Educator Guide

On the Line: Documents of Risk and Faith

September 9, 2022 – January 15, 2023

Not For Public Use or Dissemination

CAC
Contemporary
Arts Center
Welcome!

Dear Educators,

We are delighted for you to join us at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC). We are happy to bring to you On the Line: Documents of Risk and Faith. This group exhibition is part of the FotoFocus Biennial and will be on view from September 9, 2022 – January 15, 2023 on the 4th and 5th floor galleries.

This group exhibition brings together 20 artists engaging with installation, video, photography, painting, and performance offering a range of approaches to the subject of identity. Collectively this group of international artists explore the themes of identity, oppression, and whose concerns include climate change, discrimination, immigration, and race.

We invite you to explore, create, and immerse yourselves in the stories and lessons that can be found within this exhibition.

Enjoy!
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INTRODUCTORY WALL TEXT

On the Line: Documents of Risk and Faith

on the line

phrase

1. at serious risk.

Similar:
at risk
in danger
endangered
imperiled

2. (of a picture in an exhibition) hung with its center about level with the spectator’s eye.

The works in this exhibition address a range of topics, spanning performance and the body, climate change, power, colonialism and identity, heritage, and territory, and fall within a common geography of the Americas, the multi-continental, multi-national landmass (and its archipelagos) spanning northern Canada to Southern Brazil. Collectively, they portray complex and contested relationships humans have with notions of resources, environment, wilderness, nature, and place. The “line” metaphor is an organizing principle as well as a reference to the precarity of the social and physical environment in this global moment: at serious risk; caught, captured—even following the path of a line can be treacherous.

The exhibition emphasizes photography, in all its forms, as delivering a special mandate to document while also grappling with expectations and limitations of the photographic image, its historical legacies, enlarged geographies, and contemporary urgencies. The photo-based documentation of various artistic interventions featured in On the Line—the stills, the videos of ephemeral acts—suggest an expanded conception of photographic time, representation, and the document. The exhibition positions these works as proposals for a new form of social documentary, or “concerned,” photography, that evocatively expand the historical narrative of photography beyond familiar documentary methods, modalities, and attendant assumptions of objectivity toward a more honest, embodied, vulnerable, and up-to-date form of consciousness-raising expression.
VOCABULARY/ KEY WORDS

Biodiversity
Cartography
Climate Change
Colonialism
Commodity
Discrimination
Ecology
Ephemeral
Erasure
Immigration
Indigenous
Indigenous Rights
Metaphor
Middle Passage
Precarious
Primary Document
Sustainability
Stereotype
Whitewash
Themes

*Lines*: physical lines like in artwork or boundaries; metaphorical lines like causes, risks, limits, decisions.

*Activism*: Various artists focus on causes—environmental, social justice issues, political affiliations.

*Colonialism*: Various artists consider the effects of colonialism (specifically in the Americas).

*Commodity/Capitalism*: Various artists consider the impact of materialistic and human-centered culture.

*Role of the Document*: Is there a difference between a “document” and “fine art” in photography? Not a definitive answer, more of a discussion. Is the photographic document as powerful as a performance/protest? What is the role of the photograph in performance/protest?

Themes/Artwork Pairings

*Lines*: All artists

*Activism*: Francis Alÿs, Mary Mattingly, Allora & Calzadilla, Alessandra Sanguinetti, Mitch Epstein, Mauro Restiffe, Jim Goldberg, Kevin Schmidt, An-My Lê

*Colonialism*: Mary Mattingly, Mohamed Bourouissa, Patricia Esquivias, Xaviera Simmons, Lordy Rodriguez, Tania Willard, Alessandra Sanguinetti, Rashid Johnson, Paulo Nazareth, Wendy Red Star

*Commodity/Capitalism*: Francis Alÿs, Mary Mattingly, Tania Willard, Allora & Calzadilla, Abraham Cruzvillegas and Bárbara Foulkes

*Role of the Document*: David Hammons and Dawoud Bey, Alessandra Sanguinetti, Mitch Epstein, Paulo Nazareth, Mauro Restiffe, Jim Goldberg, Abraham Cruzvillegas and Bárbara Foulkes, Kevin Schmidt

Identity - Abraham Cruzvillegas and Bárbara Foulkes, Mauro Restiffe, Allora & Calzadilla, An-My Lê, Rashid Johnson, Xaviera Simmons, Mitch Epstein, Jim Goldberg, Francis Alÿs, Paulo Nazareth, Lordy Rodriguez, Wendy Red Star, Mohamed Bourouissa,

Discrimination - Alessandra Sanguinetti, Allora & Calzadilla, Rashid Johnson, Xaviera Simmons, Mitch Epstein, Jim Goldberg, Paulo Nazareth, Wendy Red Star, Mohamed Bourouissa,
CAC PRE-TOUR INFORMATION

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER HISTORY

In 1939, Betty Pollak Rauh, Peggy Frank Crawford and Rita Rentschler Cushman took the advice of Edward M.M. Warburg, the founding father of the American Ballet and a founder of the Museum of Modern Art. He suggested that rather than stress about finding non-existent art jobs in New York, “Why not start something in Cincinnati? Plenty of room there. If you decide to try, come and see me and I'll help you.”

By August of that year, Peggy Frank Crawford, Betty Pollak and Rita Rentschler raised $5000 (about $93,000 today) and created the Modern Art Society (MAS). For almost a year their “office” consisted of a letter file and a portable typewriter set up in one or another living room. Within a few years, the MAS had exhibited Renoir, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso, Beckman, Klee and many more in the lower levels of the Cincinnati Art Museum. In 1952, the MAS changed their name to the Contemporary Arts Center and in 1964 they earned a space of their own in downtown Cincinnati. In 2003, the CAC moved into the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art designed by architect Zaha Hadid. The NY Times called the structure, “the best new building since the Cold War.”

The Contemporary Arts Center is a non-collecting institution, meaning there is no permanent collection. All exhibitions are borrowed from artists, collectors and other art galleries and institutions. We strive to create exhibitions that allow visitors to “open their minds” to the arts, and to the dialogue that can be had when viewing contemporary art. We believe that art and the creative process belong to all people and that contemporary artists are an important part of how we see and interact with our world today.

