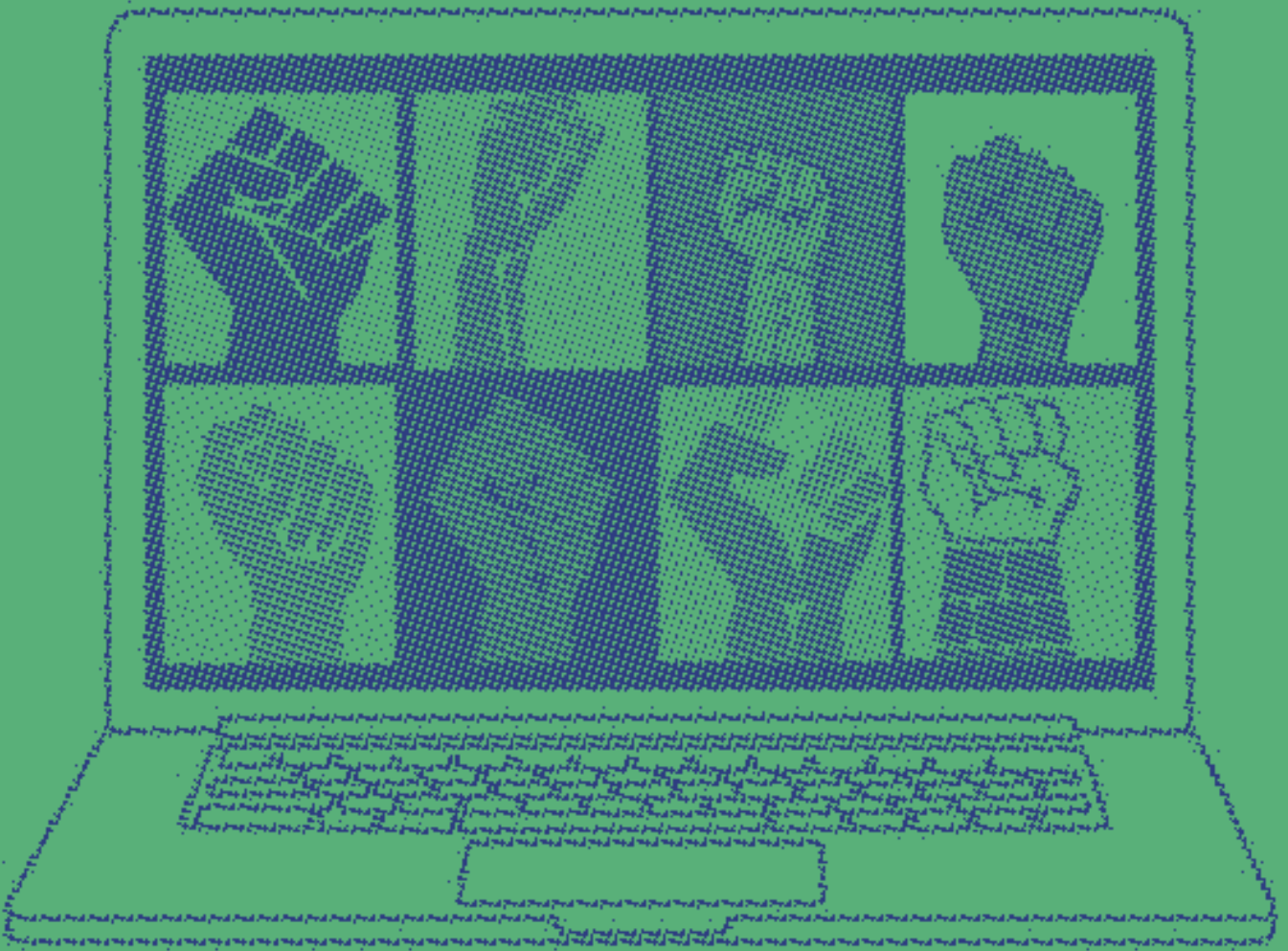


The Center for the Humanities

ANNUAL REPORT



2019



2020

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Caption: Stephen Snyder, Rivka Galchen, and Barbara Epler at Translating the Future: "Lightning in a Bottle: A Case Study of Publishing Literary Translation," August 4, 2020.

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Director's Foreword

Worlds within Worlds salon and tour of Jacolby Satterwhite's exhibition *You're at home* at Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, led by curator Gabriel Florenz, followed by a conversation with essayist Garnette Cadogan, artist Rachel Rossin, cognitive neuroscientist Tony Ro hosted by the Center's director Keith Wilson and the Wellcome Trust Mental Health Curatorial Research Fellow Rebecca Hayes Jacobs, November 20, 2019.

The Center for the Humanities at the Graduate Center, CUNY works with partners across the city and further afield on projects that are driven by locally grounded concerns. We share ideas about how to respond to urgent societal challenges, and we test out ideas practically and creatively with others. Working with a wide range of individuals and groups, we extend out from our academic home, building interdisciplinary teams that work together over time and sustain a shared focus. As our aims this year have so directly intersected with and been informed by world events, the relevance of our work has become starkly manifest, inspiring us to double down on our commitment to thinking and working in publicly responsive ways. A core aim of the Center has long been interdisciplinary work, and this year we specifically explored the interconnected discourses of science and the humanities.

In my first years as Director, and in partnership with the Wellcome Trust, we helped deliver the New York leg of their Contagious Cities project, which took infectious disease as its subject and epidemic preparedness as its purpose. Our next Wellcome-funded project will see us again partnering with local organizations and international co-investigators, this time with a focus on mental health. I am delighted to report the appointment of Rebecca Jacobs as our Wellcome Trust Postdoctoral Curatorial Research Fellow, who is taking the lead on this initiative.

Our entire team had to swiftly migrate our activities online, and I am pleased with just how much we have been able to deliver digitally with the help of our many partners, and through the imaginative hard work of the Center's entire team. For example, the pandemic lockdown hit New York just as the James Gallery was preparing to publicly launch work from the Racial

Imaginary Institute's residency, which forced that project to extend into a longer term.

In the short term, last spring we focused on supporting cultural workers and students hit hard by the pandemic, alongside transitioning and adapting our wider program. Events such as the James Gallery's ART • WORK • PLACE, the Mellon Seminar's Sancocho Live!, and the PEN America Translating the Future series have been serving large, increasingly international audiences, and we find ourselves working ever more to an international clock. The Center shined in its capacity to respond sensitively and invent new forms that proved vital to making direct, person-to-person connections within a wider world.

Motivated by a desire to support and amplify the Black Lives Matter movement, this coming academic year will see us continuing our work across disciplines—convening, provoking, amplifying, and advocating—toward projects that indict violent, oppressive, and racist systems and imagine, model, and thereby help create better futures.

Summer 2020 has brought stark reminders of how much work there still is to do at local, national, and international levels regarding both racial justice and pandemic preparedness, and of the profound societal connections between the two. The coming academic year will see us exploring some of these connections, for instance, through our work with Wellcome's mental health initiative, as we build on the tragically heightened relevance of our programming and channel our renewed awareness to create innovative structures for public conversation. We will also prepare for the fragile return of physical proximity and dream up new forms that our work together can take.

Keith Wilson, Director

Letter from the Staff

Brent Edwards and Fred Moten in conversation on Cecil Taylor in the James Gallery, October 2019.

The Center for the Humanities has long been a robust and transformational research environment in which the best of humanities work has thrived, even in the most challenging times. That mission continued throughout this past academic year, even as we responded to the ongoing pandemic, taking on new shapes, appearances, and audiences for our work. We have a long commitment to providing dialogical, interdisciplinary, public, and collaborative research opportunities that complement the foundational work of the subject-specific programs here at the Graduate Center, CUNY alongside the vibrant creative activity of New York City. Together, we address urgent issues of global resonance with innovative, collaborative, and responsive research.

At this time of deep uncertainty, it has become ever more urgent that we reaffirm our commitment to public inquiry—by continuing our drive to make our activities accessible and by amplifying the voices of the scholars, activists, and artists who have become a part of the Center’s family, both past and present.

As we have made the transition to hosting programming online for larger and more geographically dispersed audiences, our events have continued to be free and open to the public, and dialogue with our audience has remained an essential part of our panels, screenings, exhibitions, performances, and conversations.

One of our most central missions remains to connect work coming out of the Graduate Center with the greater CUNY community, which is as diverse and varied as New York City itself. Our work involves the participation of senior- and community-college faculty, adjuncts, and undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral students at all 25 CUNY campuses across all five boroughs. Our commitment

to support our own CUNY community has deepened over the past several months through small and mid-sized relief grants that support student and contingent faculty impacted by COVID, alongside new professional, writing, research fellowship opportunities for Graduate Center and CUNY students.

Our core values are best exemplified in the nature of our collaborations and the projects we support and develop. We have organized our annual report to reflect our extraordinary range of collaborators, including students (p. 9), faculty (p. 26), and wider publics (p. 36). We champion work that bridges disciplines, questions social constructs, and creates new models for how scholarship can serve social justice. In our collaborations, researchers, practitioners, artists, and community members use their expertise to articulate and tackle urgent civic issues.

In these pages, you’ll find out about many of our exciting projects this year, including:

- ➔ The Center’s appointment of the Wellcome Trust Curatorial Research Fellow, Rebecca Jacobs, who is working with Wellcome to develop future programming related to mental health;
- ➔ In-development projects led by faculty and students from across CUNY through the Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research on topics including the role of public syllabi in fostering social change, the educational activism of Black mothers in Harlem, care collectives of interdependent disability communities, undocu-immigrant-led initiatives devised in the wake of COVID-19, and activating communities and participatory budgeting toward resilience and climate justice, among many others;

- *Lost & Found* Light Relief, which provided small stipends for students and poets affected by the pandemic to publish their short-form digital work that engaged or expanded archives and/or archival theory;
- The continuation of the Object Library's artist-in-residence program and the creation of an interdisciplinary student research team to support the production of a docu-fiction film on the comedienne Mae West;
- Projects developed as part of the CUNY Adjunct Incubator, along with other funding opportunities for contingent faculty;
- The James Gallery's collaborative research and programs such as "On Nationalism" with poet Claudia Rankine and the Racial Imaginary Institute in their first year in residence at the James Gallery; exhibitions of new research of international importance examining Refugee Modernism and Tricontinentalism; the Zoom discussion series ART • WORK • PLACE, which stemmed out of seminars led by Graduate Center students examining the institutional work of museums and responded to the crises of economic and racial inequality in cultural institutions in the wake of the pandemic; and Pressing Public Issues, a series of projects organized by visiting artists and community college faculty and students;
- New writing in the public humanities through our publishing platform *Distributaries* by CUNY students, faculty, and past and present collaborators, including our new *Distributaries* Writer-in-Residence.

This work is made possible only with the generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their support of the Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research and the Curatorial Practicum and Fellowship

at the James Gallery; Amie and Tony James for their support of all the James Gallery programs, research and artist residencies, as well as the Object Library and the Mae West residency project; the Engaging the Senses Foundation, Margo and Anthony Viscusi, and the Early Research Initiative for their support of *Lost & Found: the CUNY Poetics Document Initiative*; the Sylvia Klatzin Steinig Fund and the Gittell Collective for their support of the CUNY Adjunct Incubator; the Wellcome Trust for their support of the Postdoctoral Curatorial Research Fellowship; Max Palevsky for his endowment of the Irving Howe Lecture and the family of Stanley Burnshaw for their endowment of the Stanley Burnshaw Lecture, established by Professor Morris Dickstein and hosted every other year by the Harry Ransom Center for Research in the Humanities at the University of Texas, Austin; World Poetry Books, Bread Loaf Translators Conference, Tess Lewis, ARC, Middlebury College, LTI Korea, Princeton University, Amazon, Boston University, Institut Ramon Llull, The Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library, the Yiddish Books Center, Polish Cultural Institute, PEN America, and the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center for their support of the Translating the Future event series; the Vera Shlakman Irrevocable Trust for their support in honor of the Herbert Gutman Memorial Fund; and the Provost's Office at the Graduate Center for their support of the Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research, the Object Library, *Lost & Found*, and the James Gallery. Finally, this work depends on the active and engaged participation of our publics, to whom we extend our heartfelt thanks. We hope you will enjoy learning more about the work we do and that you might join us!

Staff of the Center for the Humanities

Student Engagement

GC student Rojo Robles presents on his Lost & Found publication *Pedro Pletri: Condoms Poems 4 Sale One Size Fits All* at the launch of Lost & Found Series VIII.

The Center for the Humanities offers a wide variety of opportunities for Graduate Center students by supporting projects with broad-reaching impact across CUNY, in New York City, and beyond. By funding student research, supporting skill development, connecting students with community partners, and offering logistical support for public-facing projects, the Center supports professional exploration and advancement.

