

BOYBOX



CURATED by ANGELA CONANT

JULY 30 - AUGUST 28, 2021

END NOTES #9

EPA PROJECT SPACE



BOYBOX

CA Conrad

Deborah Czeresko

Karen Yvonne Hall

BB Kenda

Rose Nestler

Sarada Rauch

Marion Scemama and David Wojnarowicz

Vincent Tiley

Christopher Udemezue

Angela Washko

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DIRECTOR'S INTRO:

Which Masculinity? Dylan Gauthier

It is my pleasure to introduce the ninth in our series of *end_notes* publications. Aiming to breathe in and through the timespan of each exhibition at EFA Project Space, these catalogs take in the whole show, teasing out resonances and connections between the making of work, the works-on-display, the participating artists, public events, and the viewing public. Documenting not just the exhibition, but—as much as is possible—all that happened within and alongside it over its 6 week evolution-in-public, these catalogs are produced in a slow and methodical sprint alongside the day to day running of the gallery, and are released at the closing of each exhibition. In this case, the exhibition is *BOY BOX*, curated by Angela Conant, and featuring work by Jared Buckhiester, CAConrad, Deborah Czeresko, Karen Yvonne Hall, BB Kenda, Rose Nestler, Sarada Rauch, Marion Scemama and David Wojnarowicz, Vincent Tiley, Christopher Udemezue, Angela Washko. The exhibition was selected through Project Space's open call for proposals on the theme of *Bright Futures*, by our curatorial advisory committee comprised of Marco Antonini, Jean Barberis, Chloe Bass, Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo, Pablo Helguera, Felicity Hogan, Michelle Levy, Marie Lorenz, Shervone Neckles, Sara Reisman, James Allister Sprang, Radhika Subramaniam, Kendra Sullivan, Sally Szwed, and Chen Tamir.

Bright Futures envisions a radical push for transparency, equality, and justice through exhibitions and artist projects that dovetail with key political and social issues including racial capitalism, digital surveillance, mobility and access, gender, transition, multi-species repair, and ecological crisis. Expand-

ing outward from Project Space's renewed mission, *Bright Futures* spotlights art that is community-based and future-looking, revealing contemporary practices that engage with technology and society, politics and poetics, and fuse belief and praxis in the promise of a better world.

BOY BOX images a brighter future by wrestling with this freighted and fraught idea called "masculinity." Reflecting the #metoo movement, a broader acknowledgement of the ills of "toxic masculinity," the phenomenon of "white male fragility," a democracy radically transformed by an abusive relationship with a wanna-be "strongman," and the deleterious effects of patriarchy *tout court* on our humanity, *BOY BOX* was selected for its nuanced and novel approach to the topic. Through their work, and as evinced in their impassioned conversations with each other that are transcribed for this catalog, the artists in *BOY BOX* bring us closer to understanding the various ways in which masculinity is formed, performed, and might yet be reformed to do us all a better turn. At times trenchant, at times tender, *BOY BOX* digs deep into the heart of masculinity itself, in order to suss out what—if anything—therein is worth saving, remediating, and/or reclaiming.

This catalog also features an introduction by guest curator Angela Conant, along with contributions by some of the participating artists. Wherever possible, alongside reproduced images, we have added image descriptions to increase access to this catalog when it is encountered as a PDF on our website. Released as a print publication in an initial run of 250 books, it also appears in electronic format online alongside documentation of *BOY BOX* including images and video from the exhibition and related programs. Visit <http://efaproject.space> for more rich content and audio descriptions of works in the show. Finally, a debt of gratitude to Angela Conant for her care-filled and conscientious and collaborative approach to curating, and to all of the artists in *BOY BOX* for sharing their deeply personal and compelling work with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dylan Gauthier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D' and 'G'.

Dylan Gauthier, Director, EFA Project Space Program

CURATOR'S INTRO:

BOY BOX

Angela Conant

For the purposes of this exhibition, masculinity is defined as a constructed and perceived set of traits as evaluated by a cis-dominated, colonized Western culture, imposed from external perspectives, and translated into individual performances across the gender spectrum. *BOY BOX* optimistically proposes broader access to the joys and benefits of fluid, detachable masculine traits. The exhibition is not an astigmatic celebration of maleness, but rather a deconstruction of masculinity's history of power, which has fueled racism and the marginalization of people who do not conform to binary constructions of gender. Addressing the hypocrisy of a masculine archetype that, in Western culture, is reserved for white cis-male people, this exhibition aims to complicate and bend masculinity across intersections of identity. To those ends, *BOY BOX* carefully brings the fragility and preciousness of masculinity down to earth, catching it as it falls from its cultural pedestal. On view are artworks that address masculinity's myriad iterations, frustrating ideas of gender, the male sex, and toxicity.

The United States' surge of mass killings in recent years evinces the damage wrought by the Western tradition of violence as a masculine craft. Where research into the causes of mass violence is inadequate, an observable commonality is that most perpetrators are male-identifying. Meanwhile, modern sensibilities replace and flip archaic gender roles. Heterosexual romance, for example, is the old-fashioned process of quieting hyper-masculine impulse in order to sweeten and garner interest from a prospective sexual partner. This cloak to accessorize the performance of masculinity is a misguided forefather of what we now call consent.

Working to move outside its conventional constraints, this exhibition offers a group of artists' observations and performances of masculinity. Their work shows that we each have not only a unique relationship with the masculine, but a right to its power, swagger and strength.

CAConrad's knife-shaped poems are unapologetically distilled from somatic rituals that have been honed over years of coping with trauma born from anti-gay violence. Their work for this exhibition, which opens with an anecdote of the gun as phallus and the phallus as hero, touches on the history of the AK-47 and ends on a note of solitude and longing.

Jared Buckhiester makes an offering to each subject of his clandestine photography—truck drivers ostensibly without a pot to piss in—a portable ceramic urinal. The project is imbued with voyeurism and regret. Buckhiester's father drove him down a highway to pursue his aim of capturing truckers just as they noticed his gaze; a moment placing the artist between threat and threatened. Then, feeling he overstepped a boundary, Buckhiester made each driver their gift.

Deborah Czeresko's chromed tailpipe of blown glass, disembodied from the undercarriage of its vehicle, ejects a silky-white glass glob of smoke. Not shown is another Czeresko work, a glass uterus that can augment a sans-uterine body. This utopian object of postgenderism supposes a world wherein the female reproductive system is not the only possible place for pregnancy and childbirth, and is therefore a mechanism for disrupting traditional gender roles.

Karen Yvonne Hall is a trained opera singer as well as a drag performer, and their interests find overlap in the figure of the castrato, whose prepubescent singing voice is preserved through a disruption of the endocrine system, namely castration. For *BOY BOX*, Hall—as their drag persona Daren—dresses as their father to perform Soy Carlos, a song they wrote from their father's point of view. The song describes Carlos' experience being a sensitive soul living in the Dominican Republic, where his femininity was a mortal threat.

BB Kenda addresses drag and gender fluidity as well, performing in a video that seems private, with the wall so close to their back they could be in a bedroom closet, and an intimacy that reminds of a teen singing into the mirror. BB contrasts a pop song, about

the protagonist with their husband, with BB's own performance of a bifurcated identity, making the protagonist-antagonist relationship an internal one.