ABOUT THE LOIS & RICHARD ROSENTHAL CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS

In the late 1990s, after acquiring the lot on which the Contemporary Arts Center now sits, a committee narrowed a field of over 300 architects chose to design the building—first to 97, then to 12 and finally 3 of the most exciting designers working in the world today. From them, a unanimous choice emerged: Baghdad-born, London-trained Zaha Hadid.

The decision was in keeping with the CAC’s 60-year history of promoting the new. Though Hadid had been the subject of adulation, study and controversy, her work exhibited at major museums with international critical acclaim, she had only completed two freestanding structures during her career. As a largely untested inventor, a woman and an Arabic Muslim, Hadid had not found the construction world easy to enter. This renowned building is Hadid’s first American building, and is the first American museum building designed by a woman.

Groundbreaking took place in May 2001 and the new Center opened to rave reviews on May 31, 2003. The seven-story, 82,265 square-foot Contemporary Arts Center is named the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art after the CAC’s former Chairman of the Board and the most generous contributor to the new building. It sits on a narrow 11,000-square-foot footprint, and includes a 2,366-square-foot black box performance space.
Born in Iraq in 1950, Hadid received her degree in mathematics from the American University in Beirut and studied at the Architectural Association in London where she won the Diploma Prize in 1977. Upon graduation, Hadid became a partner at the Office of Metropolitan Architecture where she worked with influential architects Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis.

Establishing her own practice in London in 1979, she soon gained international attention with her groundbreaking plan for the Peak International Design Competition for Hong Kong in 1983. In 2004, she became the first female recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, which is the equivalent to the Nobel Prize for Architecture. In 2008, she was listed as one of Forbes Magazine’s “100 Most Powerful Women,” and in 2010, Time Magazine named her one of the “100 Most Influential People in the World,” and UNESCO Artist for Peace. She was awarded the Stirling Prize for Architecture in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, Hadid was awarded Damehood by Queen Elizabeth II. And, in 2015, she received the Royal Gold Medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects. Hadid died in 2016.
TOUR RULES AND GUIDELINES

• Visitor admission and school tours are free at the Contemporary Arts Center.
• We require that must be a chaperone for every 5 students under the age of 18 for self-guided groups. For docent-led tours, the required ratio is 1 to 10 for students through grade 5 and 1 to 15 for students grades 6-12.
• No backpacks, coats or lunches are permitted in the galleries, but personal belongings may be stored in the large bins or lockers we have available. Instructors may keep any emergency bags and purses with them.
• Currently photography is permitted in all areas of the museum. The CAC encourages you to post photos to various social media sites using @CincyCAC and #CincyCAC.
• Pens are not permitted in the gallery spaces. Pencils are available for use at the front desk.
• Walk throughout all galleries– no running, climbing, or roughhousing. If visiting with students under 18 please provide guidance and supervision.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

• Our facility is ADA compliant, and we will make every effort to provide accommodations when requested.
• Hearing protection is available upon request.
• Fidgets are available upon request.
• Sensory maps and social stories are available upon request.
• Large text is available upon request.
• Two quiet spaces are available—the Lower Level Lobby and the Contemplation Room on the 6th floor.
• For further inquiries or requests, please contact Shawnee Turner at sturner@cincycac.org
PRE- AND POST-VISIT DISCUSSIONS

These discussions can occur prior to, during or after viewing.

- What is a line? What are the various definitions of a line? What about the phrase “on the line?”

- Several of the artists document protest actions. How is protest a kind of performance and what is the role of photography during these protests and afterward?

- Is there a difference between a photograph taken for the purpose of documenting facts or information – versus for the purpose of an artistic act? Is there a difference between photography as a document and photography as fine art? Why or why not?

- The curators of the exhibition posit that the images in the exhibition strive toward a new kind of social documentary photography, or “concerned” photography. How do the artists in the exhibition combine performance and documentary photography to convey honesty and to spark critical action?

- How does the artist communicate his/her identity through the artwork?

- How would you define community? Where do you find your community? Is it where you were born or somewhere else?

Questions curated by the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) from discussion guide for Forum on Contemporary Photography (2011)

- Is photography the most universal medium?

- What is too sacred for photography to touch? What are our own individual boundaries? How do we set them up? Is there a collective boundary? (Question courtesy of Museum of Modern Art)

- How can I use photography to connect in a vital, meaningful way with another person at another time in another space?
LESSON PLAN IDEAS

1. Many of the artists in the exhibition, like Xaviera Simmons, use their work as way of sharing or discovering their identity. Through collage, students can create self-portraits using magazines. Here are some questions to help students consider various aspects of their self:
   a. How do you relate to your social and physical environment?
   b. How does the wilderness make you feel?
   c. Does your culture impact how you interact with the world?
   d. What roles do photography play in your everyday life?

2. In this exhibition, “The ‘line’ metaphor is an organizing principal as well as a reference to the precarity of the social and physical environment in this global moment: at serious risk; caught, captured—even following the path of a line can be treacherous.” Using cell phones or iPads, allow students to find precarious moments around the classroom, school, school grounds, or even at home. Maybe these result in objects about to fall or human emotion building? From these photos, students could write about the photo, considering what they see happening next.

3. Using Lordy Rodriguez’s *United States Map* series as inspiration, students can begin to see how art blends with other studies such as geography. Students will be drawing a map of the United States from memory. Then, they can look at an actual map together. How is it different? Why do you think these differences occurred? How is it similar to their drawing? Why do you think these similarities occurred? Next use ink markers to add patterns to your image.
   - For older students, take a deeper dive into the identity belts on the *United States Map III*. What phrases/identities are familiar to students? Discuss how the belts are attached to the idea that areas or regions of the country have different “identities”, and how the nuances of those labels are rooted in history or stereotypes. Challenge the students to identify and add the geographic boundaries to those imagined by the artist. Students may also want to add new “belts” based on identities they perceive as missing or underrepresented.

