

# ARTLINES

WINTER 2022





# ARTICLES & FEATURES

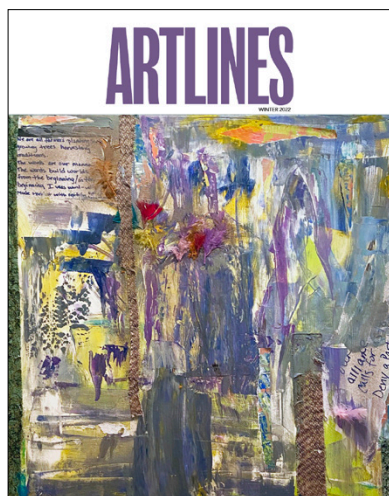
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**On The Cover**  
Artist: Chiara Atoyebi  
Title of Work: "Alignment"  
Mixed media on canvas  
Photo courtesy of Chiara Atoyebi

**ARTLINES**  
WINTER 2022

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**Alice Bedard-Voorhees, PhD**, is a re-directed academic whose loves of culture studies, poetry, and visual art led her to document this philanthropic art venture. She lives in Santa Fe, NM.

**Allyson Bell Armstrong's** expertise in biology, art, and construction inform her energies. She continued the family tradition of giving to a community by renovating an historic building on the Mexican border. She lives in Tucson, AZ.

**Amani Carille** as artist, teacher, and curator imbued the ethnocentric and spiritual into a transformational narrative at Watts Towers Art Center, Brockman Gallery, and William Grant Still Art Center.

**Noreen Dean Dresser** is an artist, curator, and writer with an ethical focus. Her art raises human agency as the engine of both transformation and destruction.

**Marlo De Lara** (she/they/siya) earned a PhD in Cultural Studies (Leeds, UK) and a MA in Psychosocial Studies (Essex, UK). Research areas focus on personal/social histories/narratives, postcolonial studies, and Filipinx/a/o American identities. Her practice works between the realms of sound performance, visual distraction, and film.

# Letter from our Editors

Dear Readers,

*Artlines' Winter issue based on WCA's 2022 Conference theme, "Occupy the Moment: Embracing Our History; Enhancing Our Impact" envisages a rich, vibrant tapestry patterned on wide-ranging themes from intersectional theory and art historical analysis to socio-political praxis, held intact by a consistent thread of individual and collaborative feminist formations that give voice to emergent, transcultural identities and discrete communities of agential expression. In teasing out the microhistories and macrohistories of women artists spanning several decades, topics touch upon numerous past achievements in correlation to present motivating forces; these horizontal and vertical threads provide the dense framework and necessary tension to get the weaving done.*

*From the groundbreaking 1960s Black Art Movement (BAM) to the 1970s L.A. art scene, Noreen Dean Dresser with Amani Carille poignantly details how diverse cultures, in conjunction with the African Diaspora and the Chicano/Latino art evolution, laid the vertical base for constructing the cords of change that were eventually witnessed on federal, state, and local levels. Lending testimonials to the many unsung stories and underrepresented peoples that founded the artistic achievements above-mentioned much gets potently revisited and re-presented by contemporary feminist arrival, Chiara Atoyebi in "Homecoming: How African Traditional Religion Restored My Faith." Commonalities in their respective writings are validated by interrelated subjects that interlace historically ethnocentric and oftentimes sacrosanct material into powerful contemporary narratives, albeit fact or fiction.*

*Correspondingly, what authors Marlo DeLara and Alice Bedard-Vorhees dually advocate in their pieces are trenchant conceptions of collaborative endeavors and new communities for creative enterprise that consistently integrate through the repetitive process of fabricating a solid ground. Reinforced is the belief that varied forms of artistic inclusion and accessibility, from intersectionality to claiming spaces, can act as catalytic forces for the global women's art community—in DeLara's instance, in specific response to Covid19 pandemic times. Whether virtual or actual, this season's contributors convey that these coinciding former and newly conceived structures of collaborative practice, through systematic analysis and a combined in-depth reflection upon them, propel them to become more thoroughly intertwined.*

Chiara Atoyebi, Margo, Hobbs, Ph.D., Patti Jordan



CHIARA ATOYEBI



MARGO, HOBBS, PH.D.



PATTI JORDAN



# *The Jewels in the Crown*

## *REVISITED*

NOREEN DEAN DRESSER WITH AMANI CARILLE

**A**s new graduates from Antioch College's art program, Amani Carille and I kept our promise and re-connected in Los Angeles in 1978, establishing our N'Debele studio. Inexorably drawn to one another while at Antioch, we were both electrified by the others' aesthetic and supported the work.

Amani's Senior Exhibition was breathtaking. Back from her Antioch College year abroad in Africa, she transformed her work into large-scale contemporary sculptural imagery imbued with spiritual, organic and ethnocentric themes. Intricate compositions and color merged from weaving and knots from Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Ghana. Techniques and patterns extending back centuries integrated into contemporary art themes, feminism and issues relevant to the African diaspora.

*the Los Angeles scene offered me a compass*

My Antioch European years abroad found me viewing art from the renaissance to modernity while studying with African and wide-ranging international students. Returning to

campus, the New York post modern pop nihilism ignored the transformative cultural emergence of a new human pedagogy emerging as the colonies ended, and bared Western art's racial constraints. Finding in the college library author's Waddy/

IMAGE 1: AMANI CARILLE'S THE GOODBYE BAG CREATED TO HONOR MINNI RIPERTON IS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF HER EXPANSION IN FIBER AND MIXED MEDIA IN 1978. DIMENSIONS: 26" X 38" X 7" WOOD, WOOL, RAFFIA, AND ROBIN'S NEST © AMANI CARILLE







Lewis books gave me the art link to my Cleveland Irish multicultural roots and the Los Angeles scene offered me a compass weaving spirituality into my conceptual focus.

The Los Angeles art scene in the 1970's was exploding. The Black Art Movement (BAM) of the 60's laid the foundations for funding and opportunities from the Federal, State and City. Murals rose across Los Angeles. Former students of Charles White painted fresh portraits and Judy Baca painted an inclusionary great Wall of Los Angeles (1974-1979). Scholarship drove support for Dr. Samella Lewis's African American Museum of Art (1976) and the California African American Museum in (1977). Now were possibilities long deferred.