Rose Nestler anthropomorphizes her soft objects by applying gender-specific body parts; sexualizing business suits with fabric bosoms. For *BOY BOX*, Nestler presents a comically green tool bag with appendages she calls Barbie legs. The piece is as brassy as a bosomy aunt with the utility of a sitcom handyman. Just as bright, but more austere, is *Open Lock*, a chastity belt of orange faux leather with a stone-toothed mouth.

Sarada Rauch connects antiquity with the Mr. Olympia body-building competition, having traveled to Archanes, north of Heraklion, Crete, and filmed herself flexing, Mr. Olympia-style, in an ancient Greek amphitheater built on top of a Minoan burial ground. Sports have been cited in other *BOY BOX* artists' works as a masculine space; an arena for playacting battle that foregrounds competition and physical condition.

Marion Scemama and David Wojnarowicz collaborated on several Super 8 video works in the late 1980s. The two pieces on view represent polar possibilities of opposition to masculine dominance. What is this Little Guy's Job presents a quiet moment of speculation on the gentle creatures of the earth, while Last Night I Took a Man is a manifesto on mass death caused by homophobic hatred. Wojnarowicz combated homophobia on the front lines of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 90s. His adversary was the ancestor of "toxic masculinity:" a pervasive cultural hatred born from conformist attitudes toward maleness and gender performance, a hatred which made it impossible for his community and loved ones, and ultimately for himself, to survive.

Vincent Tiley's encrusted leather jacket is an enveloping mouth penetrated by a horn. Lined with resin casts of human teeth, the interior is transformed into a bony textile. Impossible to wear, the piece is a found object enclosure made dangerous via confrontation with its human interior. The work calls on the conceptual logic of Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades, as well as Arte Povera, and exemplifies Tiley's affinity for the visual language of kink.

Christopher Udemezue draws from the story of Victoria Montou, a Haitian Revolutionary fighter in the army of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, to whom she was also a surrogate mother. In his recent work, Udemezue incorporates the "undercommons" of his own

Jamaican roots—to borrow Fred Moten and Stefano Harney’s term for self-organization—by recreating familial ritual. His work deals in the riskiness of being female, or being a feminine male, in a Caribbean culture.

Angela Washko virtually immerses herself in the masculine domain of *World of Warcraft*, the multi-player game that peaked in popularity in the early to mid 2000s, and whose players are presumed to be majority male-identifying. In the game, players create avatars that need not correspond to their non-virtual performance of gender. Washko engages with players on their digital turf, via her own avatar, asking questions about feminism and gender identity, yielding responses from her playmates that are variously sensitive and combative.

Artists were asked to meet in pairs to converse in parallel to the dialogue that occurred between their works on view. They started by exploring their own ideas of masculinity, whether those ideas are socially or intimately rooted, and then ventured on if and how masculinity enters their work.

Threads like weightlifting, the Haitian Revolution, video games, speaking in tongues, car culture, the “cessation of violence,” intergenerational trauma, and dreams, emerged through their conversations.

Pairing artists, based on links between their practices, yielded conversations that do not aim for an answer, but further complicate and nuance ideas around something as broad and shifting as the competitive, warring, swaggering side of gender identity. What follows are transcripts of their conversations, along with their own writings. These transcripts have been edited for publication.

EXHIBITION IMAGES



View of the front of the EFA Project Space gallery. On the left, mounted on a temporary white wall to the right of the gallery entrance is a black flatscreen monitor playing a video piece by Angela Washko. To the right of that is a video piece by BB Kenda. Vincent Tiley's sculptures are on the right. Suspended from the ceiling is a



blown glass sculpture in white and mirrored/metallic glass by Deborah Czeresko. Light is pouring from the aluminum window on the right side of the image, looking out to West 39th Street.



Still: Angela Washko, *The Council on Gender Sensitivity and Behavioral Awareness in World of Warcraft: Red Shirts and Blue Shirts (The Gay Agenda)*. 2014. Virtual Performance Documentation (Video). 24'00"

A screenshot from *Red Shirts and Blue Shirts (The Gay Agenda)*, *The Council on Gender Sensitivity and Behavioral Awareness in World of Warcraft*, by Angela Washko. The captured image depicts a video game with figures in armor in an outdoor environment. A game character at the center of the image has a chat bubble above its head with white text.



Vincent Tiley, *Hunger Jacket*, 2021. Leather Biker Jacket, Resin Teeth, Animal Horn, Grommet. 38 x 21 x 20 in.

A sculpture mounted on a wall of a black leather biker jacket hanging inside out on a protruding animal horn. The jacket is lined with hundreds of human teeth made out of resin.





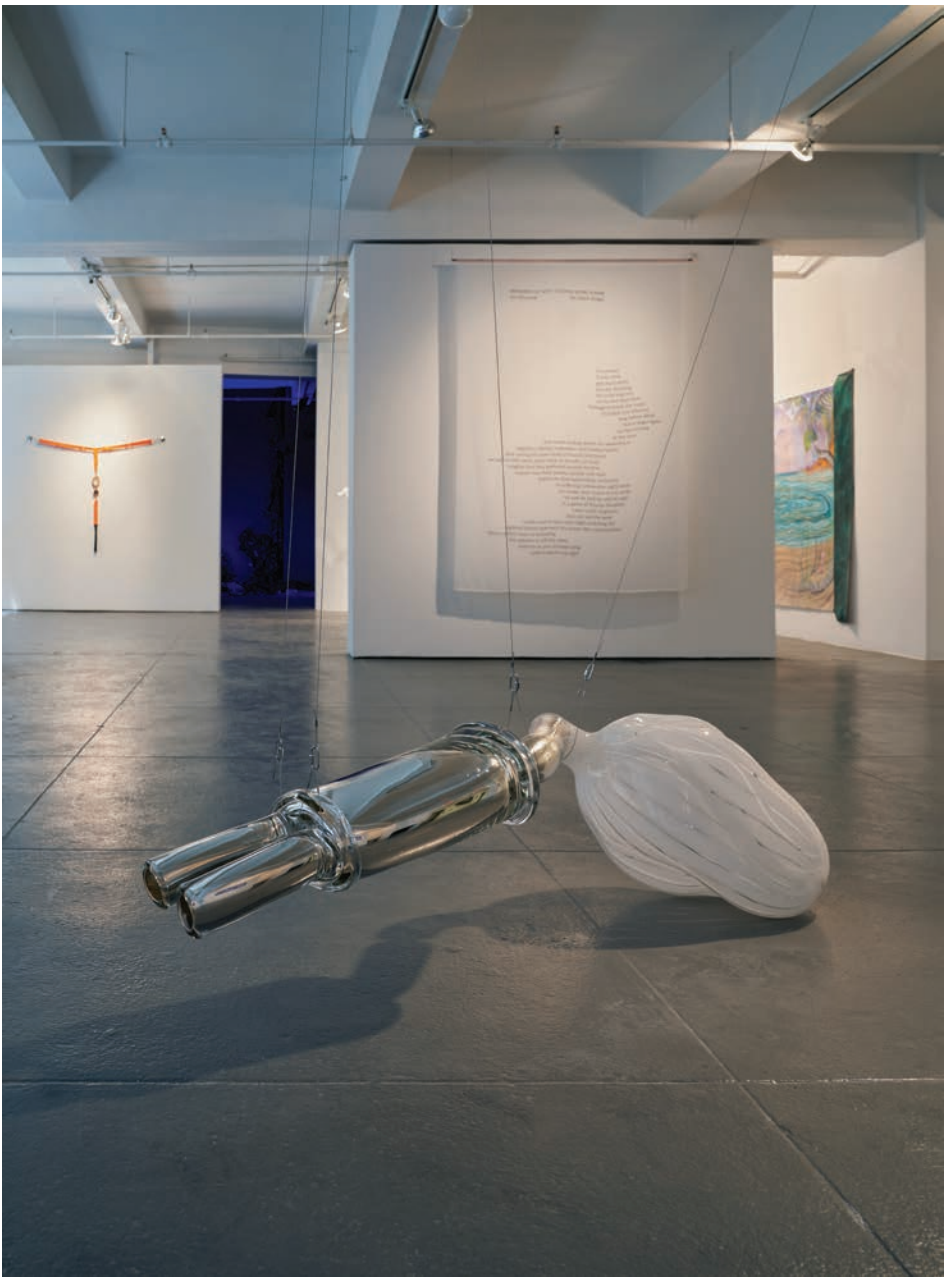
Vincent Tiley, *Urchin*, 2020. Leather Biker Jacket, Steel Nails. 13 x 54 x 24 in.