MORE LESSON PLAN RESOURCES

*Maps Providing a Sense of Direction* – ft. Lordy Rodriguez – via Art 21

*A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words* – via PBS Newshour
https://www.pbs.org/newshour/classroom/2013/02/a-picture-is-worth-1000-words/
Francis Alÿs

*Paradox of Praxis I (Sometimes Doing Something Leads to Nothing)*, Mexico City, 1997. Video documentation of an action, 5:00 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and David Zwirner

The five-minute video *Paradox of Praxis I (Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing)*, which Francis Alÿs filmed in Mexico City in 1997, follows the artist as he pushes a massive block of ice around Mexico City until it is completely melted. The video condenses an act that took some nine hours. As the artist goes about his curious task—pushing the block with his hands or kicking it along—the life of the city continues, obliviously, around him.

- Born 1959, Antwerp, Belgium; Now based in Mexico
- Multiple books, most recent, Pier 24 photography (2018) and *Gene* (2018)
- Guggenheim Fellowship, Henri Cartier-Bresson Award, and the Deutsche Borse Photography Prize, among others.
- Consider the use of line in the artist’s path around the city; also commentary of the economic restrictions on many Mexican citizens

*Quote*

Discussing *Paradox of Praxis I*, “Though considered an absurd use of one’s effort and time, the act of pushing the block of ice around the city center was done to symbolize the frustration that everyday residents of Mexico City endure in an effort to improve their living conditions. Deceptively unassuming in its simplicity, the video was also created to show that sometimes the only thing that one needs to enjoy their city in a new and unique way is something as modest as a block of ice.”

Mary Mattingly

*Pull*, 2013. Chromogenic print, 40 x 40 inches. Courtesy of Robert Mann Gallery

*Pull Brooklyn*, 2013. Video (color, sound) transferred to DVD, 2:42 minutes. Courtesy of Robert Mann Gallery

*Port of New York / New Jersey*, 2013. Chromogenic print, 30 x 30 inches. Courtesy of Robert Mann Gallery
To address issues of sustainability, climate change, and displacement, Mary Mattingly uses a range of approaches: photography, performance, and sculpture. Establishing sculptural ecosystems, she often bundles objects to create boulders that she pushes, pulls, or transports through various environments. For *Pull* (2013), she hauled all of her personal possessions through the streets of Brooklyn in order to “reconsider the weight of their extraction, production, distribution, and trajectory around the world.” Similarly, *Cobalt and the Rare Earth Elements in a Light Medium Tactical Vehicle and in My Camera* (2018) diagrams the production and distribution of cobalt, considered a "strategic mineral" by the United States government. The US military consumes 62 percent of the world's supply of cobalt.

**About the Artist**

- Born 1978, Rockville, CT; Lives and works in New York City
- BFA, RISD
- Consider the use of line in the artist’s path around the city; also commentary of the materialism and commodity culture.
- Cobalt highly valued for battery and high-heat metal production. The US military consumes 62% of the world's cobalt. Note where cobalt is coming from.

**Quote**

“Mattingly explores the themes of home, travel, cartography, and humans' relationships with each other, with the environment, with machines, and with corporate and political entities.”
“Mary Mattingly aspires to do more than issue a warning about environmental neglect and its aftermath. She offers specific solutions and architectural prototypes that we can build upon in our pursuit of a better life. She inspires hope that we can prepare for a changing world through innovative design and a restorative relationship with nature.”

David Hammons (b. 1943) and Dawoud Bey (b. 1953)

Bliz-aard Ball Sale I, 1983
Archival pigment print
McEvoy Family Collection

In his 1980s street action Bliz-aard Ball Sale (February 1983), David Hammons positioned himself alongside other street vendors and hawked snowballs—all arranged neatly in graduated sizes—to passersby on an East Village sidewalk in New York. Dawoud Bey, who had photographed various Hammons performances since they met in 1981, documented the “sale.” Critics have noted how Hammons’s work anticipated contemporary issues of class, race, and gentrification. Bey has said, “It wasn’t a performance for the art world. . . . [Hammons] would say, ‘I think I’m going to do something. Be at Cooper Square tomorrow, 12 o’clock,’ you know, and I’d say ‘Sure, man.’ It was more about documenting our presence, because, I thought, if we don’t document ourselves, no one will.”

- Dawoud Bey was born David Edward Smikle, 1953, Queens, NY
- Changed his name in the mid-70s
- Received an BFA from Empire State college in 1990 and an MFA from Yale School of Art in 1993
- “A product of the 1960s, Bey said both he and his work are products of the attitude, ‘if you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem.’ This philosophy significantly influenced his artistic practice and resulted in a way of working that is both community-focused and collaborative in nature.”
- Consider the action and the documentation

Quote

Discussing this work, “As it comes down to us in documentation, it is a portrait of the artist as an anonymous and disreputable pedlar, an absurdist street hustler. Hammons’ notion of an artist includes a constant flirtation with notions of the illicit and the fraudulent - the ever-present suggestion that the whole business might be a scam. What, after all, could be more of a scam than selling snowballs in winter?”
Mohamed Bourouissa

_Horse Day_, 2014–15. Video diptych (color, sound), 13:32 minutes. Produced by MOBILES Corinne CASTEL with support from PMU. Courtesy of the artist and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles / New York / Tokyo

The video _Horse Day_, by Mohamed Bourouissa, documents the African American horsemen of the Fletcher Street Urban Riding Club in North Philadelphia. The origins of the club go back to the 1940s, when the Tallahassee-born founder realized his vision of exposing youth to the beauty of horses while teaching them life skills. In the video, the riders stage a “horse-tuning” event—a contest in which riders festively adorn their horses. Adopting a nonlinear, prismatic approach, Bourouissa both celebrates a relatively unknown aspect of African American culture and exposes the whitewashed histories of American cowboys.