Brockman Gallery Productions (Leimert Park/Crenshaw 1967) was a central hub in the West Coast Black Art Movement (BAM). With multiple public points of entry for exhibitions, music festivals and murals, Brockman Gallery would link the continents of Africa, the Americas, and the Caribbean to the Southwest. With his MFA from Otis Art Institute, Alonzo Davis as Brockman's founder, had a global framework contrasted to the insular view of the West Los Angeles art galleries. Visionary works from the Language of Jazz exhibition to the African Film Festivals featured an array of international talent.

While Alonzo Davis with his brother Dale exhibited Charles White, Betye Saar, David Hammons, and Suzanne Jackson they also sought new artists. Alonzo hired Amani in 1979 as a gallery assistant, as an Artist in Residence (1980) and myself in 1980 on a CETA grant. This would prove a life-line to both of

us in the economic downturn giving mentorship, income, and opportunity.

### *Major exhibitions took shape at the WTAC gallery.*

Self Help Graphics & Art (SHG) is credited today as being one of the first institutions

to celebrate the Day of the Dead in the United States. Sr. Karen Bocalero transformed Art, Inc. collective of printmaking into Self Help Graphics & Art (1973) in East Los Angeles as a seminal Chicano/Latino arts hub. Its Barrio Mobile Art Studio and the Professional Printmaking Program hired artists (Linda Vallejo, myself...) and served thousands of students and community members. Between 1978-1980, SHG initiated and collaborated with several regional California art organizations including Galería Posada, Galería de la Raza, Centro Cultural de la Raza, and Galería Sin Fronteras.

Social and Public Art Resource (SPARC) in Venice 1974 under the direction of Judy Baca would transform hundreds of walls and replete history across the LA Basin. SPARC gallery in the old jail would be used by Amani. There, she displayed her seminal noose interpretation honoring the imprisoned past.

Along with the African American Museums were several vibrant LA Cultural Affairs Department Art Centers. John Outerbridge was hired as Director to the Watts Towers Art Center (WTAC; 1975) from Compton's Communicative Arts Acad-





IMAGE 2: VINTAGE PHOTO OF THE BARRIO MOBILE ART STUDIO AND PROFESSIONAL PRINTMAKING PROGRAM ESTABLISHED EARLY IN THE ORGANIZATION'S HISTORY SERVING THOUSANDS. LEFT TO RIGHT TOP ROW: MARI YANEZ CARDENAS, ISABEL CASTRO, UNKNOWN GENTLEMAN, SISTER BETH GREGORY, MARGO ALBERT AND SISTER KAREN. BOTTOM ROW: SARAH PINEDA AND LINDA VALLEJO.

emy 1969-1975. Josine Ianco-Starrels directed the Municipal Art Gallery in Barnsdall Park (1975 to 1987), and Hakim Ali directed the William Grant Still Center (1977).

Watts Towers Art Center featured exhibitions that created new pathways for teaching art. John hired Amani and me as artists-in-residence in 1978 joining the team of Alonzo, Vernell De Silva, Charles Dickson, Adrienne Fuzee, Gralin Jerald, Willie Middlebrook, Jr., Morrell Morton, Danna Mungen, Mike Perry, D.J. Robinson, Afroshe-Azungi and Richard Wyatt, Jr.



IMAGE 3: GOCART GALLERY OF CHILDREN'S ART GREW OUT OF OUR ACTIVE RESIDENCY AT THE 111TH STREET SCHOOL. THESE CHILDREN WERE PREPARING FOUNDATION FOR MASK PAINTING.

Through a WTAC grant, the creation of the GOCART (Gallery of Children's Art) brought Amani, Adrienne and me to the 111th Street elementary school to set up a studio practice with a South Africa homelands study guide to actively engage these students with their counterparts across the Diaspora. In

the Watts Towers Art Gallery, the children took on the roles of artists, gallery guards, and press agents. The South African Embassy and Media were invited on the GOCART Stationary they designed.

Major exhibitions took shape at the WTAC gallery. The sculptural exhibit in August 1979: *Feeling Has Form: A tribute to Minnie Riperton*, showcased Richmond Barthé, Carille, Dickson, Grant, and Outterbridge linking the expansion of African American Art to her music. Amani's *The GoodBye Bag* from this exhibition would prove instrumental in her series of bags. This series of three dimensional *Spirit Chambers* were imbued with energy and solemnity and would transform the medium of fiber to metaphysical art.

William Grant Still Arts Center, where Amani and I both worked as artist-instructors, had many projects: *History of Blacks in Film*, William Grant Still Classical Music Festival.... I collaborated with the Sudanese Artist Musa Musa for the mural on the back of center. Amani curated the most inclusive exhibition of black women artists in the area in July 1982: *Los Angeles Afro-American Women Artists: Recent Works*. Artists included: Gloria Bohanon, Phoebe Beasley, Sandra Rowe, Adrienne Fuzee, Teresa Tolliver, Nancy Cox, Charlene Clay, Ruth Waddy, Tess Randolph, Shahar Caren Weaver, Mabel Boyd, Amani Carille, Gail Hendricks, Varnette Honeywood, Alison Saar, AfraShe-Azungi and Carrie Mae Weems. The show was widely attended and reviewed by the *Los Angeles Times*.

This artistic wealth of the African Diaspora, the Caribbean and the Southwest crowned the City of Angels bordering Mexico and facing the Pacific and is the innovative foundation upon which the Southern California Women's Caucus for Art arose.



# Homecoming

## HOW AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION RESTORED MY FAITH

BY CHIARA ATOYEBI

“We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.” – Maya Angelou

The Yoruba people believe in reincarnation. It is called Atunwaye. This reincarnation is believed to be possible in three forms: ipadawaye (ancestor's rebirth), akudaaya (die and reappear) and abiku or born to die (Osanyinbi, O. and Falana, K. 2016). On August 4, 2017, my five-year-old daughter Calais passed away in her bedroom. She'd had a miraculous two years of life while living with a stage 4 brain tumor. I was alone from the time she passed away until hospice came and helped me change her into her Elsa gown for one last picture. The nurse spread out the blue and white gown across the bedsheet as we both stood in silence. I motioned for her to take the picture. She was like an angel. I thought I would scream, or lose it, as they rolled her small body zippered up in the black bag down the street. I didn't. I walked up the stairs and waited. I believe that she was abiku. She came for a reason, one of which was to wake me up out of my sleep. I was already “woke” in the way we use it now. But I was asleep to me. When it came to using my gifts, conducting my rituals, communing with God and being me—I quit. I quit because it was hard. I quit because I felt I had to. I had begun to publish, and I was so enamored with my work I thought I was being punished for wanting to be whole. None of those things are true but I thought it was my place, as a woman. I was around women, but I was not around feminist women. My joy in life has come with acknowledging the fullness of who I am as a woman without erasing the necessity of the men in my life.