A sculpture by Vincent Tiley sits on the floor. It takes its shape as a black biker jacket laid on steel nails.



Still: BB Kenda, *Me and My Husband*. 2021. Video. 2'16". Cello performance by Ricki Weidenhof. Original song by Mitski. Courtesy of the Artist.

A screen image captured from *Me and My Husband*, by BB Kenda, playing on a screen. A figure is standing to the left of the composition, looking directly at the camera. The right side of the figure has shoulder-length blonde hair, has dark eye make-up, red lipstick, and foundation, and is wearing a bra strap. The left side of the figure has short blond hair, has a short beard, and is wearing a "wife-beater" shirt.



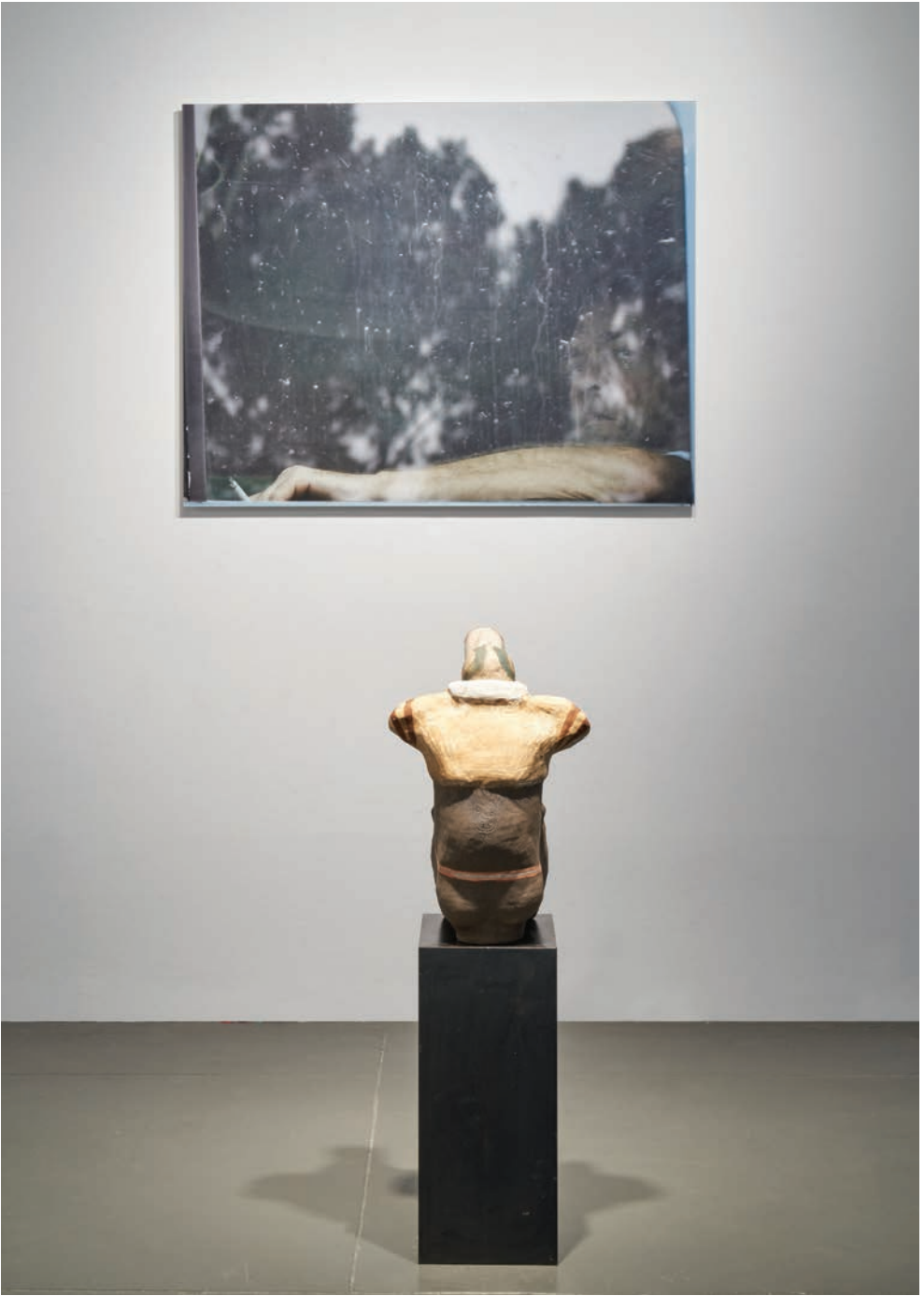
A view of the gallery. At the center of the image is *Exhaust*, a blown glass sculpture by Deborah Czeresko. A poem by CAConrad printed on white chiffon fabric, hangs from the ceiling against a freestanding wall in the center of the gallery. In the back right corner is an acrylic, oil, and paper collage painting by Karen Yvonne Hall. In the back left corner is a sculpture by Rose Nestler hanging on the wall. The sculpture features an unlocked orange chastity belt hung on metal hooks, with a leather whip attached to the bottom.



Installation view: Jared Buckhiester, *Potential Subject at 68MPH 1-85 SC State Line*, 2021, Archival C-Print, 30" x 40" / *Urinal (End)*, 2016, Glazed Stoneware, 16.5 x 11 x 10 in. and *Subject at 72 MPH I-85 GA State Line*, 2014, Archival Inkjet Print, 30 x 40 in. / *Urinal (Full Back)*, 2020, Glazed Stoneware, 16.5 x 11 x 10 in.



In this corner of the gallery, a photographic print hangs on each wall and a floor sculpture on each side. On the left side, we see a photograph of a driver's side window of a yellow truck viewed from below, looking up. To the left of the portrait is a glazed stoneware sculpture as it stands on a black rectangular stand. The sculpture is a urinal with a tubular opening that leads into the face and body of a football player. Its body morphs into the bottom of a gray pot.





Left: Jared Buckhiester, *Subject at 72 MPH I-85 GA State Line*, 2014, Archival Inkjet Print, 30 x 40 in. / *Urinal (Full Back)*, 2020, Glazed Stoneware, 16.5 x 11 x 10 in.

Above: Still, Sarada Rauch, *Spandex Shield*. 2018. Video. 2'06". Courtesy of the artist.

