

In the Presence of Absence

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Director's Introduction: *end_notes*

This is the first of a series of small publications entitled *end_notes*, timed to coincide with the closing of EFA Project Space exhibitions. The imprint presents critical texts that trail an exhibition as it leaves the world. These are paratexts rather than guides. Our focus is less on looking back on the exhibition itself—or creating a stand-in for those who could not be there to see the show in person—and more on beginning to predict its subtle wake, the shape of things to come that result from these fugacious convergences of artistic and curatorial energies and synergies.

It is fitting that our first publication in the series should trail the first curatorial foray of noted art critic and writer Jillian Steinhauer. Jillian's show has come together as the result of her many years of writing about art, her personal experience with mourning, and with her deep reading of our current cultural moment, when truth and history are accompanied by a question mark, and the erasure of violent, oppressive histories is becoming visible to a broader public.

A critic's function is not exactly to "criticize," nor is it to deconstruct for the sake of deconstruction, but rather, in the Ruskinian sense, it is to assemble strains of meaning that valorize and complicate the situation of the work itself—within society, the history of art, and the broader historical moment. The critic's words ricochet off an artwork like a stone off a pond, furrowing its still surface and at the same time disturbing the world into which the work is received. We thus launch *end_notes* like a sharp stone on an already troubled water. We are hopeful that these notes—the center of which are Jillian's curatorial essay, the commissioned texts by Michelle García and Jessica Lynne, and dedications made by the exhibition's participating artists—can contribute to a further amplification and complication of the context for *In the Presence of Absence*, an exhibition that reckons with how we find ourselves through loss.

Finally, on behalf of EFA, I thank the artists and writers for sharing their work; Jillian Steinhauer for allowing us to share in her vision; the staff of Project Space: Meghana Karnik, Nick Witchey, JP-Anne Giera; our installer Rob Nelson; and Matt Vicari, our photographer. Heartfelt thanks to Jonathan Rabinowitz, Jane Stephenson, Dathon Pilgrim, Michelle Levy, to series editor Cat Tyc, and to all the staff of EFA, as well as to our spring curatorial interns Hannah Arroyo, Frank Prescia, and Axel Sack. ●

Dylan Gauthier

Director, EFA Project Space Program



LEWIS
LORD
MAYO
MORSE
MURPHY
NASH
NICHOLS
NORRIS
O'NEILL
PARKER
RICHARDS
SMITH
TAYLOR
WALKER
WATSON
WHEELER
WILSON
YOUNG





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FIND PEOPLE KILL PEOPLE WASHITA RIVER	U.S. CAAVES MONEY MAKE SOCIAL SURGERY	MAKE UTERME HATS YOUR STORY	DO NOT DANCE FOR PAY
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Jillian Steinhauer
Curating in the Dark

This exhibition is dedicated to Henrietta, Suzanne, and Bronia.

I know there was a time before, but in my mind I find it's hard to go back there. Every so often, I'll try—stare into space and attempt to recall who I was, how it felt to be that person, before the fall of 2015. In a way, it's an arbitrary distinction. I was still me, my partner and I were still us—we were just happier. Even that construction has limits, though. Moments in our lives had been freighted with tragedy. We hadn't always been carefree like I imagine. Still, I wonder if there's something about getting older. The hangovers are worse because your body can't process the alcohol as well as it used to, and the tragedies are harsher because your spirit gets tired.

The exhaustion of accumulation. When things first got bad, I had said, "at least it can't get worse!" but then it did: Donald Trump got elected, and, sitting on the couch with my partner, I cried so hard I couldn't breathe. Through the heavens, I almost asked him to marry me, in a feeble attempt to inject some small bit of joy into the world. The next morning, when I rode the subway to work (where I sobbed with my coworkers), everyone in the car was eerily quiet and sad and sober. There is private grief, and there is the public kind. When they coincide, it can feel like too much for one person to hold.

We humans like to give meaning to things by giving them a form: bad news comes in threes, we say, or Mercury is in retrograde. As a journalist and someone who tells stories for a living, I'm no exception. Twisting and folding my life into a recognizable shape helps me understand and accept what has transpired within it. And so it is that I've

found myself constructing a timeline of grief, a tidy list that attempts to clarify a murky period.

Here is my latest version:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| November 2015 | An aneurysm ruptures in the brain of my partner's mother, Suzanne, who lives in France. Two days later, my grandmother Henrietta dies in her sleep in the Brooklyn apartment where she had lived since roughly 1953. |
| July 2016 | Police officers shoot and kill Alton Sterling outside a convenience store in Baton Rouge, LA. The next day, cops in Falcon Heights, MN, shoot and kill Philando Castile in his car. Videos from both incidents go viral on social media. |
| January 2017 | My partner and I attend the Women's March on Washington, DC. Trump institutes the "Muslim ban" after being in office for a week; I protest at JFK Airport. |
| August 2017 | White supremacists rally in Charlottesville, VA, terrorizing local residents and chanting "Jews will not replace us." |
| October 2017 | Suzanne goes into cardiac arrest and dies in her sleep in a hospital in Marseille. |
| December 2017 | EFA Project Space asks if I would be interested in curating an exhibition. |
| March 2018 | My grandmother Bronia, a Holocaust survivor, falls in a metro station in Montreal, where she lives, and is hospitalized. |
| April 2018 | The National Memorial for Peace and Justice opens in Montgomery, AL. I finalize grief as the topic of my show at EFA Project Space. |
| June 2018 | Bronia dies in a seniors' residence, shortly after we learn she has a blood disease; she has never told us the full story of how she |

survived the Holocaust, and she never will. Reports emerge that migrant children are being separated from their parents and kept in cages at the US-Mexico border. I march in a protest across the Brooklyn Bridge.