For instance, the James Gallery mentors and collaborates continuously with students in the arts, humanities and social sciences, as they actively practice new methods of work with the public in combination with approaches from their own disciplines. Students conceptualize their multifaceted projects through dialogue with curators and fellow scholars, journalists, artists, and public non-governmental organizations on the local, national, and international levels. This foregrounds aspects of doctoral research that grow out of public discussion and that might otherwise be left out of the traditional disciplines of graduate study and usual modes of presentation. Their projects dig deeply into the questions that motivate public discourse and academic practice in many fields. In addition to scholarly writing and organizing seminars, students may also explore how to spatialize their arguments in the gallery and invent other formats that foster artistic communities and create connections across disciplines. These multi-year primary research projects contribute unique knowledge that furthers the development of scholarly fields through methods that invite exchange with people outside the academy.

The James Gallery offered five student fellowships this year with the support of the President's and Provost's Offices. In spring 2020, two James Gallery Fellowships for the

2020-21 year, supported through the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Curatorial Practicum, were awarded to students for exhibition and public programs in Decolonial Curatorial Practice. Six first-year art history students also received financial aid to work in the gallery, learning and contributing to the inner workings of a nonprofit art space. Through these myriad, in-depth collaborations in the James Gallery, students actively participate in their fields professionally before completing their degrees.

The Andrew W. Mellon Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research provides students with two years of training

UNIT STRUCTURES THE ART OF CECIL TAYLOR



OCTOBER 23-26, 2019
THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY AND BROOKLYN COLLEGE

Visit the conference website for more information and to register:
unitstructures.commonscuny.edu

Cosponsored by the Center for the Humanities, Advanced Research Collaborative, the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean (IRADAC), PublicLab, Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative, the James Gallery, the Baisley Powell Eisen Fund, the PhD Program in English, the PhD Program in Music at the Graduate Center, CUNY, and the Hitchcock Institute for the Study of American Music at Brooklyn College, and Constance Old.

Photos of Cecil Taylor by Allen Ginsberg, courtesy Stanford University Libraries/Allen Ginsberg Estate
Design by Partner & Partners

Poster for the conference Unit Structures: The Art of Cecil Taylor, organized by GC student Michelle Yom.

and support to develop public-facing projects with community partners on urgent themes, grounded in social justice. This year, we selected an incredible cohort of eight student fellows. Digital Publics Fellows will utilize video, web design, and machine learning, among many other methods, to produce groundbreaking digital humanities research projects. Teaching Publics Fellows (including one in partnership with the Teaching and Learning Center) will work in classrooms across CUNY to develop innovative pedagogy and public humanities practices in their curricula. And our Provost's Fellow in the Public Humanities will work to connect public humanities work across CUNY campuses and to envision structures for the longevity of this work. Additionally, our *Distributaries* writer in residence will spend the next year publishing short-form writing on the urgency of the public humanities in higher education today.

Providing students with editorial and design support, our online publication *Distributaries* provides opportunities for CUNY graduate and undergraduate students to publish timely short-form writing on issues including digital pedagogy and the COVID-19 pandemic; the ongoing legacy of Audre Lorde's writing, teaching, and activism; and the ethics of archival practice.

Our research and publishing platform *Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative* also continued its mission to engage students in collaborative archival and editorial research methods, granting 14 archival research stipends to GC students and publishing five chapbooks of previously unpublished writing by twentieth-century authors, researched and edited by GC students.

Another essential component of promoting student research is supporting student-organized public events and conferences, such as the incredibly ambitious, four-day conference *Unit Structures: The Art of Cecil Taylor*, organized by GC student Michelle Yom.

Further, the Object Library's artist-in-residence program has offered students the opportunity to work closely with professional creative practitioners, using their own research toward the production of documentary films and artworks through projects like Mariam Ghani's *Dis-ease* and Virginia Heath's *Mae West - The Constant Sinner*.

This past spring, *Lost & Found* created an open call for micro-grants for creative work within our extended community of poets, artists, scholars, and students, inviting them to publish short-form digital works on the Center's website. We also granted six student scholarships to participate in "For the Time Being: Writing in the Pause," a series of three in-depth summer writing workshops organized by poet Sara Jane Stoner that connected them with an extended writing community of workshop attendees and eleven guest workshop leaders on embodied, text-based teaching.

The Center's programs help build a foundation for students to successfully attain further fellowships and funding opportunities for their public projects, to nurture collaborations, and to navigate their future professional careers both in and outside of academia. We hope that these offerings—and others in the works—will help students negotiate the new environment we find ourselves in at the onset of the next academic year and beyond.

Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative

Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative publishes original texts by figures central to and associated with New American Poetry. Poised at the intersection of scholarly investigation, innovative publishing, and cultural preservation, each *Lost & Found* chapbook emphasizes the importance of collaborative and archival research.

Each year, these efforts result in the production of a new *Lost & Found* series that includes extra-poetic material such as correspondence, journals, and transcriptions of lectures.

This year marked the publication of our *Series VIII*, featuring Argentinian exile Julio Cortázar's little-known first book involving John Keats, Diane Di Prima's lecture notes as she works

Iris Cushing presenting at the *Lost & Found: Series VIII* Launch.





Left to right, top to bottom: Photo of Rev. Pedro Pietri, 1990, courtesy of ADÁL; Photo of Jack Spicer and Mary Norbert Korte at the 1965 Berkeley Poetry Conference, by Tové Neville, with permission of The Estate of Jack Spicer; Photo of Diane di Prima by Allen Ginsberg, courtesy Stanford University Libraries / Allen Ginsberg Estate; Photo of Julio Cortázar in 1967 by Sara Facio; Photograph of Muriel Rukeyser by Nancy Naumberg, 1937 courtesy of Bill Rukeyser.

through Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, poet and nun Mary Norbert Korte's handwritten responses to Michael McClure's *Ghost Tantras*, as well as Muriel Rukeyser's student translation of Arthur Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell*. The series also includes selections from Nuyorican poet and activist Pedro Pietri's writing, alongside an envelope of reproduced visual artifacts.

Series VIII includes the following publications:

Julio Cortázar: *Julio y John, caminando y conversando: Selections from Imagen de John Keats*

Edited by translated by Olivia Loksing Moy and Marco Ramírez Rojas

Diane di Prima: *Prometheus Unbound as a Magickal Working*

Edited by Iris Cushing

"the difficulties involved": Muriel Rukeyser's *Selections from A Season in Hell by Arthur Rimbaud*

Edited by Chris Clarke

"a strange gift": Mary Norbert Korte's *Response to Michael McClure's Ghost Tantras*
Edited by Mary Catherine Kinniburgh

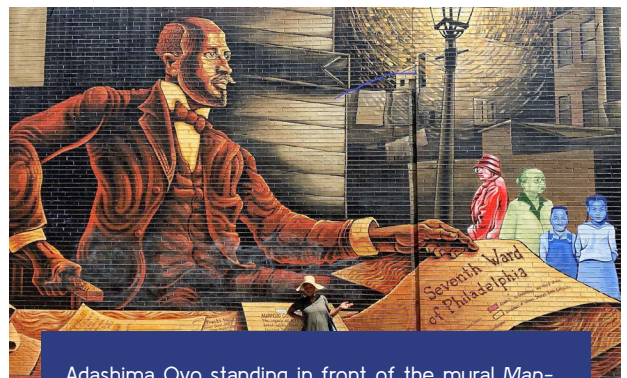
Pedro Pietri: *Condom Poems 4 Sale One Size Fits All*

Edited by Rojo Robles; Afterword by Cristina Pérez Díaz

LOST & FOUND FELLOWSHIPS

Thanks to the generous support of the Early Research Initiative, *Lost & Found* awarded 14 archival research grants and fellowships to students:

Rojo Robles's project *Pedro Pietri: Condom Poems 4 Sale One Size Fits All* delved into poet and artist Pietri's archive of poetic texts, activist artworks, and conceptual performances that drew attention to the AIDS epidemic and the sexual health of the Nuyorican community during the late '80s.



Adashima Oyo standing in front of the mural *Mapping Courage: Honoring W.E.B. Du Bois and Engine #11*, by artist Carl Willis Humphrey, which shows Du Bois (left), looking out into a Seventh Ward scene with each resident colored according to Du Bois's social class hierarchy, part of the first scientific study of race that served as the basis for his 1899 paper, "The Philadelphia Negro."

Adashima Oyo is conducting archival research for her project "Can't Hear Him: The Warnings W.E.B. Du Bois Gave for Eliminating Health Disparities & Achieving Health Equity" to investigate the signs and resolutions that Du Bois

presented about the problem of racial differences he provided and to consider why he was not heard.

César Augusto Coca Vargas's project "Defying genres: Liliana Heker's written and visual testimonies at the Café de los Angelitos (1960)" reflects on the links between gender, literature, and politics in the Argentine cultural context of the 1960s in relation to Heker's work.

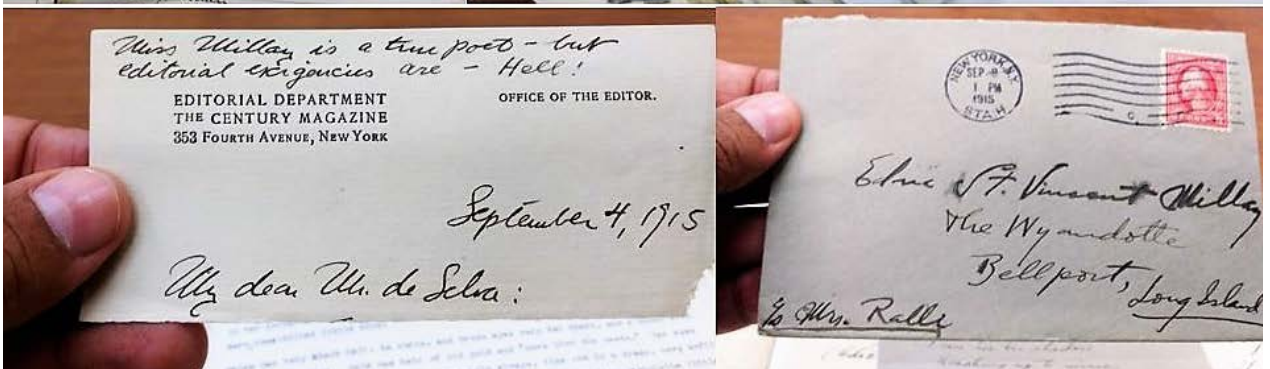
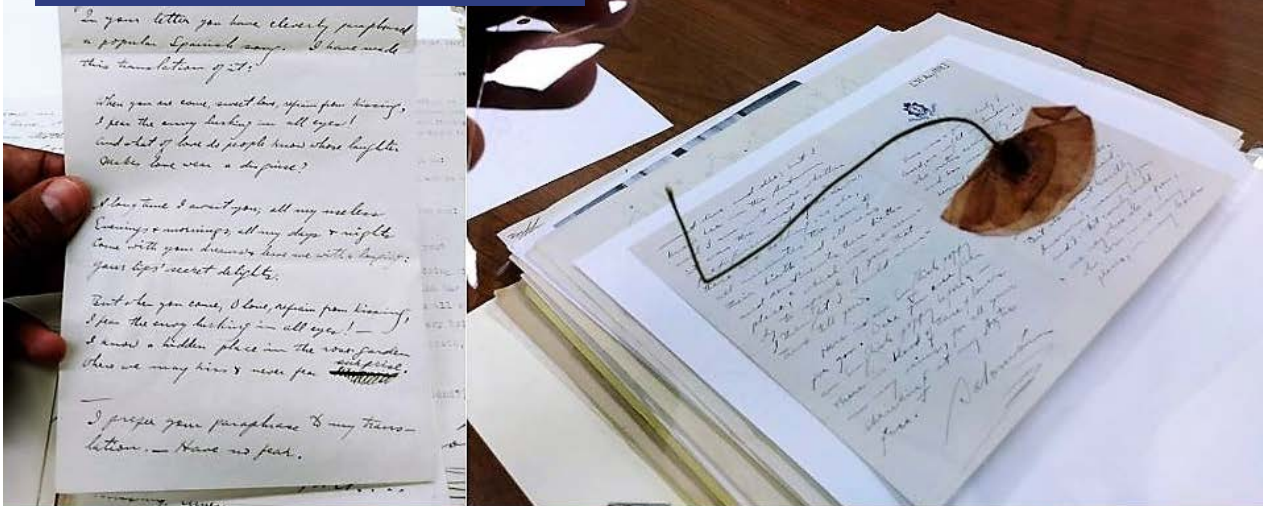
Robert P. Robinson is researching Dr. Asa Hilliard's connection to the Black Panthers' Oakland Community School to consider the building of a racially conscious curriculum in the 1960s and 1970s alongside warm collegial relationships among a community of Black scholars, activists, and everyday people.

Christopher Clarke's project centers around the New York journal of literary criticism *Kulchur* (1961-65) to consider the overlooked role played by the journal in formulating the poetics of its day.