A screen image from *Spandex Shield*, by Sarada Rauch, capturing a figure wearing a pink bikini swimsuit, standing with its back to the camera with its hands to the sides. The figure is standing at the center of an ancient Greek theater.





Still: Karen Yvonne Hall, *My Dad Has Started His Journey in Healing His Inner Wounds*. 2021. Video. 11'38". Courtesy of the artist.

A singing figure in the center of the composition, wearing a cowboy hat and glasses, a buttoned white shirt, a black vest and black pants. The figure is standing barefoot on a sand dune in the daylight. In the background is a small hill with long grass.



BOY BOX Installation view.

Center: CAConrad, *Memories of Why I Stopped Being a Man*. 2021. Inkjet Print on Chiffon. 4 x 7 feet.

A view of the gallery. Hanging on the left wall is a sculpture by Rose Nestler. The sculpture features an unlocked orange chastity belt hung on metal hooks. A leather whip is attached to the bottom, suspended above the floor. At center is a poem by CAConrad printed on chiffon fabric, hanging from the ceiling. At right is an oblique view of a painting and collage on canvas by Karen Yvonne Hall.

Detail: Rose Nestler, *Open Lock*. 2020. Leather, Thread, Carved Stones, Epoxy, Hardware. 52 x 50 x 1.5 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

A detail shot of *Open Lock*, by Rose Nestler, showing two carved stone objects with inner-facing spikes, attached to an orange unlocked chastity belt that is hanging on the wall.





Left: Rose Nestler, *Tool Bag*. 2020. Leather, Fabric, Thread, Polyfil, Wire, Zipper, Solid Cherry Stool. 66 x 46 x 29 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Center: Karen Yvonne Hall, *Scene in Dominican Republic* from *My dad has started his journey in healing his inner wounds*, 2021, painting on shaped canvas.

Right: Karen Yvonne Hall, *My Dad Has Started His Journey in Healing His Inner Wounds*. 2021. Video. 11'38". Courtesy of the artist.



A view of the gallery. To the left, a standing sculpture by Rose Nestler. The sculpture is a green leather bag with white tools made of leather in its pockets. The bag stands on a wooden stool, divided in the center to create two opposing tilted surfaces. On the frontal wall is a painting by Karen Yvonne Hall. Portraying a landscape, this acrylic, oil, and paper collage painting on canvas served as the backdrop for Hall's performance piece, performed on the night of the opening. On the right wall is a video piece by Hall.



Detail: Rose Nestler, *Tool Bag*. 2020. Leather, Fabric, Thread, Polyfil, Wire, Zipper, Solid Cherry Stool. 66 x 46 x 29 in. Courtesy of the artist.

A standing sculpture of a large green crocodile leather bag, set on a wooden stool divided in the center to create two opposing tilted surfaces. The bag has hardware tools such as a hammer and nails in its outside pockets, made of white crocodile leather. Two green leather legs extend from the bag to the floor.



Two cube TVs standing back-to-back on two white pedestals playing video pieces by Marion Scemama and David Wojnarowicz. Seen is a still image of *Last Night I Took A Man*, featuring a man's face wearing glasses, with three smaller images to his right. In the background is a view of the gallery space.



Installation view: Christopher Udemezue, *I need to know that you will be here where he can't find us when I knock my key*, 2021. Mixed Media Installation with Sound. Dimensions Variable.



An installation is set up in a room painted in black. Mixed materials such as wood branches, soil, flowers, leaves, and rope are laid on clear plastic sheets, lit with a blue light. At the center of the installation are family photos printed and pasted on paper. A soundscape is played next to the installation.

ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION

Angela Washko
Deborah Czeresko
Angela Conant

Angela Conant: I want to talk about what you think masculinity is. As I've been working on this show, it's been hard to define, and I realize that its definition is fluid and different for everyone. It could be defined as a set of traits perceived from the outside that have been formulated over the course of the way that culture has evolved around it. And, I'm curating this show from the perspective of a Western, white-dominated, cis-dominated culture. Those are the constraints that it feels to me that masculinity has formed under. I wonder if you could share, each of you, what masculinity means to you on a personal level, or not. Or, if you were to expand on masculinity, how would you expand on it? And then, also, how does it show up in your work?

Angela Washko: In my own work, I am focused specifically on toxic masculinity, so I would differentiate between what we might culturally call "toxic masculinity" and "masculinity." [In] a lot of the work that I do, and particularly the work that's in the show, I'm talking with *World of Warcraft* players trying to figure out why *World of Warcraft* became such an exclusionary space for women, non-binary people, people of color, and people across the spectrum of the queer community. Why has it become the space where the primary audience, or the most entitled player to the space, or who feels most comfortable to assert their dominance over the space, are typically white, straight men expressing a very oppressive, biological determinism around masculinity? In this particular space, I'm talking to players about why there's a feeling among a lot of the player base that women are biologically designed to be worse at video games, why they see women as "naturally" less interested in video games because it's written into their biological code, that video games are designed biologically to be a "masculine" experience, [or] that it's a masculine trait [to be] interested in video games. Obviously, that creates a games culture that's exclusionary to others and an industry where women and non-binary people are not valued. So, there's a kind of toxic masculinity that's not only oppressive to women, non-binary, queer and trans people, but [that] also creates expectations around how men are supposed to perform.

If I were to zoom out of the context of that work, I'm thinking about masculinity as a kind of performance. I think femininity as a performance is more easily recognized because of certain signifiers that we're familiar with, and I'm interested in the ways that there are still historical ideas about what is inherently feminine and what is inherently masculine and how we perform different versions of these things that make up how we ideologically want to live and perform and be in the world. I think that there are certainly things that are considered "inherently masculine" or "inherently feminine" that are oppressive and confining, but there are

people who may signal, appearance-wise, ideas of femininity, but perform in ways that are considered inherently masculine. It's complicated, and I'm really excited about the cultural moment that we're in where there's a bigger conversation about non-binary identity, about resisting the stereotypical markers of masculine and feminine identity and complicating those.

Deborah Czeresko: I was trying to figure out how to define masculinity for me. It's actually hard to define, and fluid. I started to think [about] how it's historically changing. It seems like a liberating time right now, but that's really optimistic, because I've lived through other times, such as the various waves of the feminist movement. I've historically seen that we need vigilance that we have to revisit and revisit and revisit Issues to make micro steps forward. So, I'm a little cautious about thinking of it as a liberating moment, but it does seem like something has changed and the gate has opened a little bit for some kind of change, which is exciting to me. I went back to my childhood—my really early childhood—between ages one and four, when I don't feel like I had a socio-cultural idea of what masculinity was yet, before I knew my assigned at birth gender, before I knew what I was supposed to do by society putting things on me and the messages given to me through advertising and learned behaviors. It's all sort of Pavlovian. You get stimuluses and responses; wear the wrong clothes: bad response, wear the "right clothes": good response. So we're all learning these behaviors, but before that, it was this age of innocence. In my childhood I went towards more masculine things. That's what I was interested in. I was interested in sports and cars, and I didn't know it was a construct that was defined by one's gender. As I got older and had to start doing things in the world, and go to school, that's when I started to realize the world was pushing me in certain [directions]. Certain things I [was] doing [were] not approved of, but I really didn't give a shit. I developed an attitude that was like, "This is what I am, this is what I do." But, it took a lot of inner strength. It's been a constant battle to be authentic to myself over the years, but that really fueled me, even to this day. I was on the show *Blown Away* and I had the opportunity to go up against the patriarchy in a way, with what I do, and it really was a linear thing between my childhood and now, because I was constantly doing that in my life. I think if this term non-binary existed then, I probably would have identified as that. But I've had to make peace with the fact that those terms didn't exist, and I was out there alone, in a way. I felt like I was out there alone, especially in a male-dominated field. There was not much support around me for being something other-than. I was constantly cloaking things to fit in and have some harmonious existence about myself.