October 2018

A man walks into the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA, and murders eleven people.

March 2019

In the Presence of Absence opens at EFA Project Space.

I've revised this timeline incessantly. I add events and take them away, wondering how to delineate the contours of my grief in a way that's both honest and logical. Which is absurd—I shouldn't need to contextualize or rationalize my feelings in order to acknowledge their reality. But I'm a logical person. When I look at this timeline, something about the stupor and shadow of the last three and a half years starts to make sense. And when that happens, I start to feel better.

Curating this exhibition has also been a way of making sense—or perhaps not sense, but meaning (out of what's senseless). One of the most difficult aspects of trauma or loss is confronting its intractable arbitrariness: Why did this thing have to happen, and why now? There's a bewildering intensity to how small you feel in its wake, as you realize the hard limits of your ability to exercise control. And so, when you're ready, you turn again to what you can control. You focus your sorrow with intention to create a tangible form. You make something, because you can.

That doesn't necessarily mean you know what you're making. When I began putting together this show, I felt once again like I was groping around in the dark. The difference was that this time, the dark-

ness was more familiar and inviting. And even though I couldn't see much, I suspected I'd recognize the shapes of what I was reaching for when I found them.

On the advice of the EFA team, I started with what I knew—art—and let that lead me into conversation. When I reached out to artists, I found they weren't just polite or gracious; they cared. They too had thought about the expansiveness of grief, as well as its isolation, and they too wanted to talk about it. They were deeply, confidently insightful and as I spoke with them and spent time with their work, my emotional balance shifted. I began to regain my sense of possibility.

Still, it wasn't until the work was installed in the gallery that I fully realized what I'd been doing for over a year. A few days before the opening, Dylan reminded me that, based on its Latin root word, the job of the curator is to provide care. Usually that means for objects, but in my case, there was another layer. I had thrown myself into the work because I needed somewhere for the grief to go. All those emails and phone conversations, studio visits and meetings, research and reading had been a feverish way of caring for myself. And as visitors came up to me at the opening to say how much the show moved them, I realized it wasn't just for me. I had opened up a space of care for anyone who was seeking it.

In three years, I lost three of my four matriarchs. I only had a sustained, close relationship with one of them, but I feel all of their absences in my bones. I wonder what they would say if they could see the show (although I know Bronia would not have come). They were three very different women who were never in a room together, but sometimes I like to imagine them gathering in the gallery. Maybe they're making introductions and small talk, waiting for me to arrive. When I do, we turn on some music,

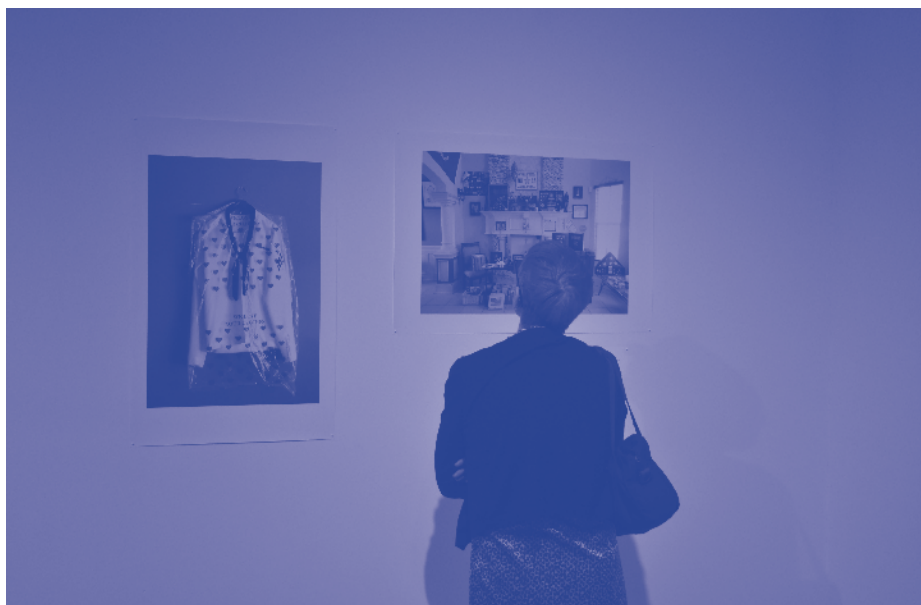
maybe a catchy standard from the 1930s or a song by the Temptations—something classic and joyful that will help us forget all our troubles. And then we get into it. Henrietta and Suzanne start singing; Bronia's more cautious, but she dances in her quiet, awkward way. It's an improbable scene, but I can see it clearly: the three of them, my muses of strength and style, joining me to say goodbye. 🌟



Jillian Steinhauer discussing Emily Carr's *Reclaimed vol. 2* during a curatorial walkthrough of the exhibition.