I was raised as a feminist. My mother was radical. She was a brilliant young Black woman that had the intellect to be a doctor but was steered to be a nurse. Playing it small was not good for her and she wanted more for me. At nine I was given a copy of two prominent books that formed my thinking as a child, *Our Bodies Ourselves* and *I Dream A World*. Both of these books I merged together in order to form my thinking. I was a Black woman who was part of a tradition of excellence. Yet, I am also a woman that exists within systems that attempt to oppress me and deny me my womanhood. If I were to place both books side by side and add in the words from the Bible and a copy of Dr. Suess's *The Lorax*, you have the foundations of my personal manifesto.

On November 7, 2017 I found out I was pregnant. My daughter Monarch was born on July 3, 2018. She was akudaaya, my dream reborn. During the many silent moments that I sat in my bed sketching pictures of what I now believe to be wombs and pictures of ears, I believe the angels were telling me about her arrival. When she came into the world, she had one finger up in victory. Just like her sonogram. She smiles every day all day. I greet my butterfly as the mother I always wanted to be. My practice is to change internal and external environments. I do this by honoring God from a pure heart and loving all his people. This type of light is what kept my ancestors alive on the voyage and allowed them to create from nothing.

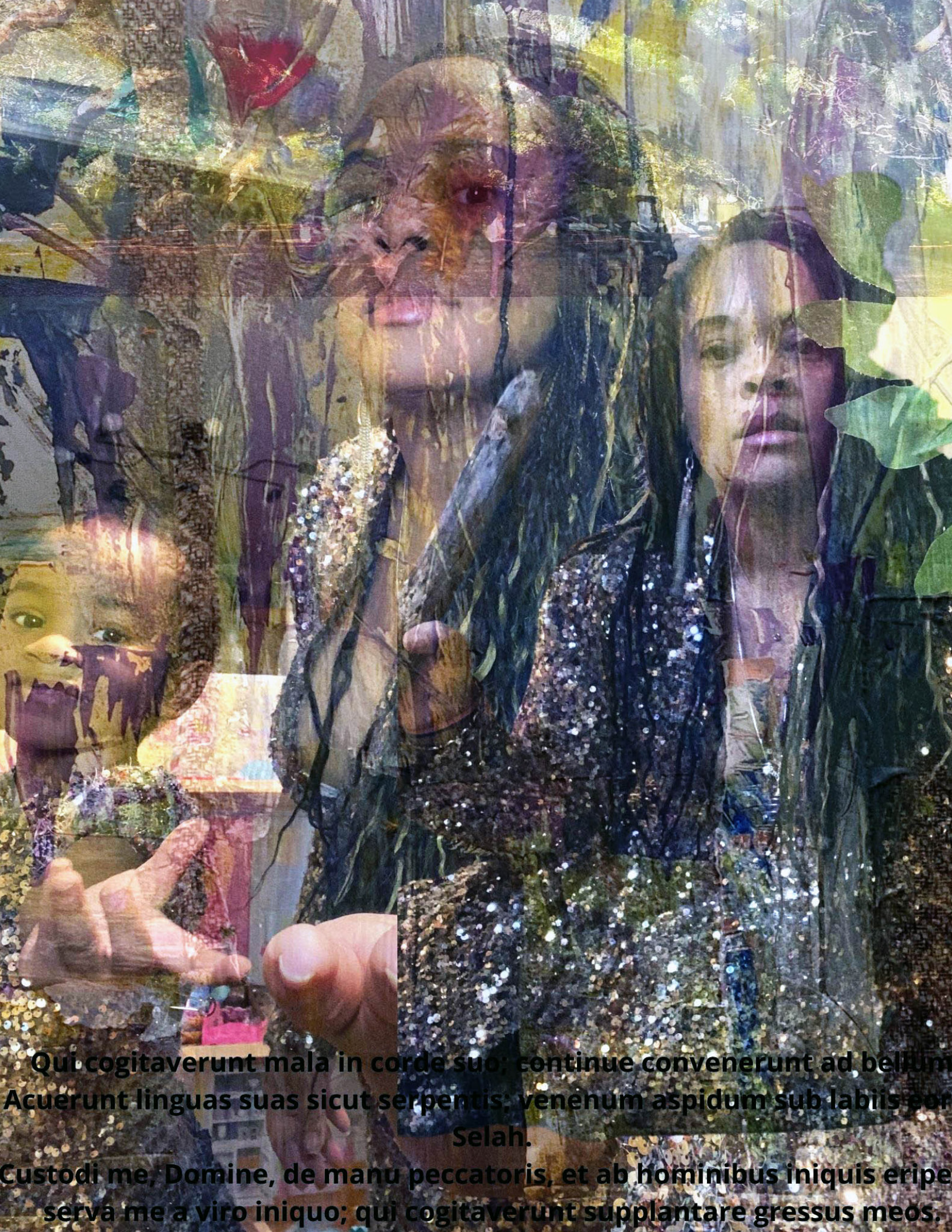
### *African Traditional Religion*

African Spirituality, or truly African Traditional religion, serves as the foundation of African American cultural identity as a whole. It is not a building but how we exist in the world. These tenets in visual culture are thematic representations that aid in movements surrounding liberation and resistance. Cultural markers of these principles are found in a connection to the natural world, family and community, and the veneration of sacred objects. A friend of mine told me this was missing in my life. I needed to find a way to build my altar and pay my respects.

