some active harm or unfortunate misunderstanding.
- A neutral circle keeper.

PROCESS:

1. Set aside everything else.
2. Sit in a circle
3. Use restorative questions: What happened? How were you thinking then? How are you feeling now? What do you need from this community to put things right?
4. Take all the time you need.

(NOT QUITE) ENDING A COMMUNITY

Burn something important. Evergreen is one of the best trees. It smells good and it lasts forever. Let it be a symbol of the immortality of this moment. Yes, we will move on. Yes, this moment will disappear into the past. But light a fire, remember that our passions and intentions and connections can remain evergreen. You are this fire, releasing that wordless goodness into the future with enthusiasm, excitement, activity, and will.

Celebrate Everything (Including Mistakes) with Pomp.

You cannot prioritize the community and whole person within it by only making time for work. Celebrate like it matters, because it does. Prioritize joy. Nourish joy when it occurs naturally. Create joy where it is conspicuously absent. Congratulate everyone for their successes and their failures. Congratulate everyone for being vulnerable, finding the trust to disagree, fighting for this community through conflict, and making it to this day.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 trivial accomplishment.
- 4 bottles of Martinelli's Sparkling Cider.
- 24 champagne flutes.
- 1 champagne saber.

Pour Out Your Heart

It's hard to end well.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 large pitcher of water.
- Hands of those you love.

PROCESS:

1. Bring everyone close together.
2. Everyone layers their hands face up, each one touching others, in the center of the circle.
3. The pourer says, "I carry your heart," and slowly pours water on all the hands.
4. The moment water touches your hand you say, "I carry it in my heart."
5. (Really feel.) (Really mean it.)

Leave a Legacy, a Wish, Advice Someone Will Cherish

Share the gift of your values and experiences. Make a zine or a journal. Draw a picture. Write a hand-written note to the future. Dear future, hold these values close, trust yourself, trust your community.

INGREDIENTS:

Paper and your favorite writing tool.

Time (don't worry if it feels like too much time).

Aloneness.

PROCESS:

1. Sit apart, even as you feel the presence of your group more deeply than ever.
2. Imagine your time together.
3. Reflect on how you have grown and changed.
4. Manifest continued transformation.



A

A

(Not Quite) Ending a Community: Pop a bottle of sparkling cider in dollar store champagne flutes, link arms, and dance to your favorite youtube channel. The pushing and the pain will blur in your memories, but these moments will stand out crisp and fresh as a midwinter morning.

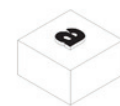
Celebrate like it matters, because it does. Prioritize joy.

FIAC 9: Scales of Collaboration

TANTO Criações Compartilhadas is a collective art and design practice based in Salvador, Brazil. Daniel Sabóia, Patricia Almeida and Fabio Steque began collaborating as students in the school of Architecture and Urban Planning at the Universidade Federal da Bahia. The artists-architects created their thesis project together, defying convention and rule in the department. TANTO's projects include installations and sculptural objects, designed spaces for creative action, and commissioned graphic design, often in collaboration with other artists, dance and theatre groups, publishers, and organizers.

Their project for the 9th FIAC (International Scene Arts Festival of Bahia) in 2016 opened up the creation of the festival's visual identity to the public, who came together to appropriate the means of design.

Marina Resende Santos



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TANTO Criações Compartilhadas

We like to experiment with creative collaboration across different scales and configurations. TANTO has a core structure, a tripod formed by three artists-architects. From that, TANTO branches out into wider nets of collaborations with performers, writers, musicians, filmmakers, visual artists, editors, curators, theater directors, and other partners. Each collaboration can point to a whole different direction, according to who is gathered around. It's really about being open to connecting to each process, trusting the collective instead of trying to force individual aspirations. You have to be humble enough to let your ideas be transformed or discarded by the collective force that is formed in the process. With time, we became more and more interested in the power of collaboration, for its creative as well as political force. In a time when Brazil's important public and cultural institutions are privatized, sabotaged and even literally burned down, as happened with the National Museum in 2018, we think that promoting encounters and exchanges through artistic processes is a form of resistance. So we started to think of ways to open our collaborations to wider and more diverse groups in some of our projects.

A good example of this effort are the visual identities that we create for the International Scene Arts Festival of Bahia (FIAC). We have worked with FIAC for five years now, and have developed a partnership with the curators so that our work is not restricted to graphic design and communication. We approach each year's concept as an artistic project that expands from the graphic material to collective actions and activities during the festival. For the ninth edition of FIAC, in 2016 we worked with the idea of layers, designing a set of graphic tools that can be played into many different arrangements. The first images in this set were created during an open workshop, where we made prints from the participants' entangling hands and arms directly on xerox machines and discussed gestures of contact and connection. We used those images to build the first layer of the visual identity, which we called the "base." We laid out the images with types in a graphic grid system, so that this layer worked as the base for a composition game using letter stamps and silk screens that we manufactured and offered to the public during the festival. Each poster, catalog, program, or nametag pertaining to the festival came "incomplete," or open, as an invitation to build new layers and transform. To bring the public around to add to the graphic material, we proposed *Graphic Patio*, a space activated

during the festival in collaboration with Sociedade da Prensa, a printmaking collective based in Salvador. There, the public, critics, and artists collaborated every day, creating from the set of tools we offered and over the bases made from the printed matter for the festival. In the end, what we really designed was a platform for collaboration. In this way, the concept for this edition of the festival was not merely illustrated graphically, but collectively performed, or played, by the public.