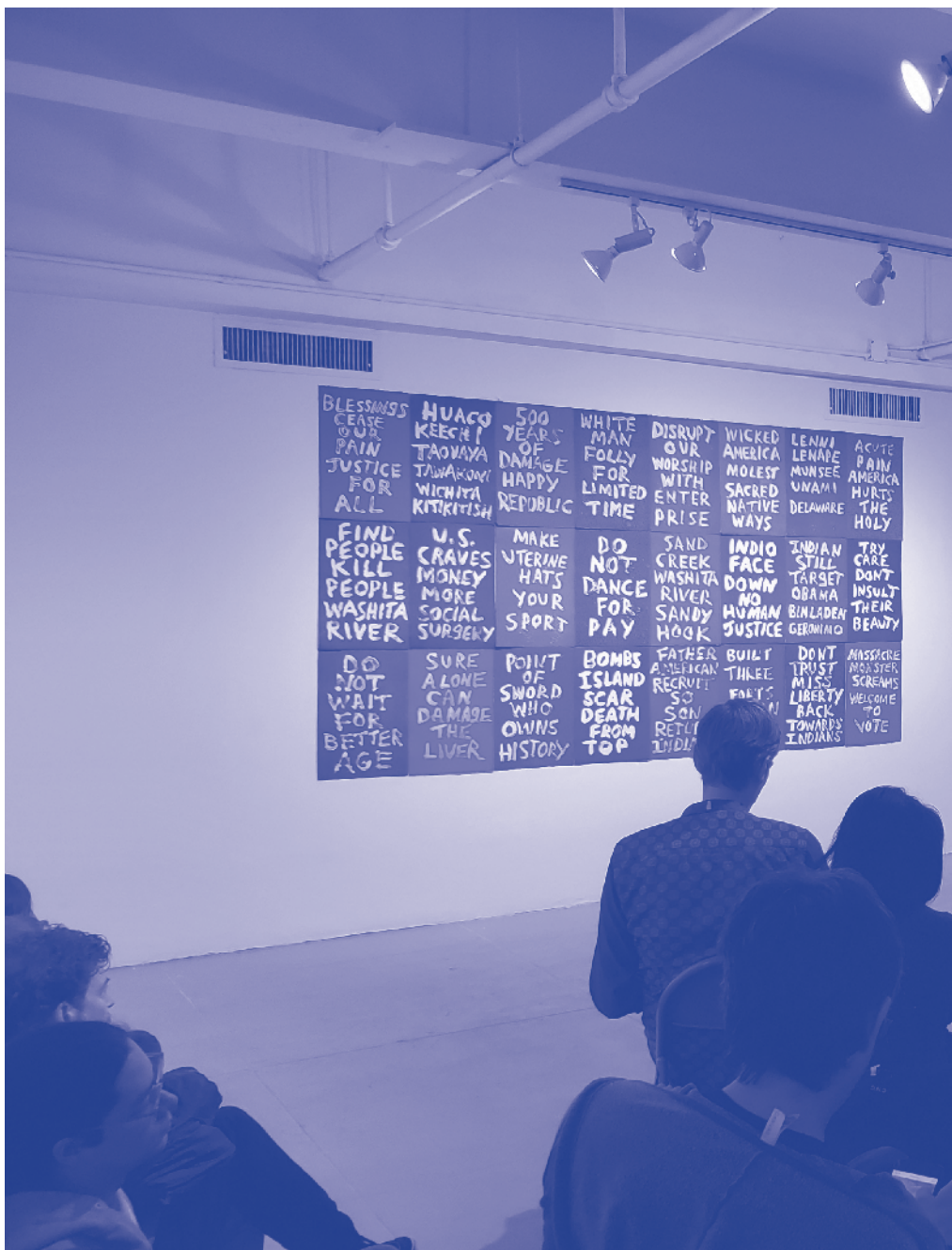
Jillian Steinhauer discussing Valery Jung Estabrook's *Five Twenty Two* during a curatorial walkthrough of the exhibition.



Inbal Abergil's series *N.O.K. – Next of Kin*, 2018, seen during the exhibition's opening reception.



Melinda Hunt's *Loneliness in a Beautiful Place: AIDS Burials on Hart Island*, 2018, seen during the exhibition's opening reception.



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DO NOT WAIT FOR BETTER AGE	SURE ALONE CAN DAMAGE THE LIVER	POINT OF SWORD WHO OWNS HISTORY	BOMBS ISLAND SCAR DEATH FROM TOP	FATHER A MELICAN RECRUIT SO SON RELU LUDIA	BUILT THREE FOETS N	DONT TRUST MISS LIBERTY BACK TOWARDS INDIANS	MASSACRE MIA STEP SCREENS WELCOME TO VOTE

Artist talk with Edgar Heap of Birds, March 30, 2019.



Jessica Lynne

At the Repast

At the repast, we attempt to gather ourselves as the deaconesses prepare the trays of food that will be served. We enter through the hall's large brown double doors, greeted by those who have managed to outpace the funeral procession back from the burial grounds. We smile and shake hands. We thank Sister Johnson again for her moving rendition of "His Eye Is on the Sparrow." We squeeze cousin Mariah's hand one more time for a measure of comfort. We hold Xavier in a strong embrace. A table has been reserved for us closest to the window, opposite the entrance, so that we are able to receive the additional *I'm so sorry for your loss-es* that we will inevitably hear throughout the next few hours. Before walking us to our table, Reverend Boyd asks if he can find us a clean handkerchief to catch the sweat from our forehead. We chuckle and make a bad joke about the heat, as if a summer funeral in Virginia would give us anything but a sweat-stained pantsuit. We take our seat and watch as a young mother prepares to breastfeed and attendees line up for their meals. We are expected to eat first, but we have decided to eat last. In the left breast pocket where we have stuffed Reverend Boyd's handkerchief, we pull out a photograph of her and place it on the table. Maybe it was '77 or '78. Maybe it was June or July. Maybe it was before or after the move. Folks ask to see this photograph all afternoon. By the time we make our way home, it seems it no longer belongs just to us.