In 2018, shortly after we moved into our new home with the promise of a new life, I began to experience the notion of a “call.” It was almost like a high-pitched dog whistle that began to reach out to me. It was difficult to ignore, but I did for as long as I could. Just when I felt I was free the lights went out in my life, and I was having what some called a Kundalini awakening. Church folks may call it spiritual warfare, the doctors would label it a nervous breakdown, but I will always call it my wilderness. It was a low point of my dark night of the soul. By this time, I was not making anything. I did, however, keep waking up at 3 am. Each time I would turn on the television, a Sangoma named Honey Tell A Story would appear.

I'd never heard of a Sangoma before, but I have been called a healer, so it felt familiar to me. After watching the healings of the Sangoma and seeing what she was doing, and hearing what she was saying, I felt comforted. It was like watching church. I noticed similarities in her practice and in mine. I used leaves





Qui cogitaverunt mala in corde suo; continue convenerunt ad bellum.  
Acuerunt linguas suas sicut serpentis: venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum.  
Selah.

Custodi me, Domine, de manu peccatoris, et ab hominibus iniquis eripe  
serva me a viro iniquo; qui cogitaverunt supplantare gressus meos.





TOP IMAGE: COME, DIGITAL COLLAGE © CHIARA ATOYEBI

and wood, and, burned candles, prayed, and made my tea. These are simple ways I prepare my environment, and myself, as I navigate the natural world. With the obeisance of every ritual I was gaining my peace. Honey showed me the missing piece in my faith and the reconciliation of who I truly was. This work I was doing was not about found materials or even a particular deity. This was about the land and God represented in his creation as love, and the acknowledgment of such. Who then could overpower the Earth?

***“I run naked in the jungle. I bathe among the trees. I’m a wild woman and I do as I please.” - Chiara***

I am wild to some degree. Especially at home in nature. Nature is for listening to what the Earth is telling me and bringing these elements closer in order to extract the medicine I need. I worked with the elements in my home in silence for months. I watched them do their thing. I let clay, dirt, and sand wash over me. I put shells in my daughter’s hair. I dragged wood into our living spaces and stones on the window sills. These earthen elements, like plants, restore life. There is no magic or chanting, just an ongoing homage. This is what the Curanderas do as well. They listen. We need to listen.

Harriet Tubman was illiterate. Her relationship with the words from her Bible is a keen example of the liberation of listening. Tubman could not read but often carried this text, imbued with the energy of the words on her heart. This foundational chord of God and Spirit found in African American Art is the undercurrent that gives it inexplicable power.

This is my true identity and our shared identity. Besides, a message hidden in the dark and practiced in isolation, is simply a message in the mirror. I want you to hear me, therefore, I shine a light. My story is the story of many because it is the story of The Alchemist. My personal is absolutely political and I seek to

inhabit all spaces. My story is the story of many. Some that have risen from the ashes. Some blinded to an open door. Where do I belong?

I belong everywhere love is needed, where the truth has been buried, and where voices are silenced.

My culture is my legacy. The influence of the African Diaspora, family from the Caribbean, the American South, and Nigeria. We all should desire a homecoming. To lead with our womb-ness, relish in our sexuality, build our altars and learn how to be free from the true freedom seekers in our lineage. I pay homage to the enslaved and thank them for holding on to their traditions, their culture in plain sight. Subverting oppressive religion and using it as a roadmap to freedom. This is the liberation we need to move forward as a whole.

### ***Spiritual Artists***

I find that many African American artists that are led to create in this way have experienced a loss that sends them on a search. One of the most notable forbearers to this practice of merging art and spirituality while cultivating identity is assemblage artist Betye Saar. Saar, who was inspired to work in this way after the loss of a relative, also cultivated her own identity and the identity of the voiceless through her works. Works such as *Spirit Catcher* (1977) and *Indigo Illusions* (1991) are works that are to be viewed, but also seem to have a functional purpose. Saar expertly materializes mysticism.

Another expert conjurer is Renee Stout. Stout, who is also WCA Lifetime Achievement recipient, is noted for her traveling exhibition, *Tales of the Conjure Woman*, in which her alter ego Fatima Mayfield is an herbalist and fortune teller. My website, The Hope Chest, was based on me as a quasi-fictional Geechee healer, tea maker and sewist, who changes the alchemy of people’s lives with old tradition. Different from Stout and Saar, my work is like a clearing agent. I am pushing you to truth and inspiring you to create. Yet in other ways, I am just like my “aunties” following the path they laid and continuing the traditions of the ancestors before us. I came into this final awareness in a healing circle on Juneteenth.

“As I stood in the doorway of the bedroom closet hunched over the small trap door that had provided refuge for so many enslaved women on their way to freedom. I felt a rush. My heart was beating. I knew that the true spirit of freedom had passed through these doors. The same spirit that had attempted to silence my ancestors and silence the truth in me- had not succeeded. I’d borne witness to the door and I looked through it and into a portal. That weekend with my spiritual family, my sisters, we were women that danced under the moonlight determined to be free.”

***- My awakening in an Amish home on Juneteenth 2021***

LEFT IMAGE: ALIGNMENT, MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS © CHIARA ATOYEBI