Carlos G. Espinal explores the literary and social milieu of a seminal figure within NYC's Hispanic community, Salomon de la Selva, through looking at his correspondence with writers such as Edna St. Vincent Millay and Edwin Markham, as well as his public interventions.

Khaled Al Hilli's project continues to trace the literary encounters of Sargon Boulus, an Iraqi poet who was part of the vibrant literary scene of late '60s San Francisco, before formulating his vision for a modernist, cosmopolitan poetics in Arabic.

Salomon de la Selva's archival papers, including correspondence with Edna St. Vincent Millay.



Jacob Aplaca's project examines the archive of filmmaker and installation artist Isaac Julien and his seminal film *Looking for Langston* (1989) as a means of meditating on the making of the film, the fostering of a queer community among the film's participants and, most significantly, the losses *Looking* brings to light: that of Hughes and those of the AIDS crisis.

Bhargav Rani's research and project looks at the rich history of neighborhood musha'iras (poetry jams) and amateur poets in the city of Banaras in northern India, exploring the performance of a fundamentally egalitarian urban consciousness known as banarasipan (Banarasi-"ness") as taking shape at the intersection of, and challenging, Enlightenment modernity under both global imperialism and militant Hindu nationalism.

Roberto Elvira Mathez is researching the correspondence between Williams Carlos Williams and José Vazquez-Amara, as they started to translate recognized communist and socialist poets from Latin America, such as Pablo Neruda and Nicanor Parra, seeking to recover a prominent intellectual figure of American Chicano tradition, who remained anonymous in the translations, and to dive deeper into this unique literary event in New American Poetry.

Brad Fox continued his research in New Haven, CT, working in the Ira Cohen papers held in the Beinecke Library, as he compiles a project with Darius James, involving interviews and unpublished or out-of-print work.

Stefano Morello is collecting material from personal archives and engaging in conversations with local punks in the San Francisco Bay Area, while working on the East Bay Punk Digital Archive (EBP-DA).

Onur Anyaz researched the work of Raphael Patai (1910-96), a cultural anthropologist and

preeminent scholar specializing in Jewish and Arab cultures, who recorded Arab and Jewish folk tales from regions such as Palestine and Israel.

Jeff Voss's project revisits artist David Wojnarowicz's artwork and archive through the lens of his friendships, exploring his correspondences, tapes, and journal entries.

UNIT STRUCTURES: THE ART OF CECIL TAYLOR CONFERENCE



In memory of the late Cecil Taylor, this four-day conference, organized by GC student Michelle Yom, aimed to build upon Taylor scholarship in jazz and American music studies, while celebrating Taylor's work as an educator by hosting three concerts, including a large ensemble workshop led by bassoonist/improviser Karen Borca, who passed on a composition dictated to her by Taylor.

To open the conference, Brent Hayes Edwards and Fred Moten hosted a listening session in the James Gallery featuring Cecil Taylor's poetry performances. Drawing from their

ongoing research collaboration involving Taylor's unpublished poetry manuscripts, Edwards and Moten facilitated an immersive experience that delved into sounds, the voice, poetics, politics, representation, and performance—with Cecil Taylor's poetry/music/practice—through the faculty of our listening(s).

This conference also was the occasion for the launch of two *Lost & Found Then & Now* publications highlighting ephemera and reflection on Taylor's work.

LIGHT RELIEF FROM LOST & FOUND

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, *Lost & Found* created an open call for micro-grants for creative work within our extended community of poets, artists, scholars, and students, inviting them to dive into their personal archives, or the archives of their research focus, to publish short-form digital works.

Matthew Shipp (piano) William Parker (bass) and Andrew Cyrille (drums) play the opening concert for the "Unit Structures: The Art of Cecil Taylor" conference at the Graduate Center, CUNY.



Karen Borca leading a 23-piece big band performing compositions by Cecil Taylor at Brooklyn College in the culminating event of the "Unit Structures: The Art of Cecil Taylor" conference, organized by Michelle Yom. Photo by David Grubbs.



The lightness of “Light Relief” also extends to the work itself—readily available fragments from works in progress, or works completed, rather than extensive work or reproductions from the archive. Although our offering was modest, we

hoped to at least give some support to those whose incomes have been compromised but whose work remains crucial. We were able to offer 50 writers \$100 each to publish their work.

Mellon Seminar Student Fellows

Since 2015, the Center for the Humanities has built institutional and community infrastructure to support an extensive platform for critical public humanities scholarship, pedagogy, and advocacy through the Andrew W. Mellon Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research.

Inspired by CUNY educators ranging from Audre Lorde and June Jordan (past) to Bianca C. Williams and Cathy Davidson (present), and building out of CUNY’s legacy of pronounced social engagement, our aim has been to produce public humanities scholarship with a progressive, activist agenda.

Images from top left and clockwise: GC Graduate Student Gleneara E. Bates works with patients at Montefiore Hospital; 2017-19 Seminar participants plan their projects; IntegrateNYC students sign their Constitution for Real Integration; Publishing American Sign Language Poetry event panelists converse during the Q & A.



Each iteration of our Seminar has brought 40+ people together to rethink the meaning and application of scholarly work through creative, pedagogical, community-centered projects on topics ranging from translation and climate action to youth-led public education reform, the implementation of immersive AR/VR environments that enhance patient experience in pediatric care units, and the role of public education in the lives of formerly incarcerated women.

These projects—co-led by faculty and students from CUNY senior and community colleges and their civic/cultural partners—are prefigurative experiments, modeling and implementing a more equitable society in their internal organization and their external goals. While the projects are the initial reason collaborators come together, the arc of their work exceeds the completion of any one project and exemplifies the power of prolonged creative engagement to foster and preserve community. The cumulative effect of each project lifts, affirms, and contributes value and meaning to wider social movements.

The 2020-22 transdisciplinary cohort includes seven faculty leads from six CUNY campuses, and eight PhD student fellows were selected to develop public humanities projects with community partners on urgent themes in Public Discourse, Urban Neighborhoods, and Blue Humanities. The group will collaborate on the production of engaged, project-based, and creative, participatory research.

DIGITAL PUBLICS FELLOWS

Pedro Cabello del Moral (Latin American, Iberian and Latino Cultures/LAILAC) will mobilize decolonial methodologies, post-COVID-19, to practice and share non-hierarchical meaningful ways to create, critique, and interact with media.

Courtney Frantz (Sociology) will produce a permanent, public, accessible, troll-free online format to facilitate the making of care collectives for disabled people creating networks of interdependence.

Nga Than (Sociology) will use digital trace data and machine learning to analyze political polarization on social media and how hate speech and dis/information spreads from one platform to another.

TEACHING PUBLICS FELLOWS

Jadele McPherson (Cultural Anthropology) is exploring Afrofuturist and Afro-Caribbean sound ecologies with artists, students, and scholars. Through innovative performance methods, McPherson will study how sound can alter or shift environments.

Fernanda Blanco Vidal (Environmental Psychology) is working as a joint Teaching Fellow through both the Center for the Humanities and the Teaching and Learning Center. She is working with her students to produce public art projects on issues related to climate change, with a focus on gentrification and displacement.

Rosa Squillacote (Political Science) is developing a political pedagogy program that provides both training and resources for professors in different disciplines to engage their students as democratic citizens, while working to expand the definition and experience of democratic citizenship.

Eric Dean Wilson (English) is initiating conversation in both the classroom and public panels around narratives of the oceanic crisis, through a wide range of narrative approaches from the journalistic and artistic to the academic, activist, and scientific.

PROVOST'S FELLOW IN THE PUBLIC HUMANITIES

Kristine Riley (Sociology) will work with CUNY administration to bridge and amplify public humanities initiatives across CUNY campuses. Her own work centers prison abolition, and she will develop a suite of public programs and publications with youth organizers.

DISTRIBUTARIES WRITER IN RESIDENCE

Building on the success of *Lost & Found*, the Center's award-winning poetry publication series, and our blog, we are now working to build a CUNY "publishing neighborhood" that advances scholarship trenchant to discourses surrounding public humanities—its aims, strands, and activist potential—through our new digital and print publication platform *Distributaries*.

Left: Queenie Sukhadia, Writer in Residence; and right: screengrab of *Distributaries* article "Why the Humanities Need to Go Public, and the Ways in Which they Already Are" by Queenie Sukhadia.



Why the Humanities Need to Go Public, and the Ways in Which They Already Are

August 03, 2020



Image description: The off-white facade of the CUNY Graduate Center appears, which consists of four graying columns and three entryways with ornate overhangs made of curved steel and glass. People are scattered on the street in front, some in groups, others walking past alone; one is pushing another person who is seated in a wheelchair; several people hold phones to their ears.

Photo  by Wikimedia Commons user Beyond My Ken, 2011.

Queenie Sukhadia

We are excited to announce that, over the next academic year, our first *Distributaries* Writer in Residence, Queenie Sukhadia, will work closely with the Mellon's cohort of faculty fellows, graduate students, and community partners to develop critical, creative, and constructive

writing about public humanities practices, the institutionalization of such practices at CUNY and across New York City, specific projects underway as part of the seminar, and the broader social implications of the means and methods of their work.

The Object Library

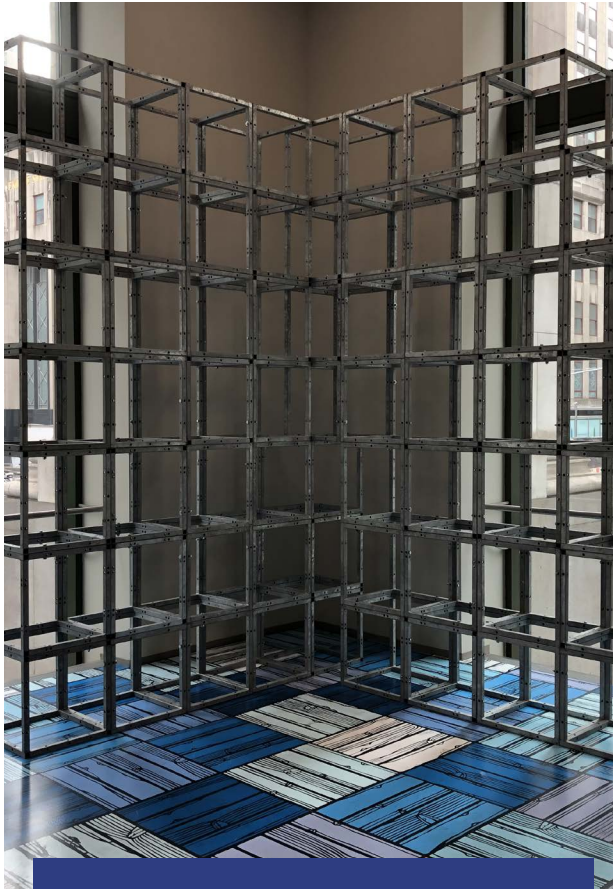
Conceived and installed in AY 2018-19, **The Object Library** is a hybrid space that combines a library with a sculpture gallery, presenting material culture as a starting point for research. The project launched in August 2018 with the installation of a custom block-print floor commissioned from Richard Woods Studio and entitled *logo 161*, a flexible installation structure made by Center director Keith Wilson, and several new pieces of furniture. In AY 2019-20,

the Object Library welcomed publics across the entire ground floor of the building from its home on the ground floor of the Mina Rees Library.

This year, the Object Library continued to host the temporary installation *365 Things*, for which members of the GC community donated objects for display and documentation. Each

The Object Library with *logo 161* by Richard Woods Studio (2018) and installation structure for *365 Things* (2018-20). Photo by Paula Vlodkowsky.





The Object Library deinstallation, summer 2020.

object was accompanied by a brief intake form that describes the object or its significance to its previous owner. Throughout AY 19-20, the temporary display structure in the Object Library was filled with donations. AY 2019-20 also saw the continued use of the Object Library Showcases, where the GC was invited to present objects and ephemera from their public-facing projects. The display structure was dismantled in June 2020 with the closure of 365 5th Ave due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in preparation for a socially distanced ground floor arrangement.

The Object Library’s **website** (theobjectlibrary.com) launched in fall 2018 and has a continued presence online. It contains a minimal interface with a list (or grid) of the objects, each of which can be expanded to view the descriptions written on the object’s accompanying intake

form. The Object Library web interface will be developed in collaboration with design firm Partner & Partners over the next academic year to include a section on the Center’s artist residencies, including past artist-residents Mariam Ghani and Mae West (see page 22–23). The site will also include a new virtual project for which our community will be invited to digitally “donate” objects of significance to the current COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter uprising.

OBJECT LIBRARY ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

Beginning in 2018, the Object Library’s Artist-in-Residence program has supported the work of artists as they develop links between their creative practices and the intellectual and research practices of our scholarly community.