At the repast, folks tell us how the woman in the photograph is the woman they hope to remember, with a perfectly picked-out Afro, meat on her bones, and not a pockmark in sight on her skin. How it had been hard to watch her lose the weight and hair and

speech. How they were surprised at the cancer's route through her body. *Us too*, we think to ourselves. How we never understood human anatomy better than in that time of X-rays and chemotherapy and convalescence. How we marveled at the way in which her body unlearned itself. How death always seems so far away until it isn't. While she was alive, we had rejected the suggestions to join walks and rallies, the ones to support research or treatment funding. The pithy sloganeering had always troubled us. If cancer is a battle, what do we think of those who have died? As if death were a flag of surrender. Haven't we always been fighting? We who are Southern and Black and Woman.

At the repast, the lump in our throat continues to swell. We were not able to cry, even as we watched her slip away from us, because there was little time to attend to our own feelings. There were the doctor appointments and the refilling of prescriptions and the preparing of meals. Then came the hospice care and the funeral plans and the selling of the house and the giving away of her things. And so now, the lump has simply lodged itself, taken up residence. We know what the reverend will say as he leads the room in prayer before we depart for the evening: *Cover them in the way only you can, Lord. Be their strength and comfort, for we know that our timing is not your timing, our ways not your ways.* We try and swallow, but the lump won't budge. It is a thing made up of a small-town girlhood and a last goodbye and a faith we aren't sure how to hold on to anymore. We recognize Nel's cries for Sula now more than ever. *girl, girl, girlgirlgirl.* We miss her—our sister, blood of our blood, this Black woman who helped us become whole. Our grief is not sorrow as much as it is disappointment. It is a particular type of lonely.

As guests leave the repast, we are showered with

scripture and more prayer, but we do not know how to join them in search of some glorious afterlife. We do not know how to pray for a new body, only for an easy slumber. We do not know how to pray for a cure, but for a world that might finally learn to love us while we're still alive.

And if we have angered god with our hesitance, then we can only pray they understand the limitations of our flesh. ●



Nile Harris performing Jaamil Olawale Kosoko's *Chameleon (The EFA Installments)*, 2019, at the opening, March 27, 2019



Michelle García
They have come for us

They began to trying to kill us when I was burying my parents. He went first, and she followed three years later. Deaths of the body. Deaths that are understood. Flowers sent. An obituary appears in the newspaper. Mariachis summoned to the country cemetery, where the songs are heard that have sent generations of our people into the ground of south Texas and into the spirit world.

Ours is another sort of death. Unrecognizable and ungrieved. There is no notice of a body. The certificate comes in other forms. Government paperwork and news reports, if read closely, refer to this less ordinary, but not unexpected, demise.

The attacks have always come from the north. They charge across our ranches and villages in warfare, and from their warfare came their border. That all happened in the 19th century, long before I was born. Warfare history: “how the west was won” and a nation was made from sea to shining sea, fighting Mexicans in our brush country.

The first signs of the latest death campaign appeared when he, my father, died in 2005. We heard the warnings on the TV news and on talk shows. We read the headlines. Politicians and hotheads. They warned about war on the frontier, about Mexicans, drug traffickers and such, looming over the border. Their border enemy had never gone away. He was back, more violent than ever. The death campaign was for our protection, they said.

We heard their warnings, but we did not understand them. Really, we thought it had nothing to do with us. There was a border 100 miles south of our home, past big ranches and small towns with drive-thru burger

places and the shrine to the folk healer, honored by brown and white alike. That border is surrounded by villages and cities where people we knew and loved lived. The ranches had existed long before their border was created. Still, she worried, my mother, about the military and what the war would do to us. She feared we would become the unknown casualties.

With the bodies of my parents in the ground, I believed that I had lost family and home. I believed that I was alone. After they came for us, I learned that to be untrue. My parents had become part of the tangle of thorns and heat. Our brush country is mapped by the names of small towns, family names, and tribal systems that locate a person and their clan in time and space. A system designed to anchor us within a story across generations. Before borders. To leave no one alone.

Their brush country is divided by sectors, bounded by a wall, and patrolled day and night. Their brush country belongs to a border that exists thousands and thousands of miles away, where war history never dies. Their border has grown and now reaches my hometown, consuming all that we have been. Their border exists for them, an idea that anchors them in the world, giving them meaning. They have to protect it. The old pickup trucks on our county roads have been replaced by police and military. Helicopters fly where crop dusters once glided across fields. They tell everyone that their border must be protected, because if it's vulnerable, so are they. They will make it strong.

And they will destroy everything in its path to create their battlefield. There, children have died, shot down by their fighters. Parents have lost children for weeks or months. They have taken my home for their defense. They have turned me from a daughter of the brush country into a native of the extended border. They make the people I know believe in the war be-

cause believing in war is an American condition. My people have become afraid, of each other and so of themselves. Home has been made hostile.

Borders obliterate a system of life that transcends time, life that knows no death. With the making of borders, they have tried to make us like them: alone, clinging to a distant illusion of the past and terrified of the future. They have sentenced us, people of the brush country, to an unnamed death—to be erased and forgotten. We are a sacrifice to their greatest ambitions and worst fears. And we have no marker for our loss, no song and no cemetery. ●



Collective Grief, the Design, Politics, and Future of Memorials, co-presented with Reimagine End of Life, with: Anthony Goicolea, Melinda Hunt, Karla Rothstein, and Elizabeth Velazquez, moderated by Jillian Steinhauer, May 2, 2019.