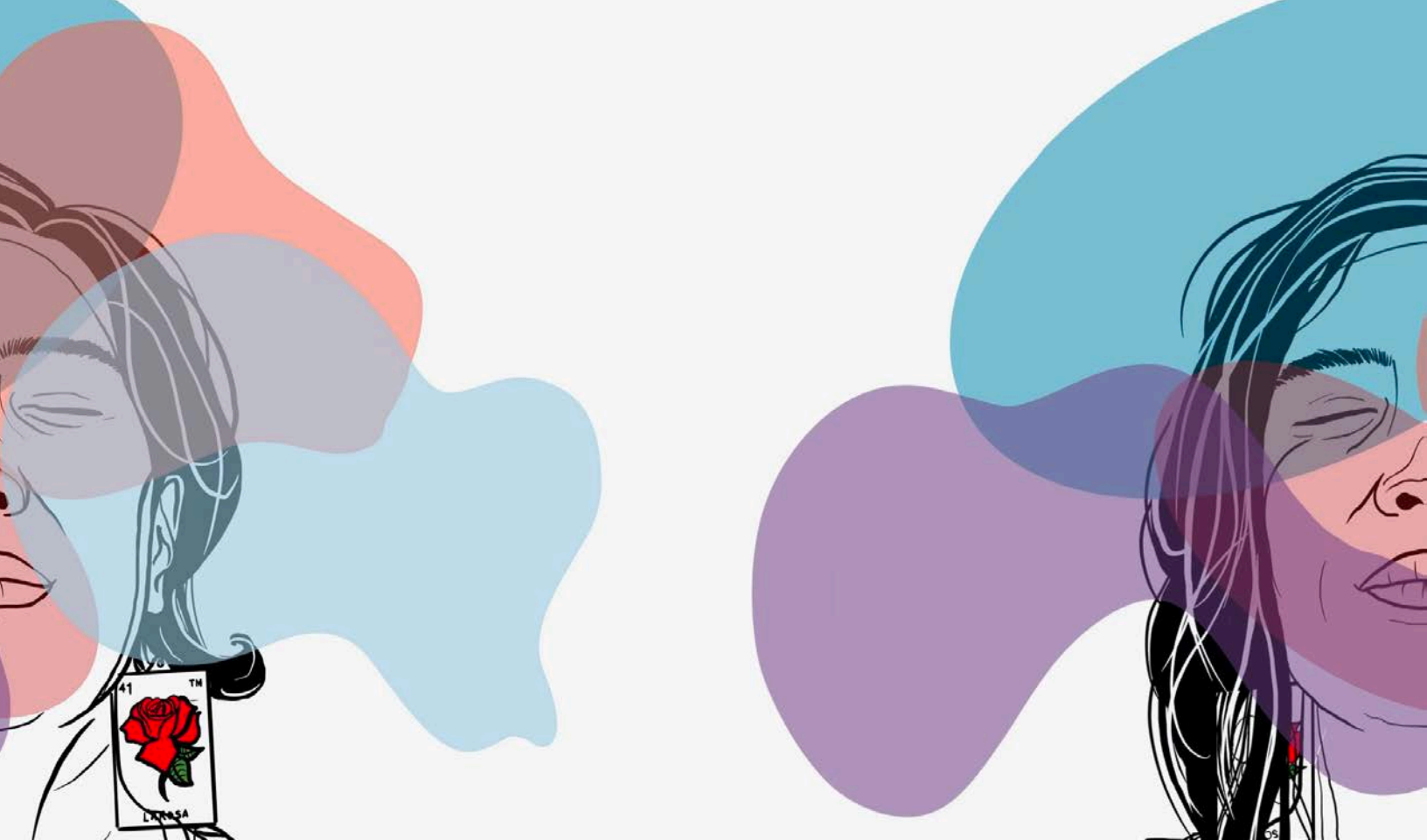


IMAGE 1: INTERSECTIONAL PRACTICES-3 © MARTIN PAUL WRIGHT

# *Intersectional Practices*

BY MARLO DE LARA, PH.D.

## **I. A STORY AND AN INTRODUCTION**

*Me: Hey! We have mutual friends! I am so excited about the residency tomorrow.*

*Jay: Ah, yes, I was told to keep an eye out for you. Me too!*

*Me: I hope we aren't surrounded by white grrl hippie jam band musicians or folk singers.*

*Jay: Ha! Right?! You said it! Lol...*

**I**t was the winter of 2018. I was giddy with excitement and anxiety for my first group residency with other women in an experimental music/sounding collaboration. I had been reviewing the online bios of other women who had been accepted into the program in an effort to prepare myself.

*VIRTUAL  
PROGRAMMING  
IN FEMINIST  
COMMUNITIES IN  
PANDEMIC TIMES*



While the residency was organized and sponsored by a feminist organization focusing on the lack of opportunities for women and the marginalized in the music industry, it was not my first time to the rodeo. I knew to reach out in order to devise a plan to navigate the inevitable whiteness and its potential harm and bolster the energy to code-switch for the unknowns. One thing I have learned in my career is to know your allies and to have survival strategies on hand.

As an academic, organizer, and touring musician/sound artist, I am often invited to feminist performance spaces. Despite these organizational mission/values statements stating “diversity and equity initiatives” and “intersectional approaches,” in practice there is often a great divide. There are few Black, indigenous, women of color amongst the participants and generally even fewer in public-facing leadership roles. It is the common dissonance between good intentions and deployed practices. My lived experience is one of adopting a reassuring persona while somehow maintaining a level of authenticity and authority.

I developed a deep friendship with that sound artist/musician, referred to as Jay here. It was one of mutual recognition and unconditional support. Fostered by meeting in a feminist arts organizational space and a mutual need to identify potential dangers preemptively, she and I were anchored by the solidarity required to be both “outside” and yet integral, hopefully transgressive, to the white heteronormative institutional hierarchies at play. To borrow Audre Lorde’s term, we have existed as “sister outsiders” while pursuing our creative endeavors in both underground and more establishment-oriented venues.

Fast forward to 2020, under the amplification of the global crises of the pandemic and simultaneous Black Lives Matter protests, these same feminist art institutions/collectives push forward with digital programming. And while this shift clearly had its benefits, it did not erase the pre-pandemic challenges of performative intersectional approaches, accessibility failures, and a prioritization of the “product” over the welfare of the individual. In this essay, I examine recent experiences navigating online spaces during the Summer of 2020. What previously would have been attended in person now were transposed into these “lockdown events, quarantine shows, online festivals, and Zoom meeting spaces.” Namely, I will review two experiences. Firstly, I will review the organizational group messaging with other members of the Ladyz in Noyz feminist open collective in preparation for an online festival where we traversed the hurdles of practicality and diversity. Secondly, I will describe the safety and sisterhood in the holding space created by the Sonic Cyberfeminisms research cohort during an online check-in. While this work may not provide answers, it aims to inform future programming to uphold intersectional practices in virtual events.

## **II. IT ISN’T ALL BAD BUT IT’S DEFINITELY PROBLEMATIC...**

Feminist film scholar Leanne Dawson describes both the assets of this transition and suggests ways in which intersectionality and accessibility can be addressed. In “Culture In Crisis: A Guide to Access, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion In Festivals, Arts, and Culture”, Dawson applauds the digital platform solution. The author highlights that certain inequities are instantly

revealed in this new online arena, namely, the benefit to one’s well-being in physically being present with another Other, internet accessibility for those without necessary means, and childcare needs for those who are now left without resources provided by schools and daycare. Dawson interviews several festival organizers in order to create guidelines for pandemic programming.