[That] brings me to my piece, which is sort of a surrogate for a disembodied phallus that fell off a car body. There's a lot that goes into car culture and masculinity, whether it's masculine or feminine. [My piece is] like a glistening mirror ejaculating out this beautiful toxic splodge of smoke that's really toying with vanity and gender and eroticism and sensuality. Glass is a very sensual material to me, and I think to a lot of people, and I like it centralizing this gross coughing thing that falls off a car. It's a lot of innuendo in the piece, and I hope it's a little bit undefined.

AC: That's great. Thank you for sharing that. It makes a lot of sense and it's funny that you bring up early childhood. I'm thinking about being a new parent and my daughter—we didn't reveal her sex while I was pregnant. Gender reveal has been this huge weird deal. Aren't people being sued right now for starting a forest fire? So, they're pretty overblown, in my opinion, no offense to anyone. I don't see you, Angela, as a major gender reveal party person.

AW: No.

DC: What's going on? I missed the whole gender reveal thing.

AC: So, you can find out the sex in utero somewhat early on. Some parents-to-be have a party where the gender is revealed somehow. Sometimes it's a cake and the cake is frosted white, but the inside cake part is blue or pink. So you cut the cake and both parents are somehow unaware of what color it's going to be.

AW: They give the results to the baker, or something, and then they are also surprised.

AC: They get their family together, and they cut the cake and then it's "it's a boy!" or "it's a girl!" People have done this in all different ways. I don't know the details of the people who started the fire.

AW: I think there was a firework display in the context of a very dry, very forested area of California and they created a massive forest fire that displaced people and everything.

DC: That's just general irresponsibility.

AW: Gender kills!

[laughter]

AC: I do think it's mortally dangerous to put people in this imposed binary. What you described, Deborah, you're not alone in that. But, the fact that you did feel alone, that's what is forced upon people by creating this binary and by the violence and the exclusion of society to someone, to everyone, because if we believe that everyone is on a spectrum of gender, or whatever you want to call it, on some fluid and moving, changing gender, then, the binary is oppressive to everyone, but especially to those who are more outside the norm.

AW: I was thinking, as Deborah was talking, about those childhood experiences of navigating to and choosing things, and not thinking very consciously about what they might represent. I have an eight-month-old daughter at home, and all of a sudden realizing just how encoded—the commercialization around gender expectations. If you just go to a regular clothing store it's almost always separated by boys and girls. Girls are pink Princesses, "mommy's girl" and "daddy's girl." Pink, purple. It's impossible to escape. And then you go into the boys' section and it's [a] much wider range of every color, except for pink and purple, and then there's sharks and there's dinosaurs. So, I'm frequently shopping in the little boys section for my daughter, because I don't want her to fall into a situation where she feels like, in order to be who she was born into being, she has to be a princess or a unicorn or whatever. But then, I started to rethink some of that, because I didn't want her to feel like she has to entirely reject things that are maybe considered stereotypically feminine. Every decision that you make, whether it's the utensils that they're using [or] the cups that they're drinking from, there's an opportunity to market the stereotypical, idealized gender performance that they're supposed to be doing. So you have to be incredibly conscious of that all the time. I feel very, very much—in my personal life—navigating that, and also how much I police that because I also don't want to keep her from things that she's naturally attracted to. So the line between what is being marketed toward her as the thing that she's supposed to want and allowing her to organically, through experiencing the world, decide what her preferences are. It's a new, daily minefield of micro-decisions about masculinity and femininity. And unisex is just gray. So, for a while, if you look back at her photos, that was the gray, and black and white phase.

AC: Yeah, we do a lot of yellow.

AW: Yes, we are on to yellow now. Yellow and green. The room is green.

DC: Green's a good color.

AW: Yes.

DC: I just remember playing with dolls—I was the only one amongst all the girls that was playing with the G.I. Joe, and no one criticized me for it until a certain age. Once I got the criticism, that made me really fiercely want to fight against that sort of thing, so it really changed the development of my personality. I just knew it was so wrong, as a child. It's so weird. But I don't have a problem with a child being feminine at all; it's just not what I was into.

When trying to come up with an idea of what masculinity meant to me, I [started] thinking about animals who don't determine masculine and feminine, they just are. And then obviously, for example, in birds [and] many other animals, the most flamboyant ones, color-wise and with decoration, are the male animals. So, humans did not get the memo from the goddess. That's another thing, our spiritualities have been programmed by a patriarchal god-dominated world. God, the male God, is in control of our spirits? In my opinion, it's goddess all the way. Earth-based. Not this dominating God that nails people to a cross, for example.

AC: Angela you brought up dominance, or who feels comfortable dominating in a space like *World of Warcraft*. And that's one word that came up for me, too, when I was trying to write about it for the show. Whatever these traits are that are maybe arbitrarily assigned to one half of the binary, they shouldn't be exclusive. Anyone should have access to traits like swagger or assertiveness or strength. But then when I got to power and dominance—yes, everyone should have power, but shared power. Is dominance a value that is worthwhile for us as a society, or is that the problem? The binary enforces a situation where some people can dominate others, and is that what needs to change?

AW: When I was thinking about dominance earlier, it was definitely within the context of when performances of masculinity turn into toxic masculinity, where it's oppressing other groups or individuals. I definitely think that that's the case in a lot of the video game communities and the gaming industry, broadly. This goes back to some other things Deborah was talking about. I was someone who was very attracted to video games, even though at the time, in the 90s, when I started playing them, they were clearly marketed to boys. The expected and understood universal user of games was a young boy. I was very attracted to narrative-based games,

role-playing games. The vast vast majority of the games that I played growing up had a male protagonist and the male protagonist was able to be fairly multi-dimensional while the female characters that appeared were usually either there to be property of that male protagonist, or had to at least be very conventionally feminine, stereotypically attractive and young. So I found myself wanting to be the male characters and rejecting these very one-dimensional female objects. It felt like the same issues that have been expressed in cinema for a long time. That Laura Mulvey text, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," would very much apply to those games. So it's no surprise to me that these early games where your only option is to play a male character led to an understanding that games-culture belongs to men, and a certain idea of who those men are, and this performance that excludes and oppresses and rejects the voices of others.

DC: It's good to be invited to have this conversation, because I wasn't really in thinking mode, I was in making mode. They're two different sides of the brain really. But it was good to think of this idea of this car part and how glass is an interesting medium to represent it in –centralizing this thing that spews out toxicity for us. I wrote down two words: fragility and toxicity, which are the two sides: fragile masculinity and toxic masculinity. And the thing has both. It's glass and it's an exhaust, so I feel like I'm really happy with the piece. The last video game I played was Ms. Pac-Man or Mr. Pac-Man [sic].

AW: Well it's *Pac-Man* and *Ms. Pac-Man*, because if it's going to be for a women's market it has to be "Ms."