- Born 1978, Blida, Algeria; Based in Paris, France
- The location of Fletcher Street Urban Riding Club, Strawberry Mansion, is a traditionally working-class neighborhood that struggles with drug and unemployment issues.
- _Horse Day_ came from an 8-month collaboration with the riders club.
- Commenting on lack of knowledge about Black cowboys and other POC cowboys; designs are collaborations with local Philadelphia artists

**Quote**

“Horse Day is a reflection on the representation of the figure of cowboy in American cinema and on the practice of whitewashing. In the popular imagination, the cowboy is a somewhat gruff white male who looks a lot like John Wayne. In the United States, Hollywood is much to blame for the official, biased vision of American history. In reality, the history of the conquest of the American West teems with people from all walks of life, including Blacks, Mexicans, and even Native Americans. Horse Day borrows the classic codes of the western only to better deconstruct them and reveal the great diversity of American equestrian culture, deliberately reduced to its white participants through the invention of the myth of the conquest of the West.”
**Patricia Esquivias**

*Natures at the Hand*, 2006. Video (color, sound), 3:46 minutes. Courtesy of the artist

The three-part video *Natures at the Hand* (2006-10) by Patricia Esquivias explores man’s distant and often comical relationship to nature and features hands lighting matches in the dark to illuminate matchbook covers depicting a variety of animals; illustrations in European garden books, such as topiaries, juxtaposed with DIY shrubbery in front of modest homes in Guadalajara, Mexico; and the artist throwing a basketball at a window toward the setting sun.

- Born 1979, Caracas, Venezuela
- MFA California College of the Arts, 2007
- Although seemingly random, Esquivias juxtaposes Spanish (the colonizer) elements with those in Mexico

**Quote**

“Esquivias' work is often characterized as a form of storytelling, and Esquivias often acts as narrator, using her own voice as narration in her videos. Many of Esquivias' videos center around themes of history and memory.”

**Xaviera Simmons**

*Sundown (Number Twelve)*, 2018. Chromogenic print, 60 x 45 inches. Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo

Photographic representation and precarity of life also inform Xaviera Simmons’s *Gain (Consider For Example, the Nature of Joy)* (2010), which consists of twenty found images of wildlife dramatically frozen in the act of pursuing prey. When the predators are gathered, the gaze of the photograph is revealed to be inherently hostile itself.

*Gain (Consider, For Example, The Nature Of Joy)*, 2010
Found color photographs, 20 parts, each 20 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo

Photographic representation and precarity of life inform Xaviera Simmons’s *Gain (Consider For Example, The Nature Of Joy)* (2010), which consists of twenty found images of wildlife dramatically frozen in the act of pursuing prey. When the predators are gathered together, the gaze of the photograph itself is revealed to be inherently hostile.
- Born 1974 in New York City
- Studied at Bard College under both Mitch Epstein and An-My Lê
- “Xaviera Simmons’s body of work spans photography, performance, video, sound, sculpture and installation. She defines her studio practice, which is rooted in an ongoing investigation of experience, memory, abstraction, present and future histories-specifically shifting notions surrounding landscape-as cyclical rather than linear.”
- Sundown series explores contemporary America as affected by the legacies of slavery, colonialism, segregation, and migration.
- The photograph the artist holds in the piece is from the Great Migration (1910s-1970), a period when Blacks in the South migrated to other parts of the country, especially New York City and Chicago searching for better opportunities.

**Quote**

Discussing Sundown, “…the artist appears frocked in a floral cotton dress and against a midcentury botanical backdrop that references the landscapes and products associated with exploitative systems of labor, from colonialism to American slavery....She also holds a mask of indeterminate origin over her face, suggesting a form of mediated looking—perhaps revealing views of the slave trade’s legacy and new visions for the future—and referencing the mask’s currency as a collectible signifier of the Western idea of Africa, sold and traded as a commodity. Through such performative staging, Simmons’s work embeds heavy visual metaphors within a lush aesthetic to point to the still-precarious circumstances of people of color in America.”
Lordy Rodriguez

*United States Map III (The Belts)*, 2013. Ink on paper, 48 x 48 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Hosfelt Gallery

*United States Map IV (Tribal Sovereignties)*, 2011. Ink on paper, 70 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Hosfelt Gallery

Lordy Rodriguez makes cartographic drawings that critique current geopolitical conditions while collapsing time and space, personal and communal experience, the real and the invented. Factual locations become imaginary geographies that recall and recover the places’ fractured and overlooked histories. While each map represents a personal vision, the brightly colored and meticulous works also engage cartographic conventions.

- Born 1976, Quezon City, Philippines
- Received a BFA from the School of Visual Arts in 1999 and a MFA from Stanford University in 2008
- Interesting conversation about how these names come to be—allow for creative conversation about their own regions—how might they be updated?
- Discussion about Indigenous land rights and the history lost about North American Nations
- Consider pairing conversation about Cameron Granger and the role of a map/compare and contrast how each artist tackles maps

**Quote**

“Lordy Rodriguez’s works explore the human urge to locate/define oneself by charting the environment in precise detail. Using the language of cartography, he makes drawings that go beyond map-making into abstracted, imaginary terrain.”
Tania Willard

Reserve Fund, 2022
From the series Snowbank and Other Investments (2020-ongoing)
Digital print, Plexiglas, satin ribbon, dyed deer buck tail
Courtesy of the artist

Tax Exempt Income, 2022
From the series Snowbank and Other Investments (2020-ongoing)
Digital print, Plexiglas, satin ribbon, dyed deer buck tail, leather
Courtesy of the artist

Investment Stewardship, 2022
From the series Snowbank and Other Investments (2020-ongoing)
Digital print, Plexiglas, satin ribbon, dyed deer buck tail
Courtesy of the artist

The series Snowbank and Other Investments by Tania Willard was inspired by her use of a snowbank near her home in the Secwépemc territory, Neskonlith Indian Reserve, near Chase British Columbia, Canada, as a projection screen in 2019. The photographs depict assemblages made from materials such as birchbark, silk ribbon, chains, a dyed deer tail, and etchings. Willard's decolonial content draws on meme-like phrases while meditating on land and economic value as well as Indigenous land rights.