## **How can we create the sensorial experience of immediate community?**

For me, the power of being and sitting with another BIPOC creative is the largest draw for participation. As mentioned, while there are few of us accepted, these few spaces create opportunities to be physically present with another feminist artist of color. I cherish these encounters, even within the confines of majority-white events. This benefit and survival strategy is lost in the transition online. Feminist spaces can only tend to this by opening themselves to possibilities previously unexplored. Adding on to Mattie Kennedy’s suggestion, I also see a need to be holistic in these approaches. How can we create the sensorial experience of immediate community without actually being able to be with each other?

Interviewee Krissy Mahan of the Scottish Queer International Film Festival underlines that efficient and affordable internet access is another barrier to a truly feminist event. How can we address and tend to economic inequity and class in online events?

For some of us with internet access and equipment, the digital shift has been useful...[L]ockdown has given some incredibly privileged people a small glimpse into how those with caring responsibilities, limited budgets, or disabilities are denied the opportunity to partake in things many people take for granted.

Mahan’s intersectional criticism as told to Dawson hits many notes. A feminist community that does not allow for parenting is myopic and discriminatory. Therefore, digital programming must be self-reflective and considerate to these parenting needs. I highly encourage those interested in improving virtual feminist community events to review Dawson’s guide as it details practical strategies informed by multiple voices. I will revisit several of the themes in my own sharing in the following section.

## **III. THE PUSH AND ITS HARMS TO “MAKE IT HAPPEN”**

It was a large undertaking for organizations to quickly adjust to a virtual platform, requiring frenzied, often unforgiving deadlines and additional labor. While this may have served to foster arts and cultural programming, it also required additional labor and time on top of the additional pandemic tasks within their communities. In her October 2020 interview, Womanist artist theologian Tricia Hersey speaks about the multiple self-defeating harms pushed aside for such goals:

You won’t be able to dismantle oppression using oppression, capitalist ideas, or grind culture. Grind culture is quick-paced, fast, gotta do it now, quantity over quality, scarcity over abundance, and “if I don’t do it, nobody’s



gonna do it.” That only allows you to continue to abuse yourself...Hate and the spiritual dimensions of white supremacy are moving on energetic levels and some people are missing it because they’re using the same culture of grind culture, which is to not sleep, stay up, work 80 hours. If they’re sick, they just push through it and ignore their body. So, how can you use those violent and oppressive tactics to liberate? ...You can’t get something beautiful and liberative by using disgusting, violent tactics. We’ve got to look at restoring, imagining, and building from a rested state.

As the pandemic continues, it is of no surprise that Zoom exhaustion has become increasingly more commonplace. Hershey’s work speaks directly to the overwhelming pervasiveness in the remote learning and work experiences. It is of no surprise that the economy of labor must be reassessed and decolonized in this new era. It is of great consequence to feminist communities to address the spiritual death inevitable to grind culture. Hindsight is 20-20, but we have lost many contributions from participants in this push “to make it happen.” In our future vision, we must allow room for tending to our needs. It was in Audre Lorde’s journals; we find the often-quoted concepts of radical self-care as political. As her body and spirit were tested in the face of struggling with cancer, she says in reflection:

Overextending myself is not stretching myself. I had to accept how difficult it is to monitor the difference. Necessary for me as cutting down on sugar. Crucial. Physically. Psychically. Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.

In pandemic time, where mortality cannot be spoken about in hushed tones, one must see the critical importance of time and space to be present in both our spirit and our human bodies.

#### IV. MY TRAVELS IN VIRTUAL FEMINIST COMMUNITY

##### Event 1: Accessibility and Respect

I was invited to organize a performance for an online digital music festival with a large international audience. I tend to use the opportunities to open doors for others in the Ladyz in Noyz (LIN) collective. In 2003, I founded the collective to contest the cultural gatekeepers who had excluded women from sound and music opportunities and find ways for women to help other women continue to create art. I expanded to an international platform across the world to advise, advocate, and support on multiple levels in the making of sound art and experimental film/music. The most productive work of the collective has been in the spirit of entering arenas as a group, unified for

the greater mission of creating opportunities. This event was no different.

##### One thing I have learned ... is to know your allies and to have survival strategies

I invited women of diverse backgrounds from the USA, Indonesia, Europe, and Australia to participate in a performance/group experience. In this group of ten women, I began an online Facebook group message to prepare. As we solidified the logistics, we awaited instructions from the organizers. With the multiple time zones and levels of access to the

### In our future vision, we must allow room for tending to our needs.

internet, we were anxious about the lack of response regarding technological needs and scheduling. As

an official LIN performance, every aspect must be decided by the group and benefit all. Division of labor and respect for the artists’ time was of utmost importance. While the event was unpaid, I used donations made to the collective to offer some compensation.

We waited. Two days prior to the event, several of our group members had voiced concern over the lack of communication with the festival. It has been our experience that women performers, especially non-white women, tend to be deprioritized in production and tech runs. Rellegated to being last and deprived of rehearsal time with techs, this was of particular insult. As the only majority BIPOC all-woman ensemble, we were left watching the clock knowing that we would not meet our own standards in the performance. After much discussion, we pulled our performance one day prior to the expected time slot. The undue stress and lack of preparation time with the tech team would have left an inaccurate impression of the LIN collective. Performing without the acknowledgement of the LIN collectives’ lack of tech access and the emotional distress of being unacknowledged.

Our battle is to define survival in ways that are acceptable and nourishing to us, meaning with substance and style. Substance. Our work. Style. True to our selves.

-Audre Lorde from “A Burst of Light”

At the root of radical self-care is a prioritization of the community needs; needs denied to historically marginalized communities. This integral connection of self and community was most clearly demonstrated by the organized efforts of groups like the Black Panthers. Writer Martha Tesema describes how the Party recognized limited access to basic aspects of care: “By distributing food to those in need, creating health clinics, building programs to educate and share accessible information with others, and more, the Black Panther Party put care into action in real tangible ways for their communities.”

These practices enabled the survival of Black Americans who were overtly refused the healthcare and social services given to white America. So, Lorde’s “act of political warfare” is seated in a necessity to preserve a threatened community that was invisibilised. Therefore to continue these acts towards liberation must incorporate practices of community care. Or in the words of Black Feminist scholar Angela Davis in her 2018 Afropunk interview, “If we don’t start practicing collective self-care now, there’s no way to imagine much less reach a time of freedom.”