DC: Even that's gendered. I mean it's everywhere, it's rampant. It was interesting to look at some of those video games [on Angela Washko's website], because I didn't ever play them. They are really extremely violent and totally gendered. I was curious, there's obviously tons of studies done on these things, but what do people that aren't teenage boys, assigned male at birth people, what kind of video games do they do? Are they just assigned out of it? Or [would they] rather do something else? I'm not familiar with that world. Are they excluded from the video [game] world?

AW: For a long time, there were a lot of people who felt excluded or felt like this was the culture of games, and if you enjoyed it you just had to accept certain lacks in terms of representation or storytelling. In more recent years, the games market has definitely opened up, so that there are many more smaller, independent artists and developers and smaller studios that are addressing some of the lack of diverse voices and lack of

multi-dimensional storytelling in the industry and have been able to find footing. And now that the market is less centralized or controlled by these very large companies, there are these marketplaces that can allow for a single person who makes a game by themselves to be able to distribute their work alongside, like, Final Fantasy 100. So, although of course there's money and gate-keeping that keeps some of that work from being as visible, it's still able to be in dialogue. I feel like it is impacting the industry. I just did an interview with a major developer, I won't say their name, but, they're specifically creating creative fellowships to try to bring in diverse voices, because they recognize that they are not able to tell the complex stories that they would like to because they have not prioritized bringing in diverse people. So, that's a shift that's definitely happening. There's still a ton of work to be done and these contexts are still incredibly toxic, but there has been a movement to change them.

DC: Well, what's interesting is you virtually deal with what I do in physically entering a space. The glass blowing world has changed also, in that it's getting more diverse now, thank goodness but it was just not that way at all. I think the thing that fueled me was [that] I was really driven to change who could occupy that space and who could be a master of that material. I think I took on masculine qualities and used the given language to do that. I became the person who wanted to dominate space and make it not just the man's world. I am rethinking that language now. It's interesting occupying a virtual space versus occupying an actual space. It's kind of parallel. They're both kind of the same, it seems.

AW: I think it's always been a little bit disappointing to me that in some of these fantasy online spaces, you'd think that the fact that you can play as an orc or a troll or a panda or a cow-like figure called a Tauren, you'd think that the politics of everyday life in physical space could be abandoned, and that new rules could be created. I think a lot of the early cyber feminists, like VNS Matrix and many others, had a lot of powerful thoughts about how cyberspace could be decolonized and that we could be liberated [from] the oppressive structures that govern physical space. But, I found that in a lot of the game environments that I've worked in or played in, that, in some ways, those restrictions are even more amplified because people want to know who you are behind your avatar. There's even more policing, even more, "Oh you jump too much and use too many smiley faces, you must be a woman," and then you start to get messages like "Will you take your clothes off on Skype? I'll give you a bunch of gold. Are you a real woman? Let's move this to getting you naked and then I'll give you a dragon."

DC: That's kind of disappointing.

AW: Maybe that will change too. I'm hopeful.

AC: I was thinking, at the beginning of COVID, that if there's anything that we could join together [for], and rise above politics and division in the U.S., it would be something that we all have to deal with, and that certainly wasn't the case either.

DC: No, it made it worse because women were the ones either quitting or losing their jobs, because of childcare, en masse. It made it worse. There is now a bigger equality division in the job market. It's like we inch along. That's why I don't want to be overly optimistic. It's still something that has to be constantly addressed and we can never take for granted.

Deborah Czeresko, *Exhaust*, 2021. Blown glass. 40 x 6 x 8 in.

Exhaust, a blown glass sculpture by Deborah Czeresko which resembles a car exhaust pipe and smoke is suspended from the ceiling 11 inches from a grey painted concrete floor of the Project Space gallery. The glass sculpture is translucent white and reflective silver.





Angela Washko, *Red Shirts and Blue Shirts (The Gay Agenda), The Council on Gender Sensitivity and Behavioral Awareness in World of Warcraft*, 2014, text from video.

“For four years, I created performances as “The Council on Gender Sensitivity and Behavioral Awareness in World of Warcraft” inside the most popular online multiplayer role-playing video game of its time. As a long-time community member, I stopped playing the game “normally” and began traveling to major towns to discuss the oppressive ways in which women, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and people of color were treated in the game-space with other players. This led to longer discussions about intersectional feminism with players from geographically varied places meeting together in this virtual public space.” – AW.

[Neuteredbull] The gay agenda is the movement by Gays/Lesbians/Bisexuals to get everyone ok with being gay, being tolerant of it and legalizing it in the U.S. Mainly

[Washclothes] when you say agenda—it sounds like a conspiracy...

[Washclothes] are you a fan of this “agenda”?

[Neuteredbull] No it’s just a movement, there are movement all the time, like protecting the environment, green energy etc

[Washclothes] so you are for the movement?

[Washclothes] if you don’t mind me asking?

[Neuteredbull] I’m not

[Washclothes] why not?

[Washclothes] eeeeeee

[Neuteredbull] Even if I don’t agree with it, it isn’t even being handled the right way anyway. In America, we are a democracy and as such, the majority of citizens should decide if something is allowed or nor. Usually one federal judge makes a decision and that’s the end of it

[Neuteredbull] When it should be popular vote

[Neuteredbull] On a national level, or state level

[Neuteredbull] In california a judge puNo

[Neuteredbull] sorry

[Neuteredbull] No*

[Washclothes] so you think everyone should vote on the issue?

[Neuteredbull] Yes

[Neuteredbull] If everyone couldn't then it wouldn't be a democracy

[Washclothes] why wouldn't we just be ok with everyone marrying anyone they want?

[Washclothes] but there are so many issues to be voted on then no?

[Washclothes] should we vote on everything?

[Neuteredbull] Because in America that's not how things work. In America, if the majority of people like something it gets passed, if they don't it doesn't get passed. A feder judge just legalized gay marriage about 2-3 weeks ago and he alone made the decision.

[Neuteredbull] A federal judge legalized it in PA*

[Washclothes] i will have to look this up, i am not qualified to talk about how the aspect of policy works

[Neuteredbull] So now in PA, it is legal because one guy said it should be? How is that fair?

[Washclothes] but i guess i want to know - why do you think everyone shouldn't be able to marry whomever they want?

[Kanzo] isn't part of the idea behind the constitution to protect the rights of individuals and minorities

[Neuteredbull] Well people can be with whoever they want i'm not questioning that, but the term "marriage" is always between a man and a woman

[Neuteredbull] Gays and lesbians can have equal rights, same treatment

[Washclothes] can you tell me a little bit more about the history of marriage? I don't know very much about it

[Washclothes] aren't there financial benefits to marriage?

[Washclothes] i don't know if I will ever get married myself so--i am a newb in this department

[Kanzo] .. not to jump in on this particular topic, but the role of a judge in this particular case is to make sure that the many don't gang up on the few just because they can.

[Neuteredbull] Yes, and the same benefits can be applied to gay and lesbian couples, but the term marriage is for man and woman.

[Washclothes] where does that term come from? i should just google it

[Washclothes] what does that term mean to you neuteredbull?

[Washclothes] are you married?

[Washclothes] if that's too personal, you don't have to answer

[Neuteredbull] I am not married

[Neuteredbull] im 19

[Washclothes] oh :)

[Washclothes] i'm 27 :)

[Washclothes] are you looking forward to being married?

[Neuteredbull] Yes

[Neuteredbull] so with the term marriage

[Washclothes] do you have a girlfriend?