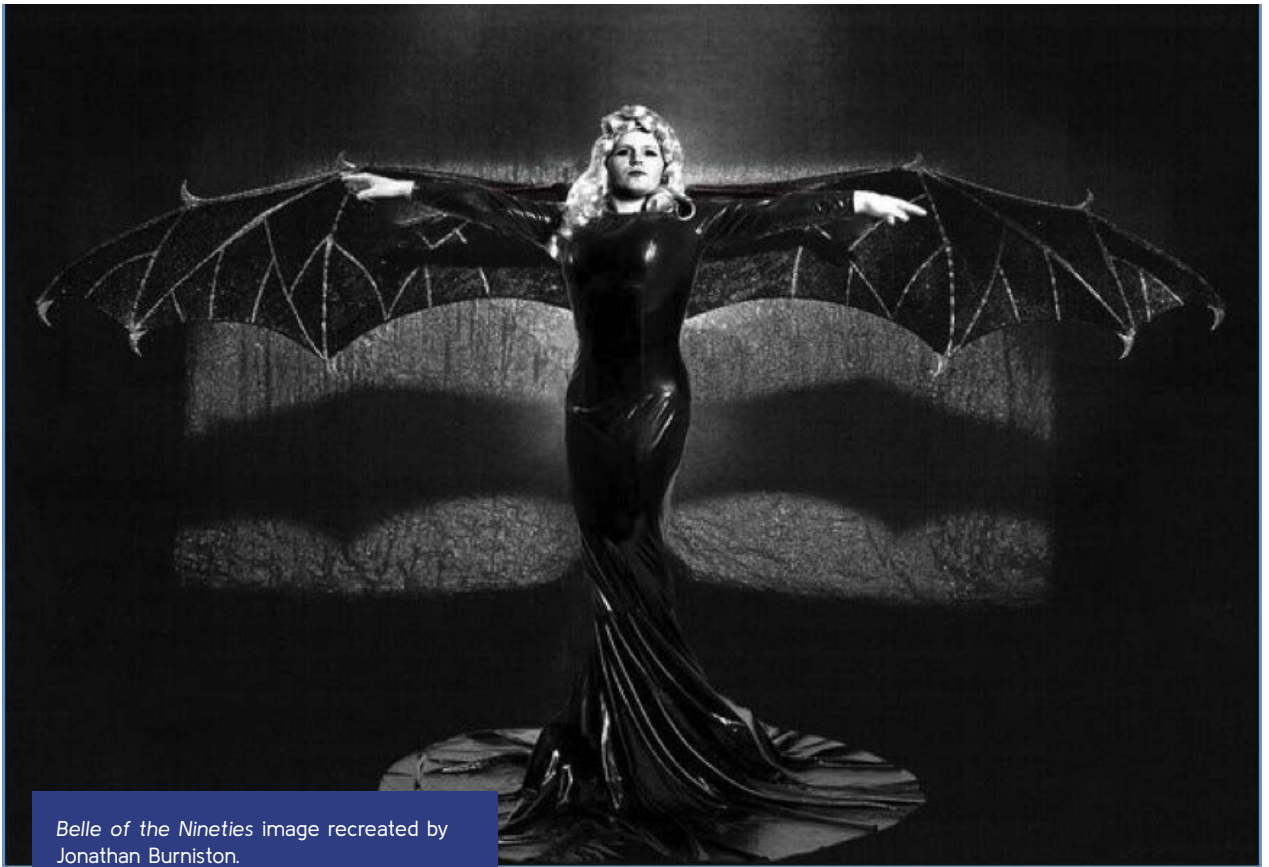
In spring/summer 2018, the Graduate Center, CUNY and the NYPL hosted resident artist **Mariam Ghani**. While in residence, she and



Artist Mariam Ghani with a team of GC student researchers, including Harry Blain, Juliana Broad, Eileen Clancy, Jacob Clary, Josh LaMore, Christian Lewis, and Dilara O’Neil, Fall 2018.



Dis-ease installed in the exhibition *Germ City*, Museum of the City of New York, September 14, 2018–April 28, 2019.



Belle of the Nineties image recreated by Jonathan Burniston.

a multi-disciplinary team of graduate student assistants (Harry Blain, Juliana Broad, Eileen Clancy, Jacob Clary, Josh LaMore, Christian Lewis, and Dilara O'Neil) conceptualized, researched, and produced a film, entitled *Dis-ease*, about illness, metaphors, contagion, isolation, and the consequences of a century-plus of waging "war on disease" using archival materials from the collections of the New York Public Library, New York Academy of Medicine, and Wellcome Collection, London. A short excerpt of Ghani's film was included in the exhibition *Germ City* at MCNY, which was co-curated by the GC's current Wellcome Trust Mental Health Curatorial Research Fellow Rebecca Hayes Jacobs (see page 45–46).

The project has continued and developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Ghani, the team went back into research mode in response

to the crisis and expanded their existing Zotero database, which had begun the year prior. Ghani is currently beginning the second rough cut of the feature with the continued support of Wellcome. The database/film was the basis of Ghani's lecture on "Pre-Existing Conditions" for a summer online course on "Understanding COVID-19" at Bennington College in Vermont.

[Click here](#) for a revised teaser that gives a sense of how the COVID-19 material will connect to the team's earlier research (use password CC_2020).

In the spring of 2020, award-winning Scotland-based filmmaker **Virginia Heath** collaborated with a multidisciplinary team of graduate research assistants (Brad Fox, Sierra Holt, Alyssa Kayser-Hirsch, Ashley Marinaccio, Carolyn McDonough, Kristen Miller, Elise Rodriguez, and Jacquelyn Shannon), in coordination with



Consulting Research Lead Elyse Singer, in preparation for a new documentary entitled ***Mae West - The Constant Sinner***. The team conducted original research into West's pre-Hollywood connections to vaudeville, burlesque, drag balls, and the Harlem Renaissance. This was the first time that many students had utilized film and image archives. While doing archival research as a team during the pandemic was challenging—especially with some team members in different time zones—Heath was able to produce a preview trailer to share at upcoming film festivals.

The team's research continued in Summer 2020. According to Heath, "One of the CUNY research team, Sierra Holt, uncovered a fascinating lead though her expertise around costume to Jonathan Burniston, a young costume designer who re-imagines, creates and performs 'Mae West with gown and bat's wings,' inspired by her film *Belle of the Nineties*. We are filming with Jonathan as an example of a young contemporary artist's practice which is reflective of Mae West and her enduring influence."

In fall 2020, there are plans to hold public discussions with the filmmaker when she returns to the US for location filming in the New York City area. Fall 2020 will see events to close out the research and development phase of our Mae West residency at the Object Library, including public discussions and screenings with Heath and her team of student researchers as the docu-drama project begins location filming in the New York City area, including a proof-of-concept salon to discuss the work done individually and collectively so far.



The James Gallery Student Engagement and Fellowships



Installation view of *Notes on Solidarity: Tricontinentalism in Print* exhibition, curated by Mellon Curatorial Fellow Debra Lennard

JAMES GALLERY EXHIBITION: NOTES ON SOLIDARITY: TRICONTINENTALISM IN PRINT

Tue, Sep 10, 2019 – Sat, Nov 2, 2019

For nearly ten years, through the generosity of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the James Gallery and the PhD Program in Art History have partnered to offer a graduate seminar in curatorial studies and a curatorial research fellowship with the gallery, which culminates in the production of an exhibition in the gallery. In the first year of the three-year cycle, the class is team-taught by Claire Bishop and Katherine Carl and includes guest speakers from major museums as well as independent curators. Next, the student from the class selected for the fellowship works with the gallery curator to conceptualize the project, secure loans, work

with artists, and learn step-by-step the full range of activities to realize the exhibition with the publication of a scholarly essay and public interdisciplinary programs. This includes everything from spatializing the project in the gallery to shipping, loan agreements, international customs and border control requirements, timelines, media materials, and to work with outside professionals designer Yve Ludwig and LanningSmith's full installation crew of professional fabricators, art handlers, and installers.

Debra Lennard was selected as the Mellon Curatorial Fellow to deepen her research and curate the exhibition *Notes on Solidarity: Tricontinentalism in Print*, consisting of printed materials circulated internationally that propelled the international network of anti-colonial struggles that unfolded after World War II. A political project born of the

mid-1960s, *Tricontinentalism* aimed to unite liberation movements across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Inquiring into the relation of print culture to political feeling, this exhibition looked at how Tricontinentalism and its solidarity discourse inspired a vibrant graphic production by self-determination movements from Havana to Hanoi during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Striking, emotionally persuasive and, above all, highly mobile, printed materials of all kinds during this period assisted in visualizing and spreading messages of affinity and shared struggle between centers of dissent. By assembling posters, newspapers, magazines, books, flyers, and postcards issued in the swell of Tricontinental feeling, this exhibition showed how the solidarity that Tricontinentalism proposed was performed through print.

Artists and organizations featured in the exhibition included the Organization of Solidarity of the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), René Mederos, the Comité des 3 continents, Peoples Press and Jane Norling, Emory Douglas and the Black Panther Party, Malaquías Montoya, Rupert García, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), Marc Rudin, Ismail Shammout, and Kameel Hawa.

JAMES GALLERY SEMINAR: INSTITUTIONAL APPARATUSES, OR, THE MUSEUM AS FORM

September 5 to December 12, 2019

Another project that emerged from the seminar in curatorial studies, *Museum as Form*, was conceived and organized by James Gallery Presidential Fellow Lauren Rosenblum and Kirsten Gill, both of the PhD Program in Art History. The discussion group, which met weekly for seven weeks in the fall semester, included students from around the region

and museum professionals. Guest speakers included artist Pablo Helguera, Deana Haggag of United States Artists, Ryan Dennis of Project Row Houses, initiator of the Art/Museum Salary Transparency Project Michelle Fisher, Connie Choi of the Studio Museum in Harlem, Michael Connor of Rhizome, and Binna Choi of Casco Art Institute.

Together, all the participants considered the ways in which a number of contemporary visual arts organizations and their workers are endeavoring to shed the inheritances of the exhibition, which have defined the profile of curating and centered museums as the primary site of social or political engagement with the public. The group examined how these organizations are pursuing their missions through close, revisionary engagement with the administrative, logistical, and programmatic armatures that prop up cultural institutions. It addressed a domain of activities that has been called the “paracuratorial,” that is, the culture worker’s obligations outside of exhibition-making (programming, education, stewardship, archiving, administration, and the like), along with the infrastructures of extra-exhibitionary activity. These functions were considered as primary sites of the institution’s politics, knowledge production, and sociality, and therefore the sites and structures within which museums reflexively grapple with their ethical obligations.



Students Lauren Rosenblum and Kirsten Gill introduce the Museum as Form Seminar in the James Gallery, October 2019.

Faculty Engagement

Chloé Bass, *Wayfinding* (Installation View, St. Nicholas Park), 2019. Archival photo on plexiglas sign face 24" x 36", brushed metal frame. Photo credit: Scott Rudd.

The Center seeks to act as a hub for faculty to build and sustain collaborative relationships, develop new methodologies, and present their work to diverse publics. In addition to supporting faculty-led programming including conferences, panels, screenings and discussions, we provide CUNY faculty with course releases to devote time to their work; numerous professional development opportunities; as well as creative, financial, and logistical support to realize engaged scholarship. Moreover, we advocate for the vital importance of this work, seeking to develop structures of sustainability for its compensation and recognition.

Through the Andrew W. Mellon Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research, we have awarded seven faculty two years of course releases and programmatic funding to develop dynamic partnerships with community groups, activists, artists, and cultural organizations. Our new faculty leads have gotten off to an early start in thinking through how to respond to urgent needs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and other ongoing civic issues. For instance, Prof. Yarimar Bonilla hosted a virtual event series on the role of cultural workers in the midst of crisis, and Prof. Michael Menser is working with CUNY students to visualize means of working with local leaders and community organizations to influence policy on the intersections between resilience, civic engagement, participatory governance, and economic democracy. In addition, this third iteration of the Seminar will bring faculty, students, and community stakeholders to form a Public Humanities Task Force, which will work to draft a white paper and establish future public humanities platforms that model and champion this type of work in perpetuity.

Equally pivotal to our mission is promoting and supporting the extraordinary contributions of

CUNY adjuncts to academic life at CUNY and public life in New York City. The CUNY Adjunct Incubator, in partnership with the Gittel Urban Studies Collective, awarded programmatic funding and provided administrative support to 11 CUNY adjuncts from six CUNY colleges. These faculty developed thoughtful, transformative, and challenging projects that spanned CUNY classrooms and public audiences ranging from a consideration of how to leverage CUNY resources toward a movement for climate justice to developing curricula for how adolescents might cope with stress to the first Ukrainian Contemporary Music Festival.