This openness to collaboration through play and gathering informs our work from the conceptual proposition to the constructive details of a project. We like to design "systems," not such that actions are controlled, but rather so that actions are suggested by the possibilities of playing with different configurations. We often pursue this by conceiving modular systems formed by connecting parts, where the points of connection are an eloquent feature of the design. For example, the modular plant holders in our installation *Câmbio Exchange Change* connect through a leg that sticks out from the orthogonal structure of each individual piece to reach others and form organic paths and gardens. In the speakers we created for a dance performance, *Looping: Bahia Overdub*, the design itself proposes different ways to hold and dance with the speakers, and forms graphic patterns when they are arranged together. For FIAC 9, we used a grid as a compositional matrix and graphic motif so that it that would inspire other compositions. We believe that play is a great way to connect people, by suspending ordinary life and proposing the shared construction of something just for the pleasure of doing it.

C



A

TANTO designed stamps for participants to add to the visual identity of the festival.

B

At the "graphic patio" created by TANTO, participants of the 9th International Scenic Arts Festival of Bahia (FIAC) played with stamps and printmaking tools offered by the collective, adding to the festival's graphic material. Photo by Patricia Almeida. Salvador, Brazil 2016.

C

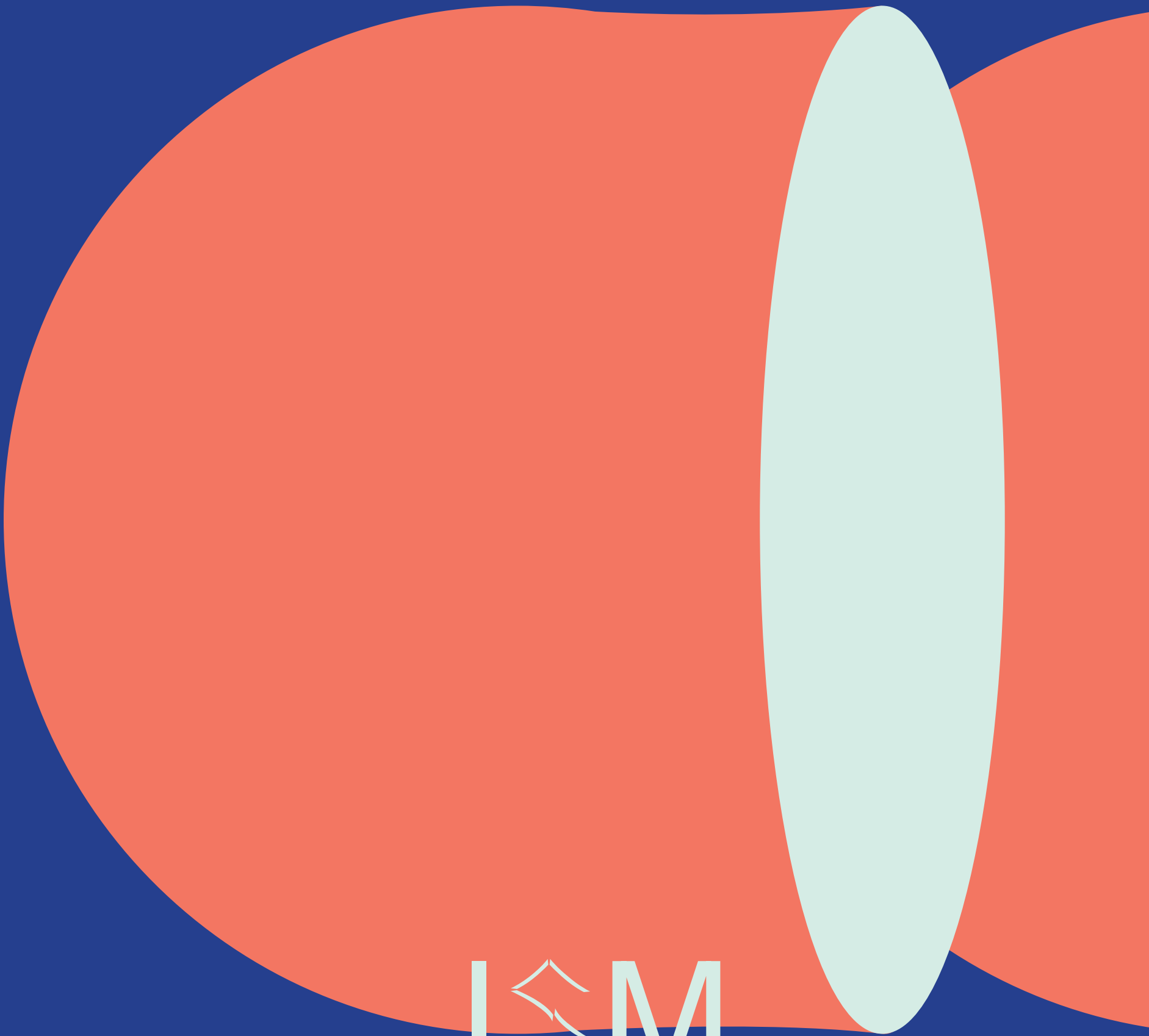
The base layer of the graphic material was created by photocopying the entangled hands of participants. Image courtesy of TANTO Criações Compartilhadas.



AN ISSUE

ON

TOGETHER



ISM

COLLABORATION
&

COLLECTIVES
&

COLLECTIVE
ACTION