- Born 1977, Kamloops, BC
- Meme-like statements evoke financial lingo and Native American identity

Quote
Willard “works within the shifting ideas of contemporary and traditional as it relates to cultural arts and production. Often working with bodies of knowledge and skills that are conceptually linked to her interest in intersections between Aboriginal and other cultures…”
Allora & Calzadilla


As is typical of their research-based practice, for The Great Silence (2014) Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla (known as Allora & Calzadilla) drew on technology used to detect evidence of extraterrestrial intelligence, specifically a radio telescope designed to transmit signals to and from the edges of the universe. Created in collaboration with the science-fiction author Ted Chiang, the roughly fifteen-minute video features the Puerto Rican parrot (Amazona vittata), the only remaining native parrot species in Puerto Rico. The birds’ habitat is the Barrio Esperanza, Arecibo, which is also the location of one of the world’s largest radio telescopes. Chiang’s dialogue, written from the perspective of the critically endangered animals, explores the relationships between humans and nonhumans, as well as language and the search for cosmic life and connection.

- Allora: born in Philadelphia in 1974; Received an MS from MIT in 2003
- Calzadilla: born in Havana in 1971; Received an MFA from Bard College in 2001
- Work focuses on how humanity has silenced intelligent non-human voices on Earth through poaching and extinction while simultaneously searching for the presence of life forms outside of Earth.
- “Allora and Calzadilla approach visual art as a set of experiments that test whether ideas such as authorship, nationality, borders, and democracy adequately describe today’s increasingly global and consumerist society. Their hybrid works—often a unique mix of sculpture, photography, performance, sound, and video—explore the physical and conceptual act of mark-making and its survival through traces. By drawing historical, cultural, and political metaphors out of basic materials, Allora and Calzadilla’s works explore the complex associations between an object and its meaning.”
- Work is inspired by the “Fermi Paradox” – the observation that, despite the high probability of other intelligent life existing within our galaxy, we have yet to find evidence.

Quote

On their research-based practice. “It’s this chance to learn more about something in the world. And be able to formulate some kind of response.”
Alessandra Sanguinetti

Andreanne Catt, protesting after a ceremony that took place on a Dakota Access Pipeline work site, North Dakota, 2016. Chromogenic print. Courtesy of the artist

Shaionna Ziegler, at a ceremony and protest that took place on a Dakota Access Pipeline work site, North Dakota, 2016. Chromogenic print. Courtesy of the artist

Demonstrating against the construction of a pipeline to transport fracked crude oil near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, North Dakota, 2016. Chromogenic print. Courtesy of the artist

Waking up to the ever-present surveillance helicopters over Oceti Sakowin Camp, North Dakota, 2016. Chromogenic print. Courtesy of the artist

In 2016, Alessandra Sanguinetti photographed the Indigenous women who led the peaceful protest against the proposed construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which was to transport 570,000 barrels of oil a day through lands sacred to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. The protesters, whose numbers quickly grew to over 100,000, were met with tear gas and rubber bullets deployed by police wearing riot gear. Sanguinetti’s subject references the long history of activism by Indigenous women, traditionally known as “water protectors,” who are advocates in the struggle for land rights, cultural restoration, and environmental justice.

About the Artist

- Born 1968, in New York City, works in San Francisco
- Discussing the photos, “Sanguinetti’s portraits portray the strength of the women protestors, and acknowledge a simultaneously deeply felt connection to both the weight of their ancestral history and their responsibility towards their children and the future.”
Quote

“I asked my mother for a camera, and I started taking pictures of my friends and my family. It was this little square Kodak thing—so I remember turning it around so it would form a diamond—my thinking was that ‘okay my best friends are diamonds and jewels’—you know that kind of thing. It was then that I really started to photograph. I continued with it through high school as well, always, even in seventh grade to chase around boys I liked (who were usually much older and therefore would pay me no attention) … I would photograph them from the windows outside while they were taking their motorcycles out of the parking lot—the camera was always my way of dealing with everything.”

Rashid Johnson

The Hikers, 2019. 16mm film (color, sound) transferred to digital, 7:04 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Inspired by a hike he took in 2018 near Aspen, Colorado, Rashid Johnson created the performance The Hikers, which debuted as a film in 2019. In the work, two young dancers wearing masks that resemble African tribal art encounter each other on a mountain trail, one ascending and the other descending. Their meeting inspires the men to perform a pas de deux, choreographed by Claudia Schreier. In Johnson’s words, his generative ideas concern “the Black body moving in space—what the repercussions of that were, the dangers, the opportunities.”

- Born 1977, Chicago, IL
- Received a BFA from Columbia College Chicago in 2000 and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2005.
- Questioning perceptions of Blackness in the film—through masks, the movement, the “gaze”

Quote

“The Hikers follows the path of two solo hikers, both Black: first alone, and then upon seeing the other—an encounter that brings tension, but also relief and wonder. As Johnson has said, ‘The body is filled with adrenaline. How does the black body function in space when it’s being witnessed, versus when it’s not? It’s about how the body becomes accustomed to the conditions of stress and anxiety’… thinking about the Black body moving in space - what the repercussions of that were, the dangers, the opportunities”. The artist was conscious of the “long history” associated with movement and dance, and their associated iconography.
Mitch Epstein


In the documentary tradition of the nineteenth-century urban photographer Eugène Atget (b. 1857 – d. 1927), in 2011-12 Mitch Epstein made black-and-white photographs of native and imported trees in New York, among them weeping beeches, Camperdown elms, and Yoshino cherries. Often overlooked in a city whose public image is centered on architecture, commerce, and power, these centenarian residents defiantly adapt and persist.


In 2017, Mitch Epstein began the photographic project Property Rights after visiting the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in Sioux City, North Dakota. The series addresses land rights, resource extraction, protest and resistance, and the role of land in contemporary American culture. Epstein’s Tree-Sits, Camp White Pine, Huntington County, Pennsylvania (2017) depicts a form of civil disobedience known as tree-sitting, in which protesters take up residence on arboreal limbs in order to disrupt logging and other destructive industrial
activities. These trees were located on land where a pipeline was to be constructed. The land was seized by eminent domain and the landowners were arrested for being on their own property. Epstein made the photograph in August 2017, and by April 2018 the trees were cut down.