Moreover, for the past ten years, the James Gallery has initiated and led new academic and artistic research in close collaboration with faculty at the GC and throughout CUNY in formats including seminars, public conversation series, exhibitions, conferences, and performances. The gallery convenes key creative voices in many fields to conduct research in art, culture, and society and elaborates new perspectives on faculty research in the public realm. The gallery provided the vision, motivation and creative expertise to collaboratively conceive and organize new methods for the Center's faculty seminars which included *Mediating the Archive*, *Narrating Change*, and *Social Choreography*.

Since 2016, the James Gallery with Presidential Fellow James Sevitt developed *Pressing Public Issues* in partnership with the Teaching and Learning Center and the Humanities Alliance, supporting nine faculty and nine teaching artists to date. Continuing to experiment together with faculty to support their desire to push their research and teaching in creative ways has resulted in multifaceted and robust projects that have been deeply rewarding for faculty, their students, and the public.

In all of our activities, we aim to connect the legacies of radical and transformative pedagogies at CUNY with the world-making, world-changing activities of our current faculty.

Andrew W. Mellon Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research Faculty Leads

The Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research imagines—and helps participants imagine—what is possible when support (financial, logistical, infrastructural) is a given and public good is a driving goal of research. We hope to advance the argument that research should be valued and rewarded for its social impact, its capacity to address practical as well as intellectual problems, and its drive to gather and redirect resources (intellectual, cultural, financial) toward social justice.

Seminar participants find that our work—and our mode of working in connection with wider social groups and goals—has prepared us to be maximally responsive to the COVID-19 pandemic and protests against white supremacy and violence in NYC and across the country. If the world is turning toward more equitable futures, and we hope it is, then we have been training to support and secure that change.



Chloë Bass, *Wayfinding* (Installation View, St. Nicholas Park), 2019. Archival photo on plexiglas sign face 24" x 36", brushed metal frame. Photo credit: Scott Rudd.

FACULTY LEAD PROJECTS: HERE AND NOT THERE

Chloë Bass will use art and lived experience as research tools, collaborating with individuals and institutions to gather family photos and create albums that inspire private and public dialogue about how socially constructed notions of “family” inform the way city dwellers understand their place in changing urban environments.

THE PUERTO RICO SYLLABUS

Yarimar Bonilla will build and extend The Puerto Rico Syllabus, a digital resource for critical thinking about the Puerto Rican Debt Crisis. Through the organization of study groups, teach outs, performances, and other public events, the #PR syllabus will promote and strengthen forms of public engagement around this digital project, while working to create dialogue among other hashtag/public syllabi initiatives.

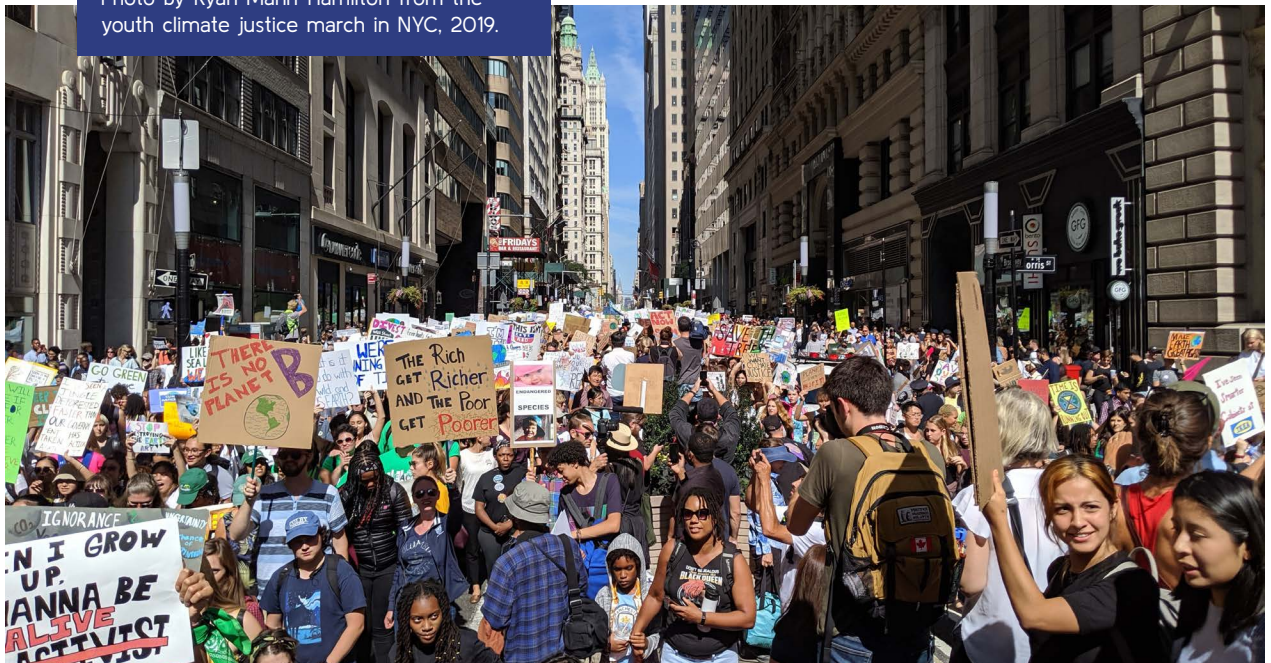
ARCHIVES IN COMMON: MIGRANT PRACTICES/KNOWLEDGES/MEMORY

Ángeles Donoso Macaya will bring together community organizers, members of immigrant communities, and members of the university community to support undocu-immigrant-led initiatives (cooperatives, workshops, gardens), devised in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, that help sustain members of these communities and to collectively imagine and create an archive of the commons.

ENVIRONMENT COMMUNITY HUMANITIES OASIS (ECHO)

Ryan Mann-Hamilton will develop networks between students and their broader communities to organize environmental justice actions, conversations, collaborative events, classroom activities, and hands-on projects on and around sensitive waterfront environments near LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, grounded in the understanding that racial and environmental justice are inextricable.

Photo by Ryan Mann-Hamilton from the youth climate justice march in NYC, 2019.



RESILIENT PB

Michael Menser will design curricula in collaboration with civic leaders, community organizations, and CUNY stakeholders to engage city-wide participatory budgeting (PB) processes toward resilience and climate justice. Collaborating with the NYC Civic Engagement Commission, Resilient PB aims to put CUNY and its communities at the forefront of NYC's efforts to meet existing and anticipated resiliency needs.

JUST COASTLINES: LIFE, LAND USE, AND ORGANIZING IN THE AGE OF CLIMATE CRISIS

Naomi Schiller will document and make accessible local histories, visions of the future, and activist knowledge in communities along NYC's changing waterfront to understand the local impacts of the climate crisis and strengthen participation in civic decision making. This project will document and disseminate this knowledge through a series of public conversations, an oral history archive, podcasts, and a handbook for action.

THE SCHOOLS WE NEED: LESSONS-LEARNED FROM HARLEM

Terri N. Watson will highlight the ways that the institution of Black motherhood has transformed public education, from nine mothers working to desegregate NYC public schools in 1958 to the present. Through a series of "living room conversations" series that center the voices, perspectives, and lived experiences of Harlem's long-standing activist-residents, this project seeks to foster agency, community, and discourse around New York City's desegregation efforts.

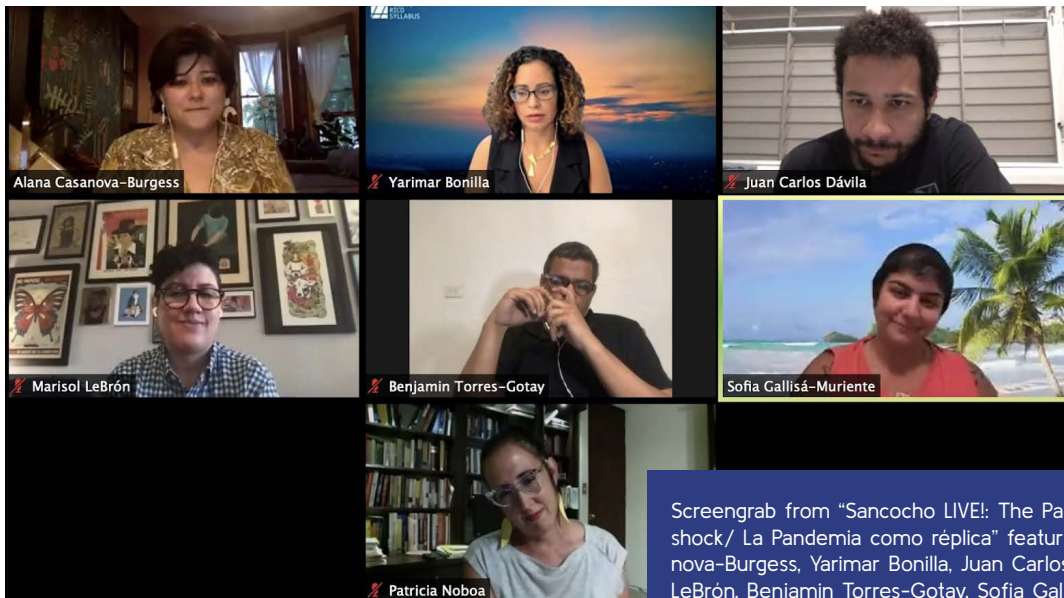


Protest in Chinatown, October 2019. ULURP is the NYC's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure. Photo by Naomi Schiller.

Spotlight: Sancocho Live!

This summer, Prof. Yarimar Bonilla's Puerto Rico Syllabus Project collaborated with **the Clemente Soto Vález Cultural Center** to launch a series of three online, bilingual events "Sancocho LIVE: Catastrophe, Resistance, & Joy," that explored how periods of crisis and catastrophes of the present lead to revaluations of cultural work and new definitions of the essential ¿Cómo en periodos de crisis se revaloriza el trabajo cultural y se redefine lo esencial?

Drawing inspiration from Pedro Pietri's concept of the aesthetic sancocho, each event consisted of short video presentations, followed by a moderated dialogue (open to Q & A) with Puerto Rican cultural workers in the island and the diaspora. The events ended in a virtual janguero where DJs set the mood and participants could continue building together



Screengrab from “Sancocho LIVE!: The Pandemic as After-shock/ La Pandemia como réplica” featuring Alana Casanova-Burgess, Yarimar Bonilla, Juan Carlos Dávila, Marisol LeBrón, Benjamin Torres-Gotay, Sofia Gallisá-Muriente, and Patricia Noboa, along with Ericka P. Rodríguez and DJ Cangro Cangrejo (not pictured)

CUNY Adjunct Incubator

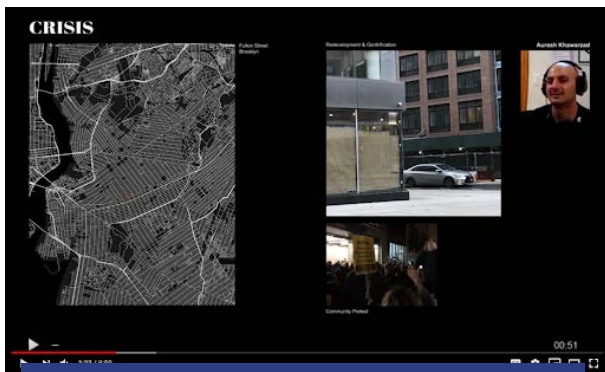
The Center for the Humanities' CUNY Adjunct Incubator supports and highlights the significant, critical, and community-engaged scholarship and pedagogy work of adjuncts teaching across CUNY. The four branches of the Adjunct Incubator are publicly calling attention to adjuncts' valuable contributions at CUNY; supporting CUNY adjuncts and their teaching, scholarly, creative, and activist work; promoting their arc toward professional success and economic well-being; and advocating for more paid, full-time, tenure-track positions for adjuncts to advance toward.

In 2019–20, the CUNY Adjunct Incubator awarded grants to 11 CUNY adjuncts from six CUNY colleges to develop a wide range of deeply impactful public and applied projects in the humanities and humanistic social sciences.

Their projects included:

Enhancing CUNY-Wide Capacity to Promote Collaborative Gender Justice, developed by Anthony Freeman, which sought to develop pedagogical policies and best practices for gender, sexuality, and women's studies classrooms including a website that will act as a clearinghouse for these classes across CUNY.

Aurash Kawarзад's project **The Urban Research Prototype**, an experimental tool for multimedia documentation of the built environment. Including content ranging from interviews, maps, images, video, diagrams, and writings that were captured in New York City between 2019 and 2020, this project seeks to familiarize researchers with spatial dynamics, narratives, and other relevant urban planning data.



Screenshare from presentation of Aurash Khawarзад's *The Urban Research Prototype*.

[Watch the Video here](#)

Radiating Black ~ Puerto Rican ~ Women's Teaching Archives from CUNY to the Americas and the Caribbean (and Back Again), organized by Conor Tomás Reed, developed research, as well as presented and published a writing series on Black and Puerto Rican women's teaching archives from CUNY to the Americas and the Caribbean, particularly centering on the work of Audre Lorde in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.