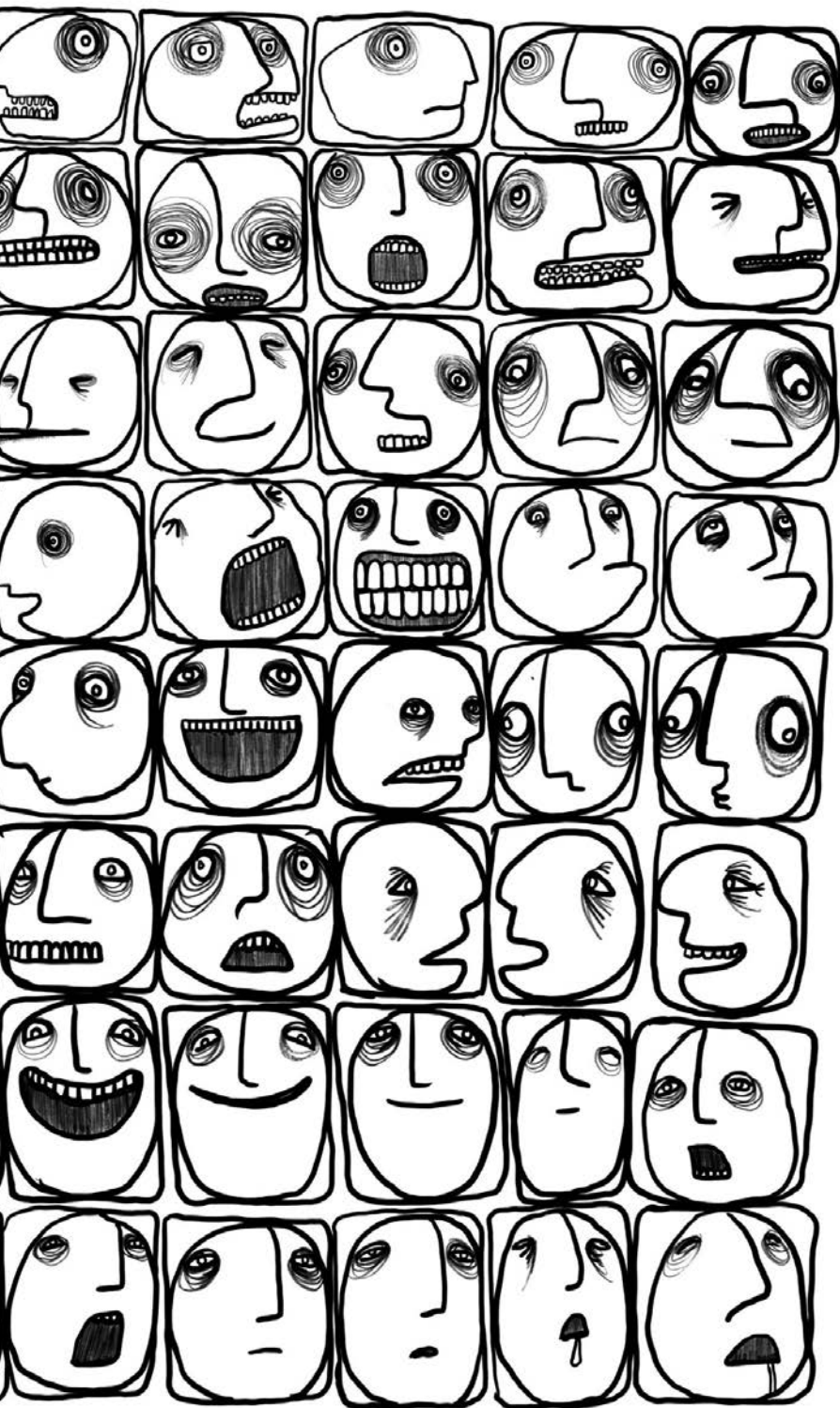


IMAGE 2: INTERSECTIONAL PRACTICES-1 © MARTIN PAUL WRIGHT

## Event 2: Radical Friendship

Our collective is an ambitious project. We state on our website: “Sonic Cyberfeminisms (abbreviated as SCF) is an ongoing project by a collective of artists, musicians and writers, which draws upon intersectional feminist praxis and the legacies of cyberfeminism. The project aims to foreground agendas of social justice in the domains of sound, gender and technology and, in doing so, develop critical cultural work.” While it has taken form in artist talks, symposiums, and lectures, it culminated in a 2018 weeklong residency at the Wysing Art Center

in Cambridge, UK. It was here that alongside the work, we solidified a deep friendship around shared intellectual and creative pursuits, gaining a level of intimacy that can only be achieved with vulnerability and the power of the group. For me, it is a fortitude only achieved in the presence of others

**...certain inequities are instantly revealed in this new online arena**

in feminist friendship and mutual appreciation. As time passed, members of the cohort had been dispersed geographically, leaving only business emails and pleasantries relayed. We could not gather and with the pandemic, we could not even entertain the thought. We planned a SCF online check in. This was not customary but with the heightened isolation, fear, depression, and anxiety, we scheduled a time. For over two hours, this group of women traversed subjects regarding our feminist research and listened to the struggles of persevering. While this may not sound remarkable in some ways, it was the pauses and the intentional listening that allowed for the emotional presence and connection that we were denied in our professional and even in our social circles. While we were all differently positioned, those sites of privilege were not ones of harm but rather ones of true empathy and connection.

I cried a lot that day. I have never felt so seen and heard than I did on that call despite the use of an internet platform. And this matters as emotions shape and enhance the collective. Sara Ahmed writes:

... emotions do things, and work to align individuals with collectives – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments. Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and collective.

- Sarah Ahmed, from “Collective Feelings Or, The Impressions Left by Others” (2004)

## V. Parting thoughts

My goal is to both inform and question what an intersectional practice could look like for feminist communities online. Starting with the practical challenges of organizing events for feminist spaces in an equitable way, to the unintentional harms created by the pace of virtual event planning, to the ways that such online practices have played out in my own life for better or worse. As attempts to thrive as feminist arts practitioners and researchers in the unpredictability of COVID-19 global precautions, it is more pertinent than ever to hold ourselves to intersectional practices as differences in our communities emerge with such voracity. The discomfort on the road to creating emotionally sensitive accountability is necessary as we create holistic and inclusive measures for the future.