About the Artist

- Born 1952, Holyoke, MA
- Epstein is regarded as a pioneer in fine-art color photography.
- Good discussion of fine art vs. document—which does he do?

Quote

“Mitch Epstein brings political and environmental discourses to bear in Property Rights… As the title suggests, his large-format photographs expose fractures in American notions of citizenship, land, and power: globally resonant topics but perhaps especially fraught in the United States, where this history intersects with indigenous genocide, slavery, and several centuries of unmitigated environmental irresponsibility.”

Paulo Nazareth


The multidisciplinary artist Paulo Nazareth originally conceived Noticias de América (News from the Americas) as an evolving durational body of work to be informed by his movement
through the landscape. Planned to last only a month, Nazareth’s journey started in Minas Gerais, Brazil, not far from where he grew up. He ended up traveling for ten months, mostly on foot, making his way through South America, Central America, and Cuba to finally reach New York, where, in a symbolic gesture, he washed his feet in the Hudson River. In documented performances, installations, drawings, photographs, and videos, Nazareth charts the enmeshed histories, territories, traumas, and economies of the Americas, often holding crude homemade signs as an added form of commentary.

- Born in 1977 in Governador Valadares, Minas Gerais, Brazil; based in Belo Horizonte, Brazil
- Nazareth is of Afro-Brazilian origin.
- Received both his BFA and MFA from the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais in 2005 and 2006 respectively.
- Documents performance of walking from Brazil to New York—consider what it means to be “American,” stereotypes about refugees and immigrants, the ritual of washing feet

Quote

“Paulo Nazareth’s work is often the result of precise and simple gestures, which bring about broader ramifications, raising awareness to press issues of immigration, racialization, globalization, colonialism, and its effects in the production and consumption of art in his native Brazil and the Global South ... his strongest medium may be cultivating relationships with people he encounters on the road – particularly those who must remain invisible due to their legal status or those who are repressed by governmental authorities.”

Mauro Restiffe


Inominável #1, 2019. Chromogenic print, 31 1/2 x 47 1/4 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Fortes D’Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo / Rio de Janeiro


Inominável #16, 2019. Chromogenic print, 43 1/4 x 65 inches. Courtesy of the artist and
Mauro Restiffe made *Empossamento* (Swearing-in) in 2003 during the presidential inauguration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a former labor leader and founder of the left-wing Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers’ Party) in Brazil. Integrating history, landscape, and architecture, the sweeping scenes unfold against the backdrop of Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer’s iconic modernist civic buildings and their grounds. At the same location and on the same date in 2019, Restiffe photographed the investiture of Brazil’s current right-wing populist president, Jair Bolsonaro, for a work he titled *Inominável* (*Unnameable*).

- Born 1970, São Paulo, Brazil
- Photographs document Brasilia’s urban landscape at a key moment in Brazil’s history - the election of Lula da Silva
- During his time as President, Lula da Silva helped curtail poverty, create jobs, combat economic stagnation, and double the minimum wage.
- Daily actions as a form of activism—consider connections to Baseera Khan and *Images on which to build*. 

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Fortes D’Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo / Rio de Janeiro


About the artwork
“Mauro Restiffe captures large format black-and-white photographs of landscapes, modernist interiors, architecture, and urban life, as well as exploring issues of representation in images that reproduce existing works of art.”

Dara Friedman

Government Cut Freestyle, 1998. 16mm film (color, silent) transferred to DVD, 9:20 minutes. Courtesy of the artist

In the silent video Government Cut Freestyle (1998), Dara Friedman documents young people jumping off a pier in South Pointe Park in Miami Beach into Government Cut, a waterway that connects Biscayne Bay to the Atlantic Ocean. The video functions as a meditation on a moment in time that is imbued with transcendent feeling. Friedman frames the bodies against a backdrop of water, sky, separated by a horizon line that for her is a metaphorical boundary between physical and emotional states.

- Born 1968, Bad Kreuznach, Germany; Lives in Miami
- “Friedman’s film and video work is regarded for its ability to reduce film to its most basic, material essences in ways that create emotionally compelling, visceral experiences.”
- “She uses everyday sights and sounds as the raw material for film and video artworks that reverberate with emotional energy. With a background in structural film and dance, Friedman’s cinema calls for a radical reduction of the medium to its most essential material properties…Yet for all of Friedman’s strenuous logic and discipline, her approach remains unabashedly sensual and emotive.”
- The video combines two sensations: sleeping and flying. The artist asked ~100 kids what they like to do most and, if they could do anything, what they would do. The most common answers were “to sleep” and “to fly.”

“My filmmaking is unusual. It’s not narrative, it’s not documentary. I’m not an artist who also makes films, I’m an artist who is a filmmaker. That’s where the structural film explanation comes in. Perhaps we don’t have another word for film-making that functions as poetry.”

Wendy Red Star

Untitled (A, B, D, L), from the series Rez Pop, 2017; Fabric with photograph. Private Collection

Untitled (C, F, H, I), from the series Rez Pop, 2017; Collection of Scott & Judy Nyquist, Houston
Raised on the Apsáalooke (Crow) reservation in Montana, Wendy Red Star has for years documented “rez cars”—decrepit vehicles commonly found on reservations—some of which belong to her family. Red Star has spoken of her childhood memories of playing in old cars and her adult reflections on their function in memorializing loved ones or marking major life events. In the series, the photographic images are cut out and mounted on fabric. The juxtaposition of the cars and bright background colors evokes the vitality of Red Star’s community and celebrates objects that are often dismissed by outsiders as signs of poverty.