[Neuteredbull] no

[Washclothes] sorry for prying

[Washclothes] eee

[Neuteredbull] but I hope to impress this girl this saturday at bowling

[Washclothes] haha nice

[Washclothes] are you a good bowler?

[Neuteredbull] better than most

[Washclothes] what's yr average?

[Neuteredbull] 130

[Washclothes] oh not bad

[Washclothes] :)

[Neuteredbull] So back to the marriage term

[Washclothes] anyways sorry - your thoughts on marriage, yes

[Neuteredbull] When you look historically, the origin of marriage always originates with a god creating a man and a woman

[Washclothes] ok so it is also religious for you

[Neuteredbull] whether it be the Bible, or other religious books, or the greek gods

[Neuteredbull] its historical

[Washclothes] so what about the people that get married who don't believe in god?

[Washclothes] are their marriages illegitimate

[Washclothes] ?

[Neuteredbull] No, not if it is between a man and a woman, because that has always been a standard

[Neuteredbull] the standard*

[Washclothes] well aren't standards always shifting with time though?

[Washclothes] why does the standard just say standard...even if maybe it's not working?

[Bmdeathnight] standards should shift with people not society

[Washclothes] well people are changing aren't they?

[Neuteredbull] If people want to change the standard that is fine, but the way it is changing is not in favor of the majority

[Neuteredbull] Because you have a few lawmakers pass that it's legal in a state and that's the end of it

[Neuteredbull] then when the majority disagrees they are "intolerant, bigots, prejudice" etc

[Washclothes] so the majority of the people don't want gay marriage? I thought maybe they did?

[Bmdeathnight] is this about gay marriage?

[Washclothes] oh yeah hi bmdeathnight

[Bmdeathnight] just let them do what they want

[Washclothes] do you have any thoughts?

[Bmdeathnight] who cares if they are gay

[Washclothes] :)

[Neuteredbull] I said they can do whatever they want

[Bmdeathnight] let them get married

[Bmdeathnight] yeah

[Neuteredbull] But the term marriage is between a man and a woman

[Bmdeathnight] but that comes from christianity does it not?

[Neuteredbull] call it a "civil union" between a man and a man, or a woman and a woman, they get the same rights, same benefits, same treatment

[Neuteredbull] it comes from all religions

[Neuteredbull] it starts with christianity though

[Washclothes] but what about when nonreligious people get married and such? that don't care about that stuff

[Bmdeathnight] church and state shouldn't mix my butt

[Washclothes] the term marriage means a lot more culturally

[Neuteredbull] Church and state

[Neuteredbull] do you know what that even means?

[Bmdeathnight] marriage should just be a union of people who love each other

[Washclothes] people want their relationship to have the same weight it does for everyone else

[Kanzo] if you're not religious, are you going to get caught up in the distinction between marriage and civil union?

[Neuteredbull] I will give you an analogy

[Washclothes] ok let's hear it Neuteredbull!

[Washclothes] great name btw

[Bmdeathnight] oh lol yeah I just noticed your name

[Washclothes] oh hi bm

[Bmdeathnight] hang on brb on my other guy

[Washclothes] do you know if there are any lgbt guilds on this server?

[Washclothes] oh ok

[Washclothes] tell me this analogy

[Babymetal] k back

[Washclothes] :)

[Washclothes] hi babymetal

[Washclothes] cute name

[Babymetal] thanks

[Washclothes] are you a woman irl or just play women [avatars]?

[Neuteredbull] Two people want to get into a party. One person has a red shirt, and another has a blue shirt. The person with the red shirt gets in, and the person with the blue shirt also wants to get into the party, have the same experience, same fun all the same....

[Babymetal] I like the female character models more

[Neuteredbull] I gotta type more

[Babymetal] but I am a guy

[Washclothes] why do you like the females better babymetal?

[Washclothes] I am just fascinated by that phenomenon

[Babymetal] cause I am a guy irl

[Babymetal] so why not role play a female

[Washclothes] :)

[Babymetal] I can't do that irl

[Washclothes] cool

[Washclothes] i like that answer

[Washclothes] so for you its like being able to experience sort of being a woman?

[Babymetal] I suppose so

[Babymetal] it's just more aesthetically pleasing to me

[Neuteredbull] The blue shirted person is allowed in but they want to be known as the person with the red shirt. The fact is, the person has a blue shirt on and that's it. The main thing is gays and lesbians want to be in a "marriage" when the term applies to something

[Kanzo] so for you its more of a technical description rather than a historical thing

[Neuteredbull] In a counter argument, why can't men and women keep the term marriage?

[Neuteredbull] what do you mean?

[Washclothes] hey babymetal just so you know this conversation is going to show up in a research project im doing

[Bmdeathnight] no worries

[Washclothes] on gender and sexuality and the internet

[Kanzo] eg. in a man/woman marriage, they refer to each other as husband/wife

[Neuteredbull] well if people who are in a man and woman relationship want to only have the term "marriage" apply to them (which it always has been) why is it we have to give it up?

[Kanzo] whereas in a gay marriage they may use the term partner

[Neuteredbull] that doesn't seem fair

[Washclothes] why does it feel it has to be "given up"

[Neuteredbull] because it wont be special anymore

[Washclothes] why not!?

[Bmdeathnight] because they "claimed" it

[Neuteredbull] yes

[Washclothes] why not share? :)

[Bmdeathnight] because man is selfish by nature

[Washclothes] why can't anyone in a committed relationship they plan to have for their whole lives be that kind of special?

[Neuteredbull] because people don't want to share, and if the majority doesn't want to share the minority should deal with it

[Neuteredbull] I never said I have a problem with gays and lesbians having equal rights

[Washclothes] have you ever been in a situation where you felt like you didn't have power?

ARTISTS IN
CONVERSATION

Karen Yvonne Hall
Christopher Udemezue

Karen Yvonne Hall: Are you originally from New York?

Christopher Udemezue: I was born on Long Island and my parents are from Jamaica. What about you?

KYH: I was born in Manhattan, in midtown, before it was nice, and both of my parents are from the Dominican Republic.

CU: Oh, cool.

KYH: It's interesting because I have my dad who's the more black Dominican, and then my mom who's a white Dominican. Every criticism about Dominicans is true, unfortunately. I'm at the awkward intersection where my dad's family [is] very pro-black, like down to their roots. My mom's side is not so much. I'm not that dark-skinned, but I am to my white Dominican family.

CU: I went to D.R. before, and it's such a beautiful place. You can see the complications. I learned about the history of it and its relation to Haiti. It's complicated. It's such a mix of different people. At least the conversation is happening. Let's acknowledge the thing in the room.

KYH: Yeah, the big elephant.

CU: The elephant in the room is staring right in my face.

KYH: Some younger people, the younger generation, you ask them if they're black and they'll actually say yes.

CU: Yes, it's important. Let's acknowledge that the Spanish Empire was really dark.

KYH: Yeah, so we can finally start addressing the generational trauma that has come from that.

CU: Exactly.

KYH: I could go on about how that really impacts [me].

CU: I do this project called RAGGA NYC where I interview and work with queer Caribbean people. I've learned so much through doing that,

specifically about countries where colorism is high and something that Americans and even first generation people won't really know or talk about, unless they're in households hearing it.

KYH: I'm wondering who specifically—are these New Yorkers that you do this with?