Johnson and Ortega from the series *N.O.K.* –
Next of Kin, 2018
Photographic prints, dimensions variable.

We can hope that we are a force for good, but a force we are, and people will continue to die for our right to exist. Whether we consider ourselves passive observers or civic activists, pacifists or conflict hawks, patriots or renegades, Americans or global citizens, we are all participants in a larger process. We owe it not only to the unknown fallen but to ourselves to accept these memories for

which we should be thankful that we did not suffer and to understand something of significance from their remote losses. Even as these lives that are now past touch us from the pages of a book that they could not have imagined, some little action that each of us takes will have an impact on someone somewhere, maybe unknown and perhaps not even born yet.

from “Still Life” by Stephen Mayes,
N.O.K - Next Of Kin, fall 2017

This work is dedicated to:
Hospitalman William F. Ortega,
Marine Expeditionary Force,
killed in action June 18th,
2010, Afghanistan

Sergeant Donna R. Johnson,
514th Military Police Company,
killed in action October 1st,
2012, Afghanistan

And all the Gold Star families.

Emily Carris

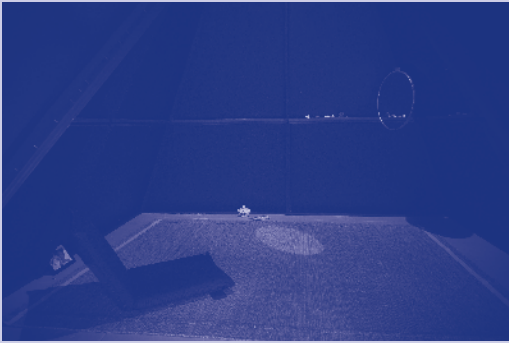
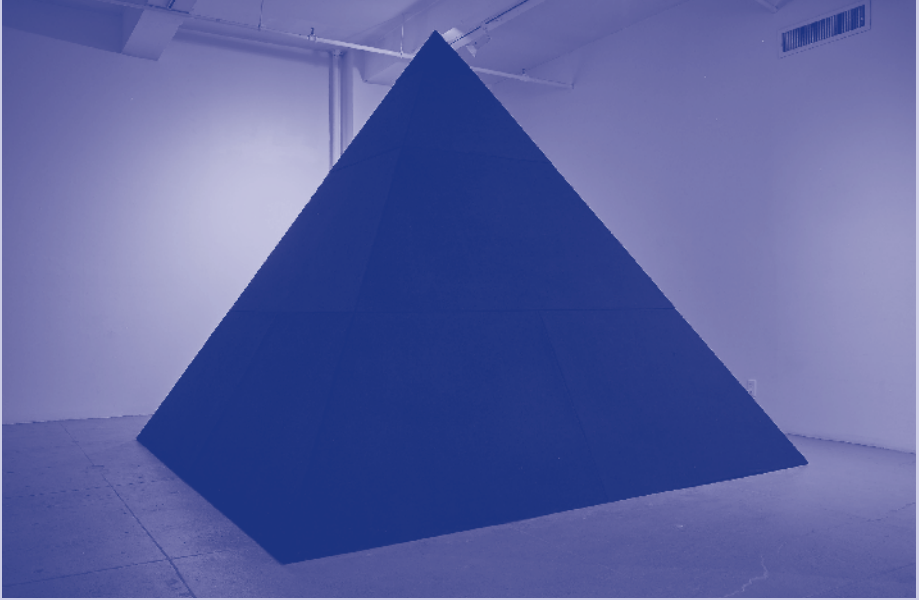


Reclaimed vol. 2, 2019

Archival inkjet ink, linen fabric, linen yarn dyed with South Carolina indigo, silk thread dyed with madder root, naturally dyed silk, antique cotton batting from mid-1800s, cotton/polyester thread, catnip, cinnamon, goldenrod, rue, safflower, tansy, indigo, iron derived from early 1800s slave shackles, platinum & palladium print of the artist, cotton paper, salt from Arrowsic, ME, silk embroidery thread, 24k gold thread, coral, quartz, rock salt, antique Ashanti akua'ba, antique crochet doll (named Lucy), wooden peg holder, malachite, clay leaves, 81 x 128 x 24 in., approximate

Leigh Davis

This work is dedicated to Mrs., Gram, Nancy, GGD, and all of the people who have shared their losses with me over the past few years.

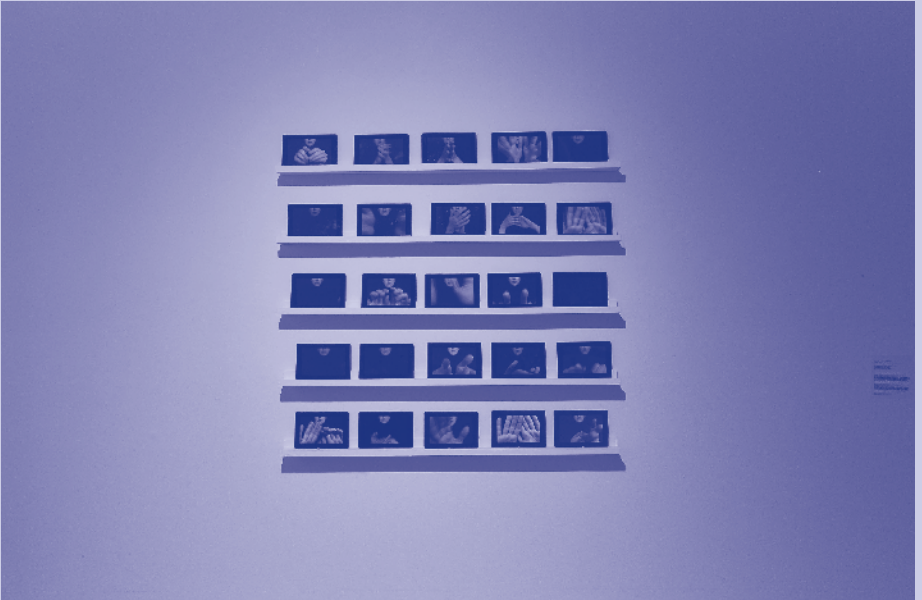


Reunions, 2019

Wood, paint, masonite, moleskin, chair,
mirror, 103 x 96 x 96 in.