• Born 1981, Billings, MT; Lives and works in Portland, OR
• Received an MFA from UCLA in 2006
• Although Red Star has a specialization in sculpture, her work includes photography, fashion design, bead work, fiber art, performance art, and painting.
• “Her humorous approach and use of Native American images from traditional media draw the viewer into her work, while also confronting romanticized representations. She juxtaposes popular depictions of Native Americans with authentic cultural and gender identities. Her work has been described as ‘funny, brash, and surreal.’”
• The Rez Pop series is made to be reminiscent of the style of Andy Warhol.
• Cars are meant to push against assumptions of poverty—kept as sentimental objects; colors derived from the garish colors of the government housing; chosen by the government because it was the cheapest paint available—not due to any Indigenous identity affiliation

**Quote**

When asked about the origin of the series, Red Star remarks, “The series started with the simple questions: ‘why are there so many broken down cars in front yards here?’ and ‘why are the HUD houses painted such bizarre colors?’”

Does not necessarily consider her work political: “The reservation cars and houses are not a direct conversation but because of the commonalities all Native people share with the U.S.
government, many of the images allude to the consequences of an oppressed people and culture. Much of what I have photographed helps explain situations like the pipeline controversies and political activism—that these people who have already given up so much are asked to sacrifice yet again. Oftentimes my work is labeled political even if I am just documenting my own environment which may seem political to the colonial norm but benign to me. I am an observer of my world and whether or not my documenting it through art is understood as political, it should certainly be understood as reimagining what can initially appear shabby or discarded as something resilient and alive.”

Jim Goldberg

1,600 Miles from the Border, Altacolmulco, Mexico. Still from Luna Llena, 2018. Gelatin silver print, 20 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the artist

Mary, Mexico City, Mexico. Still from Luna Llena, 2018. Gelatin silver print, 20 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the artist

The Route, Mexico City, Mexico. Still from Luna Llena, 2018. Gelatin silver print, 16 x 24 inches. Courtesy of the artist

Zonkey, Tijuana, Mexico. Still from Luna Llena, 2018. Gelatin silver print, 16 x 24 inches. Courtesy of the artist

1,200 Miles from the Border, Santa Maria del Oro, Mexico. Still from Luna Llena, 2018. Gelatin silver print, 16 x 24 inches. Courtesy of the artist

Jim Goldberg and Cristina de Middel, Untitled, 2019. Unique internal dye diffusion transfer print, 3 1/4 x 4 1/4 inches. Courtesy of the artists
In 2018, Jim Goldberg documented the daily experience of Central Americans fleeing the dangers in their native countries to seek asylum in the US. The caravan of individuals making a grueling and emotional journey became the basis for the creation of the 2019 film Luna Llena (Full Moon). In 2019, Goldberg returned with fellow Magnum photographer Cristina de Middel. The two collaborated to make Polaroid portraits of migrant families and those who facilitate their passage, colloquially known as “coyotes.” As part of the series, children posed atop a fantastical “zonkey,” a donkey painted with zebra stripes.

- Born, 1953, New Haven, CT
- Received an MFA in photography from San Francisco Art Institute in 1979
- Goldberg’s work reflects long-term, in-depth collaborations with neglected, ignored, or otherwise outside-the-mainstream populations, investigating the nature of power, class, and happiness.
- Luna Llena documents the “Migrant Caravan” of November 2018.
- Consider discussing how Goldberg is different from traditional documentary photographers—he wants to persuade, rather than remain unbiased.

**Quote**

Goldberg discussing Luna Llena: “Last fall as I was reading and watching the news, I was horrified to witness how my country was portraying these individuals and families seeking asylum. With my experience from Open See working with refugees, immigrants, and trafficked individuals, I knew I had to do something. With Magnum’s support, I flew to Mexico City and embedded myself within the migrant caravan as it traveled towards the U.S. border. It was a time of great movement, emotion, and hope for a better life. It felt right to shoot film, video, and still imagery for this work, as the mixing of these mediums more accurately describes the momentum of this multi-dimensional journey. The overlaid audio further amplifies the feelings of chaos, motion, and community as people pray, parents sing lullabies to their children, and the truck engines rumble throughout.”
Abraham Cruzvillegas and Bárbara Foulkes

Video documentation by Iki Nakagawa. Music by Andrés García Nestitla. Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City / New York.

Autoreconstrucción (Self-Reconstruction), first performed and recorded at The Kitchen, New York, in April 2018, is a collaboration between artist Abraham Cruzvillegas, choreographer Bárbara Foulkes, and musician Andrés García Nestitla. Scavenging the streets of New York’s Chelsea neighborhood, Cruzvillegas retrieved objects like soccer balls, shopping carts, bedsheets, and washing machines to create a massive hanging sculpture. Foulkes was then suspended to perform improvised movements and actions that eventually caused the object to become unbound and fall to the floor (only to be rebuilt for the next performance). Nestitla’s accompanying live score was performed on empty milk jugs, bottles, and washboards, in addition to traditional instruments.

- Cruzvillegas: Born 1968, Mexico City; lives and works in Paris, France
- Foulkes: Born 1982, Buenos Aires, Argentina; lives and works in Mexico
- Inspired by favelas and shantytowns of Latin America
- Performative, improvised work commenting on income gap.
  o By the end of 2021, the top 1% of Americans owned 32.3% of America’s wealth.
- Cruzvillegas would build the sculpture using refuse from Chelsea neighborhood, then Foulkes would perform with it.

Quote

“Many of my works are unfinished. When you look at the roofs of houses and there is rebar coming out there, like an optimistic hope of being finished, that’s my reference.”

Kevin Schmidt

A Sign in the Northwest Passage (Billboard Mural), 2011. Digital file, 11452 x 20050 pixels. Courtesy of the artist and the Art Gallery of Alberta

A Sign in the Northwest Passage (Photo taken where we left the sign: Beaufort Sea), 2011. Chromogenic print, 22 x 28 inches.Courtesy of the artist and the Art Gallery of Alberta

A Sign in the Northwest Passage (Photobook), 2010. Print-on-demand photobook, 60 pages, 6 x 8 inches. Courtesy of the artist and the Art Gallery of Alberta

In 2010, Kevin Schmidt built a wooden billboard inscribed with disasters prophesied in the biblical Book of Revelation. He installed the sign on seasonal ice at the western entrance to the Northwest Passage on the northern coast of Canada’s mainland, leaving it to the fate of the summer melt. Returning that summer, Schmidt launched a search for the object, interviewing locals and scouring the coast, but no physical evidence was found. Schmidt considers, *A Sign in the Northwest Passage* a work that will remain incomplete until its remains are found. Meanwhile, the sign had been photographed not only by Schmidt but also by others such as Brad Felix, who happened on it on a hunting trip and posted pictures on Facebook—the sign’s last known sighting. The genre of the work, then, exists somewhere between visual documentation and mythic quest, functioning as a symbol of economic colonization and global warming.