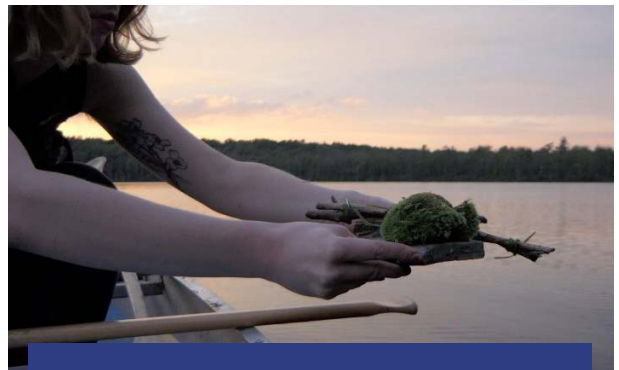
Conor Tomás Reed presenting archival research with Co-Editor Makeba Lavan on the CUNY teaching materials of Toni Cade Bambara for the *Lost & Found Series VII* launch and publication of *Toni Cade Bambara: "Realizing the Dream of a Black University," & Other Writings (Parts I & II)*.

Sarah Coluccio's project **Private Lives, Public Literacies** examined archival documents, case studies, and recent library programming to connect the history of how the New York Public Library has served patrons from the turn of the 20th century with how that legacy can be utilized to improve the libraries of today.

For the project **Increasing Inclusivity of Scholarship and Practice for Social Workers**, Tiffany Younger applied an intersectional lens to anti-oppressive approaches to the study and practice of social work, through a series of coffee chats leading to the creation of a public syllabus.

Susan Stratton and Brian McSherry produced a series of method cards for their project **Know Your Work-Know Your Worth: Portfolio Design Thinking Cards** to teach professional development for media and design students to share their work, in and out of the classroom.

Zefyr Lisowski developed their film and multimedia collaboration **Wolf Inventory** with filmmaker and artist Candace Thompson, which addresses the intersections of haunting, childhood/early adolescent sexual violence, and trans and femme coming-of-age in the rural South.



Screenshot from the film-in-progress, *Wolf Inventory*.



Ukrainian Chorus DUMKA of New York, directed by Vasyl Hrechynsky

For her project, **Revolution of Dignity: Art Music Culture and Political Change in Ukraine**, Leah Batstone explored the relationship between political change and art, music, and culture in 20th-century Ukraine, with particular attention to the third revolution of 2014. Through this project, she organized the 2020 Ukrainian Contemporary Music Festival.

Camille Ferguson worked to develop the project **Curriculum to Help Adolescents Cope with Stress** for young people (ages 13–17) of color (Black and LatinX) to identify stressors and how to deal with them.

Anita Cheng's project **A Public Affairs Media Study** was dedicated to designing public interest graphics about current legislative issues before the New York City Council to be shown on broadcasts, events, and social media platforms, as well as to support civic education and curriculum development.

SPOTLIGHT: UKRAINIAN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FESTIVAL 2020

Growing out of her CUNY Adjunct Incubator Research Project, Hunter College Adjunct Professor of Music Leah Batstone organized the first Ukrainian Contemporary Music Festival, three days of performances and scholarly discussion on the role of music in the cultural and political landscape of Ukraine.

Pressing Public Issues

2018–ongoing

Pressing Public Issues is a partnership of the James Gallery, the GC Teaching and Learning Center, and the CUNY Humanities Alliance and was conceived and initiated by the James Gallery Presidential Fellow James Sevitt (PhD Program in Environmental Psychology). The program offered stipends and programming funds for cohorts of six teaching artists and six faculty in the first year and three teaching artists and three faculty in the second year who were teaching courses in various disciplines at CUNY community colleges. The first cohort experimented together over the academic year to develop creative teaching practices and pedagogies to formulate the overall project and inform and shape their syllabi. While forging a collective dynamic to support each other, they, in turn, encouraged their students to experiment through creative modes of research, expression, knowledge-production and public scholarship.

Students explored issues that were relevant to both their lives and to the aims of the course through a variety of forms of artistic expression. The students publicly displayed or performed in unexpected and underused spaces on their community college campuses and in the James Gallery to spark challenging and productive conversations about pressing and contentious issues with the publics of the students' community college campuses, their local communities, the broader CUNY community, and across New York City.

Faculty instructor Inés Vañó García teamed up with artist Ryan Seslow on [Linguistic Landscapes: Unpacking Language Hierarchies](#)

at La Guardia Community College. Students explored and examined the linguistic landscape of their school as well as Jackson Heights, how language(s) shape these public spheres, and reflected on their experiences of this linguistic exploration through digital storytelling projects.

Faculty instructor Soniya Munshi collaborated with artist Melissa Liu on [Asian American History: "What a test never taught me..."](#) at Borough of Manhattan Community College. Students unpacked myths of meritocracy, culture, and success as it relates to Asian Americans and education in the US. Students examined their individual and community educational histories to express different "push-out" and "pull-in" factors, or, structural issues that prevent and encourage us to stay on our educational paths. The students' collages were shown at the BMCC library and the James Gallery.



Borough of Manhattan Community College students in Soniya Munshi's Asian American History class installing their artwork "What a test never taught me..." for the Pressing Public Issues exhibition in the James Gallery at the Graduate Center, CUNY.



Bronx Community College students from the Black Land Ownership class taught by Prithi Kanakamedala worked with artist Walis Johnson to install *Red Line Labyrinth* on Bronx Community College main quad, as part of the Pressing Public Issues collaboration.

Faculty instructor Prithi Kanakamedala and artist Walis Johnson examined Black Land Ownership at Bronx Community College. Students learned how a systematic lack of access to land and property ownership for African Americans over 400 years of US History has led to massive wealth inequality today. In collaboration with artist Walis Johnson, the class culminated in the installation of the participatory public art project *Red Line Labyrinth* on BCC's historic Stanford White campus.

Faculty instructor Nate Mickelson and poet Carlos iro Burgos created Poetry and Public Life at Guttman Community College. Students researched and enacted projects that use poetry to engage public audiences in thinking through local, national, and global issues. In collaboration with poet Carlos iro Burgos, the class proposed their projects and performed poems at the famed Nuyorican Poets Café; took their work public in print, video, and online media, and in a public presentation in the James Gallery; and had planned to hold a roundtable discussion at the James Gallery in spring 2020.

Faculty instructor Kristina Baines worked with artist Vaimoana (Moana) Niemeitolu on Environmental Ethics at Guttman Community

College. Students learned the theoretical roots of the environmental movement and explored the role of public art in environmental and community activism. Students researched critical environmental issues in their communities and created posters presented in the James Gallery and a class zine addressing their concerns about these issues for display and distribution at the gallery, on campus, and throughout their neighborhoods.

Faculty instructor Leslie Craig and artist Res collaborated on Early Childhood Practicum II: Pedagogy for Infants and Toddlers at Borough of Manhattan Community College. Students learned how to use environmental portraiture, interior photography, still lifes, and photographic sequencing to document infant toddler care-giving environments, and aspects of the environment that support learning. At the James Gallery, the students created and exhibited photo books based on their journals and photographs.

The faculty selected for the second year cohort are Ria Banerjee, Guttman College; Ryan Mann Hamilton, LaGuardia; and Jill Strauss, Borough of Manhattan Community College.



Guttman Community College students from Poetry and Public Life class with poet Carlos Burgos and professor Nate Mickelson after performing their poems at the famed Nuyorican Poets Cafe, as part of the James Gallery's Pressing Public Issues collaboration.

Public Engagement

Worlds within Worlds salon and tour of Jacolby Satterwhite's exhibition *You're at home* at Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, led by curator Gabriel Florenz.

At the core of our mission, the Center for the Humanities aims to create models and support structures for work that reimagines the role of scholarship in public life and vice versa. We have spent the last decade developing methodologies for fostering and nourishing collaborations among undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and collaborators including activists, archivists, artists, community and cultural organizations, filmmakers, interpreters, journalists, oral historians, translators, and many more.

This work not only reaches wide audiences but also sustains networks that produce new forms of knowledge and make meaningful impacts on the worlds that produce them.

Our Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research invites community partners to co-produce public projects on urgent civic issues with faculty and students, offering a variety of forms of institutional support in the process, including access to scholarly research and discourse, analysis and data, event and meeting spaces, professional and creative training, programmatic and travel funds, administrative and promotional support, audiovisual documentation, and technical facilitation. Over the next two years, our new cohort's projects will take a variety of forms ranging from public syllabi, archives, and websites that collate vital community resources to public artworks, exhibitions, and decolonial media to policy proposals, direct actions, and local alliances.

Many of our activities also involve creating discursive spaces that share this work out toward new audiences. As part of the Seminar, we have launched the publication platform *Distributaries*, which publishes short-form writing on the Center's website that deepen and extend conversations in the public humanities as well as book-length projects that

emerged from collaborative research such as *Approaching Reparations*, on the ways in which reparations might be enacted in the performing arts field, and *The City Amplified*, an anthology and guide to creating community archives. In addition to publishing chapbooks generated from student archival research around 20th-century writers, *Lost & Found* works to form communities of study and practice around the work of authors published in the series, through initiatives like the Audre Lorde-focused reading group "Your Silence Will Not Protect You!"

Since 2010, the James Gallery has been providing time and space for scholars, artists, and publics to convene through research and dialogue on topics of mutual interest in myriad formats. Each year, the exhibitions and programs on view in the gallery represent the tip of the iceberg of the gallery's long-term collaborative work and research. Last year, the first year of the Racial Imaginary Institute's three-part residency at the James Gallery started with engaged research, artist studio visits, deepening specific partnerships at the GC, and conversations with scholars in a wide range of disciplines across CUNY and the nation. The project was scheduled to publicly launch March 26 and has shifted to online projects for next year and a physical exhibition the following year.

In the remaining weeks of the semester, after teaching and learning migrated online, the James Gallery sought to respond thoughtfully and with agility to the unfolding COVID-19 crisis. The gallery worked with Michelle Millar Fisher of the PhD Program in Art History and curator Nikki Columbus to host the event series ART • WORK • PLACE, conducting research and creating a Zoom platform for sharing resources and ideas on precarious economic and labor

issues facing cultural workers and students and the mutual aid efforts that have been devised to address them, in the wake of the pandemic. By reinventing how we gather, the interactive sessions were filled with brainstorming and resource-sharing. With nearly 40 speakers and 2,000 participants, these three events demonstrated the power of mobilizing our platform and resources to gather wider communities around issues of public concern. As part of all spring and summer 2020 programs, the James Gallery distributed small participation funds to over 100 adjuncts and students who are precarious cultural workers.

Just as our events through the James Gallery saw expanded online audiences, our Translating the Future event series reconfigured a two-day conference into a weekly event series that engaged over nine thousand participants around the world.

The international reach of this work has continued behind the scenes, as Wellcome Curatorial Research Fellow Rebecca Jacobs works to adapt an ambitious exhibition, artist residency, and series of programming through the Wellcome Trust's global mental health initiative to consider the impacts of the pandemic on New York City residents living with mental illness.

As we look forward to the coming academic year, which will begin at a physical distance, we look forward to finding more means of proximity and presence in shared study, reflection, and action.

ART • WORK • PLACE

ART • WORK • PLACE was originally planned as a two-day summit on efforts to create a just and equitable workplace in the art world—union organizing at museums, protests against toxic philanthropy, challenges to institutional racism, and lawsuits against sexual harassment and gender discrimination. The health emergency amplified the urgency of these conversations, and the project was rapidly turned into a series of public Zoom events on April 7, May 6, and June 16, 2020, gaining large audiences from around the globe including representatives from Ford Foundation, Warhol Foundation, and major museum boards. This series of online forums addressed the immediate need to share concrete information and ideas.