Valery Jung Estabrook

I'd like to dedicate this work to my dad, Vito, and Barbara, as well as to each of their partners and spouses: my mom, Maria, and Florrie. May we carry on the legacies of our loved ones through acts of creativity and kindness so that we may find comfort and grace here on Earth.



Five Twenty Two #1-19, #21, #23-24, #26-28, 2018
25 unique single-channel videos on 7" tablets, 5:22
total run time each, looped, music composed by John
Driscoll

Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap Of Birds



Dead Indian Stories, 2007-15

Monoprint, ink rag on paper, 15 x 22 in. each

I would like to dedicate my artwork contribution *Dead Indian Stories* to honor my four ceremonial instructors who taught and helped me and my family over the last 30 years:

- Paul Peak Heart
- Roy Dean Bullcoming
- Vernon Bullcoming
- Jasper Washa

Nene Humphrey



Circling the Center (Braiding Table), 2019
Wood, wire, fabric, 36 x 36 x 33 in., approximate

Dedicated to Benny Andrews,
1930–2006

*If you were to peer into the mourner's skull
where all this feeling is electrical signals
firing, what you'd see are nerve fibers,
long strands of tissue that look like dead
people's hair
braided into amulets, lockets
in barrows and old tombs: you'd see little
lightning storms of rising glare, you'd see
it all as pure physical phenomena—
nerves lit
up on a screen in troughs, spikes,
no interpretation, no allegory,
no one listening to music
in a room the not-there listener sits
inside, no solitary midsummer afternoon
of watching rain slide down the non-
existent pane.*

*Why does he only come back to her in
fragments,
a head floating above a not quite present
body, or just a close up of his hand?
Why does he keep vanishing into wave-bands
of electrons, staticky flashes
signalling to the brain only his nose,
his right eye, imposed one upon another
in scenes she can't control, his face
shoved in hers*

*now drifting high up in the clouds? The more
she tries to make him come back, the more
she has to endure him dissolving*

*into thin continuous dreaming
of the nothing he's becoming..
But even as that nothing, he's still hers...*

*She sits at her table and weaves
what she can into coil on coil of uneasy
narrative
that pushes him farther out into his orbit
until*

*all she can see, all anyone can see, is the
braid she makes
from strand on strand of his gradual
unravelling.*

Excerpted from “Circling the
Center” by Tom Sleigh

Melinda Hunt

In honor of Thomas Jack Hockett and Herbert Sweat, Vietnam veterans fighting to restore the dignity of people buried on Hart Island.



Loneliness in a Beautiful Place: AIDS Burials on Hart Island, 2018

Single-channel video, 8:21 total run time

After the Fire and Before AIDS: Sonia, 2017

Acrylic inkjet on Somerset paper, 49.5 x 40 in

Traveling Cloud Museum 2.0

Creative software and storytelling platform developed in collaboration with Studio AIRPORT and Inspire.nl



Accidental Saint (J.I.K.D.I.S.Y.G.I.B.), 2019
Mixed-media installation, dimensions variable

Wake
for my brother

*I suppose if I've learned anything,
it's all been tethered to loss. My
16 year old self, lowering
my mother's body down
into that black earth, and now,
exactly 16 years later,
I'm back at this same place,
same broken body, same face.*

*But this time it's not my mother.
This is her son, and he is just as
fragile as he is strong. His
22 year old self: long and muscular,
dark and bruised, punished
and weathered. I lay him down,
like a question to God. I ask,*

Lord, if I am still here; why can I not obey?

This work is dedicated to my brother Abdul Jaamal. Special thanks to Nile Harris, Sarah Lurie, Holly Bass, Imma Asher, EFA, and Jillian Steinhauer for support in realizing this project.

M. Carmen Lane

Skin Hunger

This is the difficult. This is the strange rage laid dormant in the belly—water through the shoddy dam angry. A dry-mouthed grief at the edge of healing. This is fury. The



Akhsó (Grandma): This Is A New Experience, 2019
Black-and-white iPhone images printed on vinyl,
mixed-media construction, dimensions variable

stinging ache of a not-touched body. The beginning of the moan, guttural—before the song comes. This is the painful. The scratchy red of eyes at the precipice of old tears finally ready to flow. This is the in-between. The coughing up of after the near drown—the instinct to live and draw breath. This is excavated memory. The awareness of wrenching aortic patterns—the hot and heavy energy of ancestral unfinished business. The guilty healing vibration of “I’m sorry I’ve passed this on to you.” Fuck. Fuck this. I saw the pain in her eyes and still yelled. I raged about while she pretended nothing different was occurring. Her brain was doing the difficult mental dance post stroke to understand. She was keeping the peace or manipulating to maintain care. This is not normal. They offer “thoughts and prayers.” Sitting in the privilege of not being dirty with family story. Fuck them all. Fuck you all. Caring is a foreign concept to the settler. Empathy is a lost art to the settler. The stabbing throb of inflammation in my joints. I am pushing through to keep an elder alive. Did he die because I stopped touching him? Did I choose her skin over his love? I want to bludgeon in the old way the next person who texts to fulfill the obligation of care without the accountability of seeing taking in the impact of struggle.