- Born 1972, Ottawa, Canada; lives and works in Toronto, Canada
- BFA, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design
- Good for discussion around “What makes a photograph art?” and the role of the document
- Also interested in environmental concerns—sign was meant to be connected to the ice melt—summer melt is normal, but is getting more dire
- Located over oil reserves—connection to over-consumption and environmental concerns
- Did receive permission from Brad Felix to use photographs from his Facebook

**Quote**

“Describing the decimation of the earth and humankind in vivid detail, it relays a warning that no one seems present to receive. This solitary sign—carrying an urgent message for the masses—references advertising culture and the city, yet is silenced by its surrounding barren landscape. Schmidt deliberately located this project on the ice above major oil reserves, where the potential for devastating exploitation is clearly implied. When the seasonal ice melted, this sign floated away to parts unknown, taking its cataclysmic message with it.”
An-My Lê

*Ship Divers, USS New Hampshire, Arctic Seas*, 2011. From the series *Events Ashore*. Pigment print, 40 x 56 1/2 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery

*Marine Corps Weapons Company (I), Earthquake Relief, Grand Goave, Haiti*, 2010. From the series *Events Ashore*. Pigment print, 40 x 56 1/2 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery

The body of work *Events Ashore* (2010–14) by An-My Lê examines the US military presence on the global stage, across oceans and borders, and its emergence as an unlikely force in the unfolding environmental crisis in regions like the Arctic and Haiti. Lê’s sweeping yet detailed scenes portray locations in Panama, San Clemente Island in California, St. Lawrence Island off Alaska, and Shoalwater Bay in Australia.

- Born 1960, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Lives and works in New York City
- MFA Yale School of Art, 1993
- *Events Ashore* depicts a 9-year exploration of the US Navy’s global activities.
- As Lê explains, these trips allowed her to study close at hand the military’s noncombat activities, becoming “a launching point for an examination of the U.S. military on the global stage across oceans and borders as a symbol of conflict, an echo of the age of exploration, and an unlikely (and unsung) force in the unfolding environmental crisis This work is as much about my perspective and personal history as a political refugee from Vietnam as it is about the vast geopolitical forces and conflicts that shape these landscapes.”

**Quote**
“With [Events Ashore], Lê has assembled a visual narrative of hardware, personnel, destinations, and points of contact that constitutes the American military experience--and influence.”
RESOURCES

Read

24 hours with Xaviera Simmons - via Moma Magazine
https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/136

An-My Lê’s “Events Ashore” - via The New Yorker
https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/photographer-an-my-le-events-ashore?scrlybrkr=f20ac156

Bliz-aard Ball Sale by David Hammons, 1982 - via Aphelis Archives (Canada)
https://aphelis.net/bliz-aard-ball-sale-david-hammons-1983/

Documenting Indigenous Culture Through Photography - via the New York Times

Photographer Mitch Epstein Foregrounds the Tension between Sublime American Landscapes and Corporate Agendas - via Art in America

Portfolio: Marty Mattingly - via Art Works for Change
https://www.artworksforchange.org/portfolio/mary-mattingly/

Portraits of Protest: The Women of Standing Rock - via Magnum Photos
https://www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/environment/alessandra-sanguinetti-women-anti-dakota-access-pipeline-demonstrations/

Wendy Red Star: Reservation Pop - by Cynthia Gladen via the artist’s website
https://www.wendyredstar.com/reservation-pop

Which indigenous lands are you on? This map will show you - via NPR
https://www.npr.org/2022/10/10/1127837659/native-land-map-ancestral-tribal-lands-worldwide

Why did Francis Alys push a block of ice for 9 hours? - via Public Delivery (South Korea)
https://publicdelivery.org/francis-alyss-ice/

Listen

Prioritizing Indigenous Communities and Voices (2021 Wyeth Lecture in American Art) - via National Gallery of Art “Talks” Podcast (51 minutes)
Watch

Abraham Cruzvillegas: Autoconstrucción – via Art21
https://www.kurimanzutto.com/artists/abraham-cruzvillegas

Alessandra Sanguinetti, Guille & Belinda: nostalgia and photographic memory – via MACK
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaGKuR-nGxY

Interview with Dawoud Bey – via National Gallery of Art
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VD9TtrG2uS4

Mary Mattingly Owns Up – via Art21
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qujH5oYmHcY

Opening New Doors for Native Women: Wendy Red Star on Making American Art
Welcoming to All – via Seattle Art Museum, YouTube
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZpuEu9veRk

Paulo Nazareth: When People Become Products - via Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_2zR_aw2fE

Project Horse Day – via Mohamed Bourrouissa’s website
https://www.mohamedbourrouissa.com/horse-day/

Lordy Rodriguez and the Language of Cartography – via Nevada Museum of Art
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_aYrxS4Pfs

Watch: Jim Goldberg’s Short Film, Luna Llena – via Magnum Photos
LEARNING STANDARDS

Common Core Standards

http://www.corestandards.org/

Ohio Common Core Links

http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/OLS-Graphic-Sections/Learning-Standards

http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Fine-Arts/Fine-Arts-Standards

Kentucky Common Core Links

https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Pages/default.aspx

https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Kentucky_Academic_Standards_Arts_and_Humanities.pdf

Indiana Standards Links

https://www.doe.in.gov/standards

https://www.doe.in.gov/standards/fine-arts-dance-music-theatre-visual-arts

Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change

http://www.animatingdemocracy.org/aesthetic-perspectives