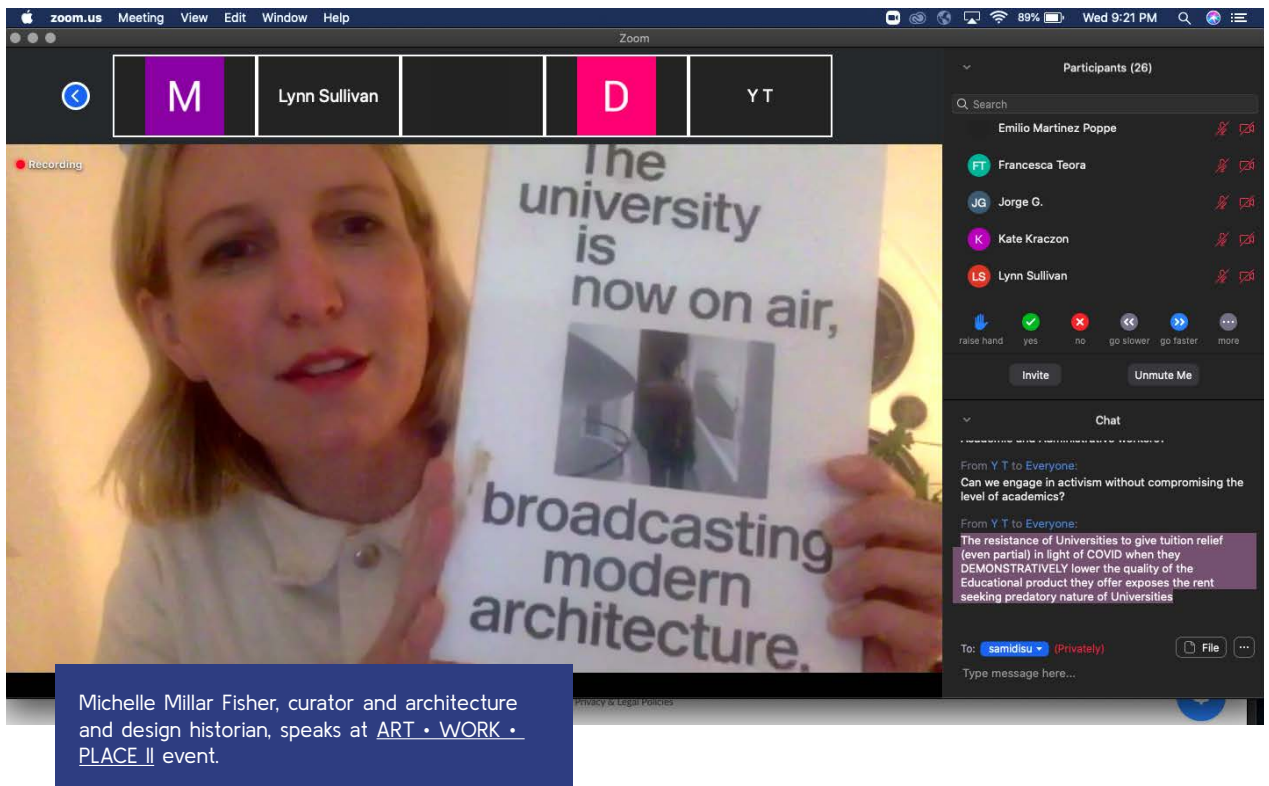
As the COVID-19 pandemic worsened, cultural workers experienced mass layoffs, and it became clear that the art world may never



look the same. Introduced by Nikki Columbus, the first forum examined what coalition groups have been formed for solidarity and support and strategies going forward. Data about layoffs, furloughs, and pay cuts taking place at museums and galleries, and the consequences for unionization, resources for precarious workers and rent strikes, and

Kemi Ilesanmi, executive director of the Laundromat Project, speaks at the ART • WORK • PLACE III event.



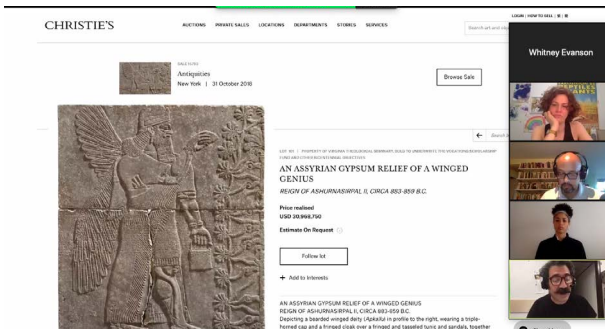


what this means for ongoing equality and racial justice struggles were shared by the panelists Ian Epps (Art Handlers Alliance), Michelle Millar Fisher (Art + Museum Transparency), Camilo Godoy (artist/educator), Landry Haarmann (Met Council on Housing), Shaun Leonardo (artist), Andres Puerta (International Union of Operating Engineers Local 30), and Kate Zayko (Licensed Clinical Social Worker).

As the GC entered its third month of virtual instruction, the second emergency session focused on specific needs of the university during the COVID-19 crisis. How can students and adjuncts fight for equity in the face of escalating austerity? Nationwide, student debt has reached \$1.6 trillion yet student loans are only one category of household debt, alongside medical, housing, and criminal justice debt. Although the vast majority of Americans are burdened by debt, it is disproportionately held by Black women. How can we mobilize millions of debtors into collective

action? Mutual aid increasingly fills in for the social safety net destroyed by neoliberalism. But how long can neighbors and colleagues sustain each other in a vacuum of leadership and resources? How do we enlist legislators and make use of the tools of government to further our aims? The future of the university in light of these issues was explored by panelists [Hannah Appel](#), [David Xu Borgonjon](#), [Sami Disu](#), [Jamila Hammami](#), [Nicholas Mirzoeff](#), [Yuh-Line Niou](#), [Sandy Nurse](#), [Dean Spade](#), and [Naomi Zewde](#).

Radical Black imagination and speculative futures animated the third emergency session. This session amplified voices of Black women cultural workers, as it addressed current racial and economic inequity in museums. The event also started from the understanding that Black, Indigenous, and POC art workers and activists—often overlooked or tokenized—have already mapped out what is possible, while artists envision what comes next. [Kemi Ilesanmi](#),



Michael Rakowitz, conceptual artist and Professor of Art and Director of Graduate Studies at Northwestern University, speaks at [ART • WORK • PLACE Emergency Session III](#) event.

[M. Carmen Lane](#), [Tavia Nyong'o](#), [Shani Peters](#), [Anni Pullagura](#), and [Michael Rakowitz](#) discussed how to build an art world that centers BIPOC voices, tears down racist structures, and works toward decolonization, before opening to audience discussion. Participants in the event noted that Black Lives Matter is not a magical incantation, a phrase to be absorbed and neutralized; Black Lives Matter is a movement, and a call for action.

Participants in all sessions exchanged much-needed knowledge, resources, and uplifting support. The public contributions to these discussions of cross-organizing and local mutual aid efforts were practical, hopeful and invigorating. And the budget for these events were reallocated to direct aid to groups and individuals in need.

Video and resources from all sessions are currently shared on our website and are being compiled in a hybrid printed and online publication including transcripts, further reflections, images and a toolkit of resources.

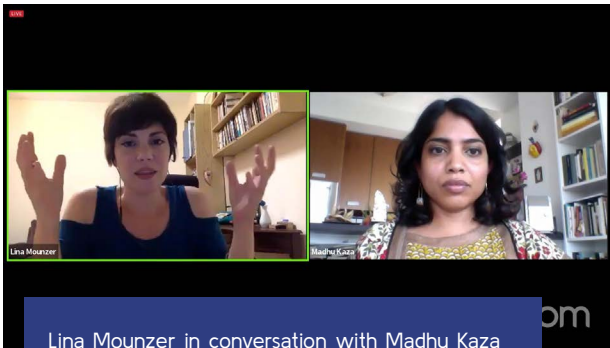
This event series was organized by Nikki Columbus and Michelle Millar Fisher, in collaboration with the PhD Program in Art History, the James Gallery, and [the Vera List Center for Art and Politics](#) (The New School), where it is sponsored in part by the Helen Shapiro Lectureship.

TRANSLATING THE FUTURE CONFERENCE AND CONVERSATION SERIES

In spring 2020, as COVID-19 closed the Graduate Center and our activities transitioned online, Esther Allen and Allison Markin Powell began to reconceive a two-day conference that they had scheduled for fall 2020. In mid-May 2020, Translating the Future launched with weekly hour-long online conversations with renowned translators hosted on the web platform Howlround.



Poets and translators Forrest Gander and Raquel Salas Rivera with hosts Esther Allen and Allison Markin Powell. [Video link.](#)



Lina Mounzer in conversation with Madhu Kaza for Translating the Uncertain Present: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o23dRagvD2w&-feature=emb_logo

Isaac Bashevis Singer, and many others. It billed itself as "the first international literary translation conference in the United States" and had a major impact on US literary culture.

Translating the Future occurred weekly throughout the late spring and summer, attracting 5,000 viewers from 70 countries across the world. Topics included the relationship between translation and eco-poetics, children's literature, and plays, among other areas, and the 1970 World of Translation conference.

The event series culminated in late September 2020 with several large-scale programs, including a symposium among Olga Tokarczuk's translators into languages including English, Japanese, Hindi, and more, in collaboration with the GC's Public Programs department.

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



Yoko Tawada with Margaret Mitsutani, Susan Bernofsky, Barbara Epler, Jeffrey Yang, Allison Markin Powell, Esther Allen, & Rivka Galchen; moderated by Stephen Snyder for "Lightning in a Bottle: A Case Study of Publishing Literary Translation."

The Center for the Humanities / Distributaries /

Practicing Distance with Jeff Kasper

May 18, 2020



Image description: A square sign appears on a tile floor, reading, "Thank you for practicing social distancing. Please keep at least 6ft apart," next to two feet, seen from above.
Photo by Jeff Kasper.

As part of the Andrew W. Mellon Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research, the Center for the Humanities launched the digital and print publication platform *Distributaries*.

Named after the channels of a river that flow away from its mainstream, *Distributaries* seeks to offer a space for parallel strands of research, writing, art, theater, poetry, and other cultural production that stems from the work of our Mellon Seminar. This platform allows us to develop both timely responses to unfolding circumstances—such as the COVID-19 pandemic—as well as in-depth research

projects, whose long-term growth is archived in our publication series.

This year's activities on *Distributaries* ranged from publishing the theater work *(In)Visible Freedom*, written and performed by a group of formerly incarcerated women, College and Community Fellowship, about the meaning of freedom and education to them to sharing writing on our web platform about the legacy of Audre Lorde; instructional scores on imaginary touch across intimacy and distance in the wake of COVID-19; interviews between poets, writers, and scholars; as well as the beginning of a series on the implications of digital pedagogy.

Your Silence Will Not Protect You!

Throughout our work, the Center seeks to build on the legacy of radical, decolonial, anti-racist pedagogies at CUNY. A former CUNY educator, Audre Lorde's teaching methods and practices are central to this legacy, and her vital work as a poet and activist continues to model survival and living for Black / queer / feminist readers. Following from the publication of a selection of Lorde's syllabi and other teaching materials in *Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative*, co-facilitators Jillian Lane White and Conor Tomás Reed formed the Audre Lorde-focused reading group "Your Silence Will Not Protect You!" Throughout four sessions, this group of 20 participants approached Lorde's work from their own experiences, applying the power of her teaching / writing / radicalism to the process of elaborating study in community. And one of the group members,

Spencer Garcia, wrote about their experience in the group on *Distributaries*.

This group was sponsored by a Humanities New York Reading & Discussion Grant, *Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative*, and the Center for the Humanities.

Surviving and Speaking Out: Reading Audre Lorde in Community

April 17, 2020

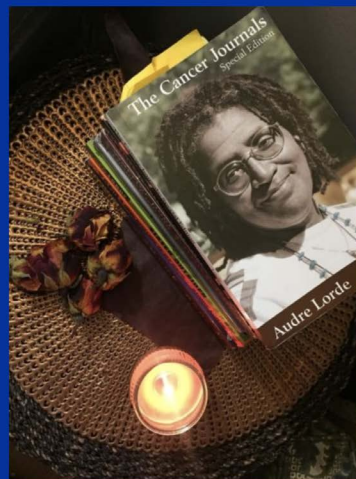


Photo by the Free Black Women's Library.

[Image description: A stack of books by Audre Lorde set on top of a textured, metallic gold placemat, next to a cluster of dried rose blossoms and a lit candle. At the top of the stack is Lorde's *The Cancer Journals*; on the book's cover, Audre Lorde softly smiles and is wearing glasses. Her hair is in shoulder-length dreadlocks.]

Wellcome Trust Mental Health Curatorial Research Fellow



Keith Wilson presenting at Worlds within Worlds, November 2019.

In October 2019, Rebecca Jacobs joined the Graduate Center, CUNY's Center for the Humanities as the Wellcome Trust Mental Health Curatorial Research Fellow. In this new role at the Center, she is helping to develop the New York City component of Wellcome's new international cultural initiative on mental health.

Wellcome's International Cultural Initiatives co-produce projects that support locally grounded conversations about global health challenges. This extended cultural inquiry will be a multi-year project, with collaborative programs being based in New York, Berlin, Tokyo, Bengaluru, and other global cities. Activities could include exhibitions, public events, workshops, documentary film, digital content, radio programs, and other modes of public engagement and participation.

For the New York City component of Wellcome's next global brief, Jacobs is partnering with selected local cultural institutions to create public programs that examine the cultural

meanings of mental health and well-being for millions of New Yorkers across the five boroughs. This multidisciplinary cultural project seeks to bring together a variety of local institutions to collaborate and reflect upon the mental health challenges that so many New Yorkers face, thereby advancing public conversations that could potentially lead to cultural shifts and policy reform.



Germ City Exhibition: A Conversation on Cities, Health, and Public Humanities

Rebecca Hayes Jacobs
Care for the Polis.

Rebecca Hayes Jacobs participates in the "Care for the Polis" digital series through Columbia SOF/Heyman Center, May 1, 2020.