My right knee hurts. I am alive in the moist earth of our Mother, she knows me in a different way—it smells different with her. I awake in the filth of the city, tense with the abundance of settled walking about post-apocalyptic searching for freedom. Their comfort will always cost the lives of the human beings. He wears my shirt and I hope it is enough that he will never feel what it is like to live in my body. His mother thinks he may be two:spirit. It is difficult to walk between the currents when the oil keeps spilling and their blood keeps pumping.

I'd like to dedicate this work in honor of the memory of my grandparents, Vivian C. Murphy and Paul O'Neill Murphy. In addition, I'd like to thank the following people for their support: nya:weh Kat Burdine, Arthur Russell, Annie Clark, Michael Rakowitz, Donald Black, Jr., Ty Defoe, Jillian Steinhauer, and the team at EFA Project Space.

Todd Shalom



Todd Shalom, *Good Grief*, a participatory listening event, April 11, 2019.

Contributors

Inbal Abergil is a visual artist and an educator originally from Jerusalem. Abergil works in photography, video, text, and installation. Coming from Israel, a culture where loss, conflict, and trauma are substantial parts of daily life, has had a profound effect on her artistic vision. Abergil's work has been exhibited internationally in museum and gallery exhibitions in the U.S., Belfast, Northern Ireland, South Korea, Amsterdam, and Israel. Abergil is the recipient of the Pollock-Krasner Grant (2018). Her work has been shortlisted for the 2018 Documentary Essay Prize at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. Her series *Nothing Left Here But The Hurt* has been nominated for the Prix Pictet Photography Prize (2012). Abergil received her MFA in visual arts from Columbia University (2011) and is an Assistant Professor of Photography at Pace University.

Emily Carris is an artist and founding member of The Art Dept/Colored Vintage, a collectively-run vintage store and workshop space dedicated to sharing stories and uplifting underserved artists, particularly queer, nonbinary, and artists of color in Philadelphia, where she currently lives and works. She has a BA in education and photography from Eugene Lang College in New York and holds a master's degree in photography from UCA in Kent, England. She has also worked as a photography teacher and museum educator at the International Center of Photography in New York. Her work explores the personal and cultural legacy of slavery and the Black female body and has been exhibited around the U.S. and internationally.

Leigh Davis is a multimedia artist and educator. She has created performances and/or events for the former Morbid Anatomy Museum, Dixon Place, and Hunter East Harlem Gallery, in NYC. Her work has been featured at Open Source Gallery and BRIC (Brooklyn) and the Maryland Institute College of Art (Baltimore). Recently, Davis created a site-based audio work for the historic chapel at Green-Wood Cemetery. She is a recipient of numerous awards and grants, including those from The Pollination Project and the New York Department of Cultural Affairs. Davis holds a BFA in photography from Savannah College of Art and Design, GA, and an MFA from Concordia University, Montreal. She teaches courses at Parsons and the New School and works between Brooklyn, NY, and Washington, DC.

Valery Jung Estabrook was born in Plantation, Florida, and raised on an organic Asian pear farm outside of Lexington, Virginia. She holds an MFA in painting from Brooklyn College and a BA in visual art from Brown University. Her work has been exhibited in major cities both domestically and internationally, including New York, Los Angeles, Nashville, Lagos, Bilbao, and Melbourne. In 2018 she received the Gold AHL-T&W Foundation Contemporary Visual Art Award, an annual award recognizing artists of Korean heritage in the United States. She currently resides in New Mexico.

Michelle García is a journalist and essayist. She is a current Soros Equality fellow and Dobie Paisano writer-in-residence. She is working on a book about borders. Her work has appeared in *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Baffler* and numerous other publications and she is a frequent contributor to the *Oxford American* and *Guernica*. She has also reported from the New York bureau

of the *Washington Post* and is a former Texas correspondent for *Columbia Journalism Review* and a member of Pen America. She is based in Texas and New York City, and you can find her at www.michellegarciainc.com and on twitter at @pistoleraprod.