# Studio 917 Community Invite *RE-BUILDING AN HISTORIC BUILDING FOR ART*

**ALICE BEDARD-VOORHEES, PH.D. AND  
ALLYSON BELL ARMSTRONG**

In 2017, Allyson Bell Armstrong bought a hundred-year-old building on the main street of Douglas, Arizona, a border town. She envisioned an inviting addition to a street dominated by derelict buildings, an artists' showcase welcoming the community and visitors. Her three years of designing and managing its restoration tell the story of a vision that expanded participation in the arts for this community.

The landscape of mountains, plains, and the moderate climate of southeast Arizona and Northern Mexico, a place she'd often visited for work and vacation was attractive. Growing up with parents who encouraged social contributions also inspired her. Additionally she was drawn to a community rich in influences from indigenous peoples, European invaders, and white and Mexican ranching and mining ventures

Even on her first visit, she "saw a spark in Douglas"--amid a mix of stately buildings, adobe and plaster, midwestern red brick, and two-story boarding houses, she noted energetic and personal decorations on humble homes.

A background in construction, drafting, and a habit of collecting landscaping and construction trash for mixed media assemblages made renovating an abandoned building a good fit. The time and place were right for finding the building.

Three years living in Douglas magnified what she already knew. Most people are low-income and family-centered, and bi-lingual. The wealth of architecture and parks came from the mining company, Phelps-Dodge Corporation, to attract educated and well-traveled employees in the 1930s-70s. It could now be characterized as a boomtown that eventually went bust.

## **The time and place were right for finding the building.**

She found a building on main street--one that had been vacant for five years. Its most recent life had been a dress shop. Its 1960's remodel had given it a single-paned acrylic front window with ochre trim, a mishmash of lightweight flagstone brick, and a glass door bearing dust and stains. The property measured 17' wide and 147' long. Her choice of a mixed-use model with a flexible floor plan of living plus business, would support downtown occupancy and add nighttime vibrancy on the street. That the one-story building was only 1,200 square feet made the project financially feasible.

When an inspector declared the structure sound, she proceeded to find a contractor. Only one responded, a Douglas native and



IMAGE 1: GALLERY INTERIOR, 2018 © DALE G. ARMSTRONG

second-generation builder with a capable crew. Fortunately, a commercial architect in nearby Bisbee, agreed to draw the plans.

Balancing green materials, energy efficiency, fire codes, acoustics, costs, and availability was a constant process. Dry, splintered framing and the high desert climate made constructing a new frame within the old shell a necessity. Given the high fire risk in old towns, she chose fire-resistant rock wool insulation despite its cost. Drywall was required by fire code on the south wall, but using alternative materials everywhere else achieved what she hoped for: a well-lit backdrop for art combined with revealed spaces that showed the bones, function, and history of the space.

From her self-awareness as an outsider, she engaged with a "gentle handshake"--a way of allowing shy children and others to meet her, a way of making herself visible at many levels. Prior to quarantine, Armstrong participated in several street fairs with children's activities. Later she made chalk drawings on the sidewalk and painted a face mask mural on the temporary facade. Initially, she attended meetings with a local business group and city staff. Over time, she met owners of downtown stores. The result? The site activity drew motorists and pedestrians to investigate.



Her reach expanded through Instagram when she met Ash Dahlke, an art instructor at Cochise College. As opportunity would have it, Dalke is also a member of the non-profit organization, the Border Arts Corridor. With this partnership, Studio 917 Gallery now offers exhibit space for students and professional artists wanting to increase their public exposure. For a number of exhibiting artists, this is their first gallery experience. The local Douglas Dispatch provides ongoing media attention. And the Friday nights lights invite people who've never visited a gallery to step inside.



IMAGE 2: OPEN FOR ART—GALLERY FRONT © DALE G. ARMSTRONG

When asked what insights Armstrong might share with others who are inspired by this philanthropy, she said:

*I did not approach this as a money-making venture; it was a creative project for myself, and a community enhancement project for a rural town. I had vision and determination; it was a team effort. Without a registered architect, the cost control, aesthetics, and building permit would not have happened so easily. Without a competent, committed general contractor to provide the equipment, manpower, and local experience, it would have taken much longer with a lower quality result.*

With monthly openings since March 2021, locals have expressed delight and appreciation for bringing art and the marvelous space to their community. And artists are excited to have a place in the historic district to show work in a bright, high-ceilinged space that rivals city galleries.

Citations: Armstrong, Allyson B. and Dale Armstrong. (2021) Studio 917 a southeast Arizona Art Gallery. Retrieved October 14, 2021, from <http://www.studio917.art/>

Douglas Dispatch. November 10, 2021. Studio 917 Gallery hosts BAC artist Showcase. Retrieved November 11, 2021, from [https://www.myheraldreview.com/news/douglas/studio-917-gallery-hosts-bac-artist-showcase/article\\_a992de18-3e50-11ec-a804-afcc31054713.html](https://www.myheraldreview.com/news/douglas/studio-917-gallery-hosts-bac-artist-showcase/article_a992de18-3e50-11ec-a804-afcc31054713.html)

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**The Women's Caucus for Art is pleased to announce the 2022 recipients for the WCA Lifetime Achievement Awards:**



LYNDA BENGLIS



BEATE MINKOVSKI



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# Occupy the Moment:

## Embracing Our History, Enhancing Our Impact

WCA National Exhibition  
Bridgeport Art Center, Chicago, IL  
January 21 February 25, 2022

**Juror: Dr. Maura Reilly**

In the last half century, the art historical canon has been uprooted and redefined. The canon was erected on categorized colonial narratives and invented racial rankings. The WCA has cast aside this “white male gaze” to define our own vision.

This National WCA 50th Anniversary exhibition features works that address this moment of 2022. Artists were encouraged to interpret the theme broadly, considering the multiple paths of how we arrived here and what we envision moving forward. We encouraged art that explored the ways that our identities and expressions intersect with such factors as environment, culture, time, and location. Artwork submissions were open to any approach and form, subjects in range from the historic precedents set by political activism, to personal transformation, social engagement and beyond.