As part of her new role, in fall 2019 she worked with Keith Wilson, Director of the Center for the Humanities, to develop a salon, entitled *Worlds within Worlds*. Hosted by the Graduate Center, CUNY's Center for the Humanities, the event took place in November 2019 at Pioneer Works Science Studios. The salon featured Garnette Cadogan, Tony Ro, and Rachel Rossin, and was devoted to an informal discussion about the alternative mental spaces we create through visual art, writing, and other creative practices.

Jacobs was previously the 2017–2019 Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Museum of the City of New York (MCNY). During her time there, she co-curated the exhibition *Germ City: Microbes and the Metropolis* as part of Wellcome’s previous Contagious Cities project. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in spring 2020 she spoke to the press and presented at public programs on the subject of infectious disease. Jacobs was interviewed for articles about the cultural meanings of contagion for the *New Yorker* (March 2020) and about the role of public exhibitions devoted to infectious disease for *Museums Journal* (forthcoming). She presented at a historians’ roundtable on COVID-19 on April 2nd, a public program, “Visualizing Virus” at the International Center for Photography on April 5th, and at the “Care for the Polis” ongoing digital series Columbia’s SOF/Heyman Center on May 1st. She also presented at a breakout session at the New York City Museum Educators Roundtable on May 11th about an exhibition she co-curated at MCNY, *Urban Indian: Native New York Now*, which was developed in collaboration with local Indigenous community groups.

This spring and summer, Jacobs has also devoted time to planning discussions with colleagues at the Wellcome Trust and in New York to adapt the project in response to the tremendous public health and economic impacts of COVID-19 on New York City residents, and the mental health implications of those impacts in the years ahead.

In December 2020, Jacobs will be organizing a virtual convening of local participating cultural

organizations, and content advisors at the Graduate Center, to collectively determine the most effective and meaningful ways to address mental health in New York at this time. She will continue to work with these key partners to develop an artist residency, exhibition, tours, educational and public programs, and additional mental health related activities.

James Gallery Artist in Residence: Claudia Rankine and the Racial Imaginary Institute *On Nationalism*



Claudia Rankine and Jess Row in conversation, November 5, 2019.

Ongoing 2019-21

With the continued mainstreaming of far-right nationalism, it has become increasingly clear that, as Trinh T. Minh-ha emphasizes, today we are living through an “epoch of global fear.” The post-1989 “victory” of liberal democracy has failed to deliver on its promise of equality,

freedom, and prosperity for all as feelings of anger and resentment accumulating for many decades have intensified the depth of democratic disenchantment.

Through exhibitions, dialogues, symposia, and experimental pedagogy with CUNY community colleges, *On Nationalism: Borders*

and Belonging explored various visions of what being a nation could mean and look like in opposition to today's ongoing racialized nationalism. In response to conditions of heightened polarization and vicious public debate, the project brought together artists, writers, and the public to reflect on the possibilities and challenges of trying to understand the complex experiences and worldviews of individuals and communities with whom they disagree and are largely unfamiliar.

Questions explored included: How can we reimagine the concept of nation itself? What does it mean to belong? And in what ways do we need to rethink who "we" are and who "they" are? Faced with resurgent and terrifying ethnic and racial nationalism around the world, and well-aware of how nations are imagined into existence with real-world consequences, how does culture work with strong feelings of patriotism, whether coming from the right or the left? What is the real-life work of decolonizing representation, focused on Viet Thanh Nguyen's call for "abolishing the conditions of voicelessness through having the unheard own their share of the means of representation" in a dominant national culture?

Such modes of imagination and conversation allowed the participants to explore ways in which we can successfully take a stand for our core values and rights at the same time as holding discomfort and exploring disagreement. It recognizes, as Pankaj Mishra writes, "Never have so many free individuals felt so helpless—so desperate to take back control from anyone they can blame for their feeling of having lost it." This followed Claudia Rankine, as she asked while speaking to someone with conflicting political views, "How can I say this so that we can stay in this car together, and yet explore the things that I want to explore with you?"

Twenty programs as part of *On Nationalism* were set to publicly launch on March 26. Among these were a conversation on race imagination and nationalism with project artists and curators and members of the Center for Globalization and Social Change at the Graduate Center; a lecture by Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Viet Thanh Nguyen in the Proshansky Auditorium at the Graduate Center in cooperation with Zollberg Center at the New School; performances by indigenous artist and scholar Maria Hupfield, stand-up comedian and artist Jibz Cameron, and social justice educator and performer Kayhan Irani with CUNY students; and the exhibition in the James Gallery with works by Ajay Kurian, Maria Hupfield, John Lucas and Claudia Rankine, Mercedes Teixido, and Emily Jacir. *On Nationalism* is a collaborative project between the Racial Imaginary Institute and the James Gallery with significant contributions by writer and curator Simon Wu, James Gallery Presidential Fellow James Sevitt, and curator Katherine Carl.

James Gallery Presents “How Can I Say This So That We Can Stay In This Car Together?”



Ajay Kurian, *Rise*, 2017 (detail). Courtesy of the artist and 47 Canal. Photo by Joerg Lohse.

Ongoing 2019–21

Claudia Rankine and the Racial Imaginary Institute, artist in residence *New Commissions and Conversation* series.

In response to conditions of heightened racialized nationalism, widening inequalities and vicious public discourse, the Racial Imaginary Institute and the James Gallery have undertaken a collaborative project *On Nationalism: Borders and Belonging* during the

academic years 2019–21, including an exhibition and a full program of public activities.

Claudia Rankine, a cofounder of the Racial Imaginary Institute, posed this question in a [recent interview](#), describing it as central to what preoccupies and animates much of her recent and ongoing thinking and writing. Prompted by Rankine’s reflections on the possibilities and challenges of “how to have a conversation so that the space can hold discomfort,” and

how “to be curious, to go places with a person beyond our predestined positionings,” a small group of scholars, artists, and writers have been gathering together, to collectively discuss and reflect on their particular experiences with engaging difference and holding discomfort. This ongoing conversation seeks to open up space to discuss with and learn from each other about negotiating and translating difficult conversations with interlocutors—whether they happen in “the field” or in “everyday life”—especially with those interlocutors whose complex predicaments we may know little about and who hold points of view that conflict with our own.

In order to explore both our internal conversations with ourselves and external dynamics with others, we will pursue the following questions with artists and scholars:

What does it mean and look like to be curious in conversing with one another? How do you understand the relationship between curiosity and empathy? In what ways have you both attentively listened to and expressed disagreement with an interlocutor? In what way, and toward what ends, do curiosity, empathy or disagreement function as methods in your work? How do the interplay of what Vincent Crapanzano calls our “troubling” and “pleasurable” feelings produced by interlocutory dynamics generate a particular kind of knowledge and understanding (about “misunderstanding”)? How do we navigate and unlearn the unsaid imperatives of our disciplines (genius artist, cutting criticism, persuasive rhetoric, empathize with field subjects, be a neutral observer)?

As part of the collaborative project *On Nationalism: Borders and Belonging* James Gallery Presidential Fellow James Sevitt (PhD Program in Environmental Psychology) collaborated with curator Katherine Carl and the Racial Imaginary Institute to organize the ongoing conversation series.

James Gallery Presents Harmony Holiday and Fred Moten Reading and Book Celebration

Poetry Reading and Conversation

Fri, Nov 1, 2019, 07:00 PM – 08:30 PM

Fred Moten was the first keynote speaker in the James Gallery in 2010 to inaugurate the new mission of the gallery, marking the intellectual and artistic routes that the gallery set out to pursue. In fall and spring 2020, Harmony Holiday and Fred Moten came together for a celebration of their books, including the newly published *A Jazz Funeral for Uncle Tom and All That Beauty*, the music and cultural context that inspires them, and the legacy of collective improvisation and call and response that both of the new works celebrate and deploy. Adopting

the mode they both admire, the event took the form of an improvised conversation with the writers engaging in a back-and-forth between works, with each reading picking up on the theme of its predecessor. The reading was followed by a discussion and a brief Q & A with the audience.

This event was organized by the James Gallery and the Center for the Humanities and co-sponsored the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean (IRADAC) at the Graduate Center, CUNY.

Harmony Holiday and Fred Moten in conversation in the James Gallery, November 1, 2019



About the Center For The Humanities

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

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

This is accomplished through four main initiatives:

- ➔ The Andrew W. Mellon Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research brings together over 40 faculty, students, and civic, cultural, and community partners to produce and circulate research through public projects, engaged scholarship, and interdisciplinary activities at CUNY and throughout New York City.
- ➔ *Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative* is a platform for publishing, supporting student collaborative archival research, and connecting poetics and pedagogy. In addition to awarding numerous archival research grants, *Lost & Found* chapbooks are edited by doctoral students and contain original texts by figures central to and associated with New American Poetry, unearthed from personal and institutional archives located throughout the United States and abroad. In addition to publishing, *Lost & Found* also implements pedagogical initiatives, bringing legacies of pedagogy at CUNY to contemporary students through *Lost & Found: In the Classroom* and hosting poetry workshops at the Academy for Young Writers.
- ➔ The Amie and Tony James Gallery's mission is to bring artists and scholars into public dialogue on topics of mutual concern

through exhibitions as a form of advanced research. As a window into the research work of the Graduate Center and a hub of international discussion, the James Gallery is central to the Graduate Center's and the City University of New York's contribution to the cultural life of New York City. Located in midtown Manhattan at the nexus of the academy, contemporary art, and the city, the gallery creates and presents artwork to the public in a variety of formats. While some exhibitions remain on view for extended contemplation, other activities such as performances, workshops, reading groups, roundtable discussions, salons, and screenings have a short duration. The gallery works with scholars, students, artists and the public to explore working methods that may lie outside usual disciplinary boundaries.

- ➔ The Object Library, also on the Graduate Center's ground floor, offers both material objects and books as starting points for knowledge. With an eye toward opening up the ground floor library space to the public, the Object Library inspires non-standard routes into study through temporary installations that incorporate a range of learning styles and cross-fertilize among disciplines.

We also continue to receive and support proposals for student and faculty-led public programming including screenings, lectures, conferences, and performances. The Center provides key financial, publicity, and logistical support in realizing these events.

Continuing our legacy of putting scholars in conversation with public audiences, we are the host of ongoing lecture, seminar, and reading series—the Annual Irving Howe Memorial Lecture, the Bi-Annual Stanley Burnshaw Lecture, the Essay Seminars, and the Turnstyle Reading Series.

For the last 18 years, our Working Groups in the Humanities have modelled much of the interdisciplinary research we do across our various platforms, and we continue to support four extremely active working groups, who not only meet regularly but also have created amazing public resources including open source digital platforms for annotating analog archival material, public syllabi, and best practices for creating community-based oral histories.

Our CUNY Adjunct Incubator program grants funds and uplifts the vital work of adjuncts across CUNY in realizing public projects. And each year, we help to support two Graduate Center students as Public Humanities Fellows, in collaboration with Humanities New York.

Finally, our digital writing platform *Distributaries* provides a space for critical reflection on all of the work we do, publishing a wide range of contributors from undergraduate students to professional writers and scholars.

Across the many forms these activities take, we share a commitment to the humanities as an always evolving set of practices for making meaning, envisioning change, and communicating across the closest affinities and the widest differences.

None of this work would have been possible without the generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their support of the Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research and the Curatorial Practicum and Fellowship at the James Gallery; Amie and Tony James for their support of all the James Gallery programs, research and artist residencies, as well as the Object Library and the Mae West residency project; the Engaging the Senses Foundation, Margo and Anthony Viscusi, and the Early Research Initiative, for

their support of *Lost & Found: the CUNY Poetics Document Initiative*; the Sylvia Klatzin Steinig Fund and the Gittell Collective for their support of the CUNY Adjunct Incubator; the Wellcome Trust for their support of the Postdoctoral Curatorial Research Fellowship; Max Palevsky for his endowment of the Irving Howe Lecture and the family of Stanley Burnshaw for their endowment of the Stanley Burnshaw Lecture, established by Professor Morris Dickstein and hosted every other year by the Harry Ransom Center for Research in the Humanities at the University of Texas, Austin; World Poetry Books, Bread Loaf Translators Conference, Tess Lewis, ARC, Middlebury College, LTI Korea, Princeton University, Amazon, Boston University, Institut Ramon Llull, The Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library, the Yiddish Books Center, Polish Cultural Institute, PEN America, and the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center for their support of the Translating the Future event series; the Vera Shlakman Irrevocable Trust for their support in honor of the Herbert Gutman Memorial Fund; and the Provost's Office at the Graduate Center for their support of the Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research, the Object Library, *Lost & Found*, and the James Gallery.

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2020–22

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Nga Than (Sociology)

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Fernanda Blanco Vidal (Environmental
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Cover Image

Image designed for ART • WORK • PLACE event series by Nikki Columbus, 2020.



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