- Hock E Aye Vi Edgar** is an artist and an advocate for Indigenous communities worldwide. His work includes multidisciplinary forms of public art messages, large-scale drawings, *Neuf* Series acrylic paintings, prints, works in glass, and monumental porcelain enamel on steel outdoor sculpture. While representing Indigenous communities, his art focuses first on social justice and on the personal freedom to live within the tribal circle as an expressive individual. *Heap of Birds* work was shown in the 2007 Venice Biennale and has been exhibited at some of the most renowned institutions in the world. In 2012, he was named a USA Ford Fellow and in 2014 was honored as a Distinguished Alumni from the University of Kansas. Now retired from teaching at the University of Oklahoma after 30 years of service, he continues to serve there as professor emeritus.
- Heap Of Birds**
- Nene Humphrey** has exhibited in numerous museums and galleries since coming to New York in 1979. Exhibition locations include the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX; Mead Museum, Amherst, MA; Palmer Museum, PA; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; SculptureCenter, PS1 Contemporary Art Center, and the Lesley Heller Gallery, New York, NY. Humphrey has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Rockefeller Foundation, Brown Foundation, and Anonymous was a Woman, among others. Her work has been written about in numerous publications including the *New York Times*, *Art in America*, *ARTnews*, *Sculpture* magazine, *Hyperallergic*, and *Artforum*. Since 2005 she has been artist in residence at the Joseph LeDoux neuroscience lab at NYU, where her work has focused on explorations of the brain mechanisms underlying human emotions. She is currently collaborating with musician and composer Matana Roberts on a multidisciplinary performance piece, *Lining Out*.
- Melinda Hunt** is a Canadian-born artist and founding director of The Hart Island Project, which is a public charity with an arts and social justice mission. She is a recent recipient of a grant from the Women's Film, TV and Theatre Fund of the City of New York Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment and a current recipient of a Research and Creation Award by the Canada Council for the Arts 2017–2019. She is also a 2017 NYFA/NYSCA Fellow in Digital & Electronic Art. Her work as an artist and activist includes developing software for a storytelling platform known as the Traveling Cloud Museum, featuring clocks of anonymity assigned to people who disappear into mass graves on Hart Island. Her creative work has generated three pieces of legislation. Melinda graduated from Reed College (BA) and the Pacific Northwest College of Art (BFA). She received her MFA from the Yale School of Art and an MS in Digital Imaging & Design from NYU.
- Jaamil Olawale Kosoko** is a Nigerian American poet, curator, and performance artist originally from Detroit, MI. He is a 2019 Red Bull Arts Detroit Writing Fellow, 2018–2020 Live Feed Artist at New York Live Arts, a 2019 DiP Resident Artist at Gibney, a 2019 National Dance Project Award recipient, a 2017 Princeton Arts Fellow, a 2017 Jerome Foundation Artist in Residence at Abrons Arts Center, and a 2017 Cave Canem Poetry Fellow. He lectures, speaks, and performs internationally. His previous works *#negrophobia* (nominated for a 2016 Bessie Award) and *Séancers* have toured throughout Europe, appearing in major festivals including Moving in November (Finland), TakeMeSomewhere (UK), SICK! (UK), Tanz im August (Berlin), Oslo Internasjonale Teaterfestival (Norway),

Zurich MOVES! (Switzerland), Beursschouwburg (Belgium), and Spielart Festival (Munich), among others. He was an inaugural graduate member of the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance (ICPP) at Wesleyan University, where he earned his MA in Curatorial Studies. More at jaamil.com or @jaamilkosoko.

M. Carmen Lane is a Cleveland-based two spirit African-American and Haudenosaunee (Mohawk/Tuscarora) artist, birthworker, consultant, and facilitator. Their work has been published in numerous journals and anthologies including the *Yellow Medicine Review*, *Red Ink* magazine, and *Anomaly*, and they are a contributor to the Lambda Literary Award–nominated *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literatures*. Carmen’s first collection of poetry is *Calling Out After Slaughter* (GTK Press, 2015). They are the founder and director of ATNSC: Center for Healing & Creative Leadership (www.atnsc.org), an urban retreat center and social practice experiment in holistic health, leadership development, Indigenous arts & culture, and Akhsótha Gallery located in the historic Buckeye–Larchmere neighborhood. Carmen is a member of NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers, and the experimental pop-up gallery collective Arts-SalvageCLE. Their work was exhibited in the 2018 Front Triennial as a part of *A Color Removed* (with Michael Rakowitz). Carmen was a 2018 Creative Fusion artist-in-residence.

Jessica Lynne is a founding editor of *ARTS.BLACK*, an online journal of art criticism. Her writing has been featured in publications such as *Art in America*, *The Believer*, *BOMB Magazine*, and elsewhere. She is currently at work on a collection of essays about family, faith, and the American South.

Todd Shalom is the founder and director of Elastic City, a nonprofit organization that produced over 200 participatory walks and events between 2010 and 2016. In collaboration with performance artist/director Nigel Smith, Todd conceives and stages interactive performances in public and private environments. Todd has been a faculty member at Pratt Institute and the School of Visual Arts. His work has been presented by Abrons Art Center, Brooklyn Museum, Columbia University GSAPP, Des Moines Art Center, The Invisible Dog, ISSUE Project Room, MIT List Visual Arts Center, The Museum of Modern Art, The New Museum, P.S. 122, and Stanford University. Todd has been an artist-in-residence at Akiyoshidai International Art Village (Japan), Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts (Omaha), Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and SHIFT (EFA Project Space).

Jillian Steinhauer is a journalist and editor living in Brooklyn, NY. Her writing has appeared recently in the *New York Times*, *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and *The Art Newspaper*, among other publications. She won the 2014 Best Art Reporting Award from the U.S. chapter of the International Association of Art Critics for her work at *Hyperallergic*, where she was formerly a senior editor. She writes mainly about art and politics, or the intersection of art and the world, but has been known to go on at length about cats, as in an essay commissioned for the 2015 book *Cat Is Art Spelled Wrong* (Coffee House Press). She received her master’s in Cultural Reporting and Criticism from NYU.

end_notes

In the Presence of Absence

Artists: Inbal Abergil, Emily Carris, Leigh Davis, Valery Jung Estabrook, Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds, Nene Humphrey, Melinda Hunt, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, M. Carmen Lane, Todd Shalom

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EFA Project Space, launched in September 2008 as a program of The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, is a collaborative, cross-disciplinary arts venue founded on the belief that art is directly connected to the individuals who produce it, the communities that arise because of it, and to everyday life; and that by providing an arena for exploring these connections, we empower artists to forge new partnerships and encourage the expansion of ideas.

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