CU: Yeah. I started the project in New York, so a lot of people I've interviewed are DJs or poets or artists living in New York, who are Caribbean and queer or allies who are Caribbean, black, or people of color. And then I extended it to Toronto, but also now I have a whole section of the project that's in Jamaica where I work with a lot of queer people in Kingston.

KYH: That's beautiful. I'm trying to build up connections to people in my country again.

CU: Yeah, it's important, especially as first generation [Americans]. The Caribbean is a geologically very tiny place, but such an important cultural place. So many things come out of this tiny, tiny place in the world, and to not extend that education or legacy or just a conversation to your American-born children is doing yourself a disservice because—I know everyone wants to assimilate and live the American dream, but at the same time, like, that's not what we're eating at Christmas.

KYH: We'll never be accepted as general Americans anyway, so you have to tell your children. Otherwise, they'll experience it from other people.

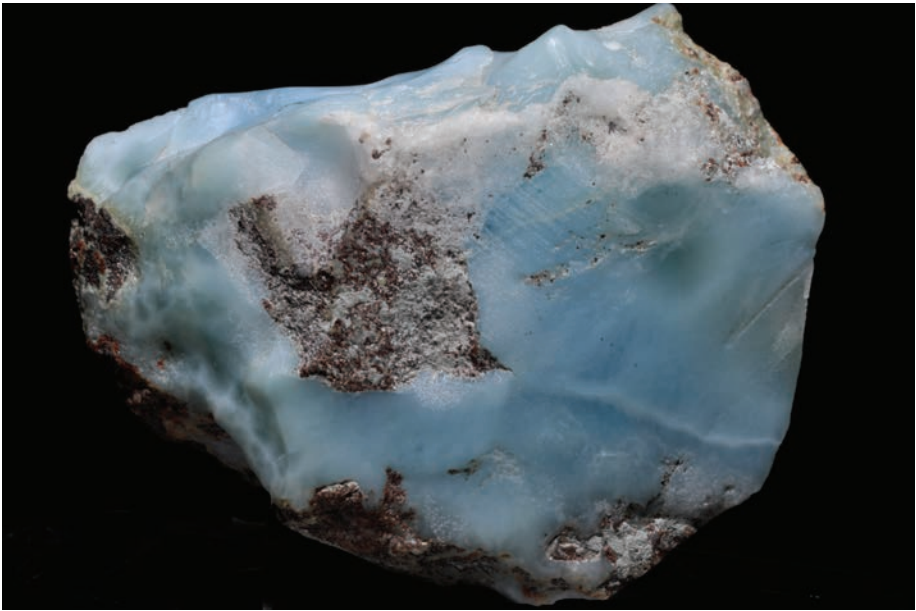
CU: Exactly. They're already going to feel like outsiders, you might as well just tell them where they're from and embrace it.

KYH: About it being small and beautiful—I took these photos of the Caribbean and sometimes I just can't believe it compared to anywhere else. It just blends in with the water. It is magical straight up, just like my favorite stone that means so much to me.

CU: What is that?

KYH: I have a bunch of this. This stone is only [found] in the Dominican Republic.

CU: What is it called?



Larimar: a blueish-whiteish stone with grey and white on a black background. Public domain image.

KYH: It's called *larimar*. It means—some guy's daughter was named Larissa, and *mar* just means ocean.

CU: Beautiful. Have you been back to D.R. in a while?

KYH: I went back like two months ago. I wanted to stay there to live. But by the end of the trip, I was a little bit sad seeing the problems, like you mentioned [about] when you were there.

CU: I understand why my mom left, and I understand all the privileges I have being here in the States, obviously, like a vaccine. You know, like, first world country. But I don't want to divorce my relationship to that place, because that's not right, at least not in my opinion. I think it's important especially, even at bare minimum, for the queer people I've met in Jamaica. They want to know us. They want to be in community with us.

KYH: Oh that's beautiful to hear. I didn't get to connect with any queer community, so I want to go again without my mom and actually visit family.

CU: Is there a lot of PTSD with your mom in terms of being there and experiencing things there?

KYH: Maybe. It was an interesting life for her. I would say more for my

grandma, though, because she was an orphan, so that was a lot of PTSD for her.

CU: The more I talked to more Caribbean people, especially queer, first-generation people, I realized there's such a commonality of our stories. Why are we not talking about this as a group? We're all dealing with the same stuff. Generally speaking, that part of the world is kind of economically oppressed, but that didn't happen on accident, obviously. Colonialism did its thing. Continued colonialism is doing its thing, and economic pressures—how that affects queer people, how that affects people assimilating to first world countries—it's all kind of the same. But, people don't like to talk about it.

KYH: Yeah. We're so affected by colonialism and money and people don't talk about it. The equator, that's where all the resources are, and that's where everyone's sucking from, but not in any way that they deserve. I keep thinking about [how] Haiti deserves so much better.

CU: How is it that this part of the world was a goldmine for Europe for so long, and then all of a sudden it's now poor and they have nothing?

KYH: Yeah. That doesn't make any sense. I'm confused how people in my country go hungry. How is that possible? You [could] just eat off the land, but that's not not the case.

CU: Yes, and then you start to research things like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and how all these countries turned their back on this part of the world, and how those things are still happening. All the stuff that went down with Cuba and the US during World War Two—it's just a continued history of—even if it's not economic [oppression]—the political oppression of this area and no one will trade with these countries or they make weird deals with them, and they don't own their land, and it's just continued chaos. And then, of course, that ripples. No one has jobs, and everyone's poor and stressed, and crime goes up and it's called oppression. Most of my family has a complicated relationship to Jamaica—my family that's here. They're proud to be Jamaican, but don't really go home often. And I'm just like why? Do you all understand that you guys are so heavily Jamaican and I was not raised American at all, even though you tried to make me [into] Obama?

KYH: Same, actually. My mom tried so hard to make sure I assimilated, but there's just no way to completely assimilate. It's just not possible.

CU: Yeah. It's really hard. Especially if you're dark-toned. It's very real.

KYH: Everything you just said was so well explained in terms of how all these banks exist and how nobody wants to trade with our countries. On some level, there is part of me that's very tempted to be a politician. Part of me wants to go back [to the Dominican Republic], like maybe I should be there a year and then come back and be a politician. There are so many things I want to do: artist, politician, dancer, singer, music composer. But hey, my great grandma died at 108, so I have time. I'm counting on it.

So what does masculinity mean to you, or how does it show up in your life?

CU: Well, I myself am queer and I'm first-generation Jamaican-American, so I think that just generally, being a black American, the conversations around masculinity are so complicated and nuanced. And it's even moreso being Jamaican, because Jamaica has such an ethos and reputation that's distorted, being highly homophobic and transphobic. So figuring out who I was and how I fit into the world as a person who is cis and male-identified—I was kind of just like "I don't know what all this means." Everyone in my family who is strong, fixing-the-thing, doing-the-thing, on-top-of-it, and running the family are women. I didn't have a lot of men in my life. All the men in my life were somewhere in the background, and never really there, so I didn't really know what everyone was trying to tell me to do, because I didn't see that in the first person, and I was like "I'm just here, and I like to color. I don't want to play football, leave me alone." So I kind of had to figure it out myself. I'm also the oldest of my generation of all the kids born in America. I was just like "I don't really know what you all want me to do. If this is indeed the American dream, then I'm going to just go be happy, no? Isn't that the idea? Do I have to be a doctor or a football player?"

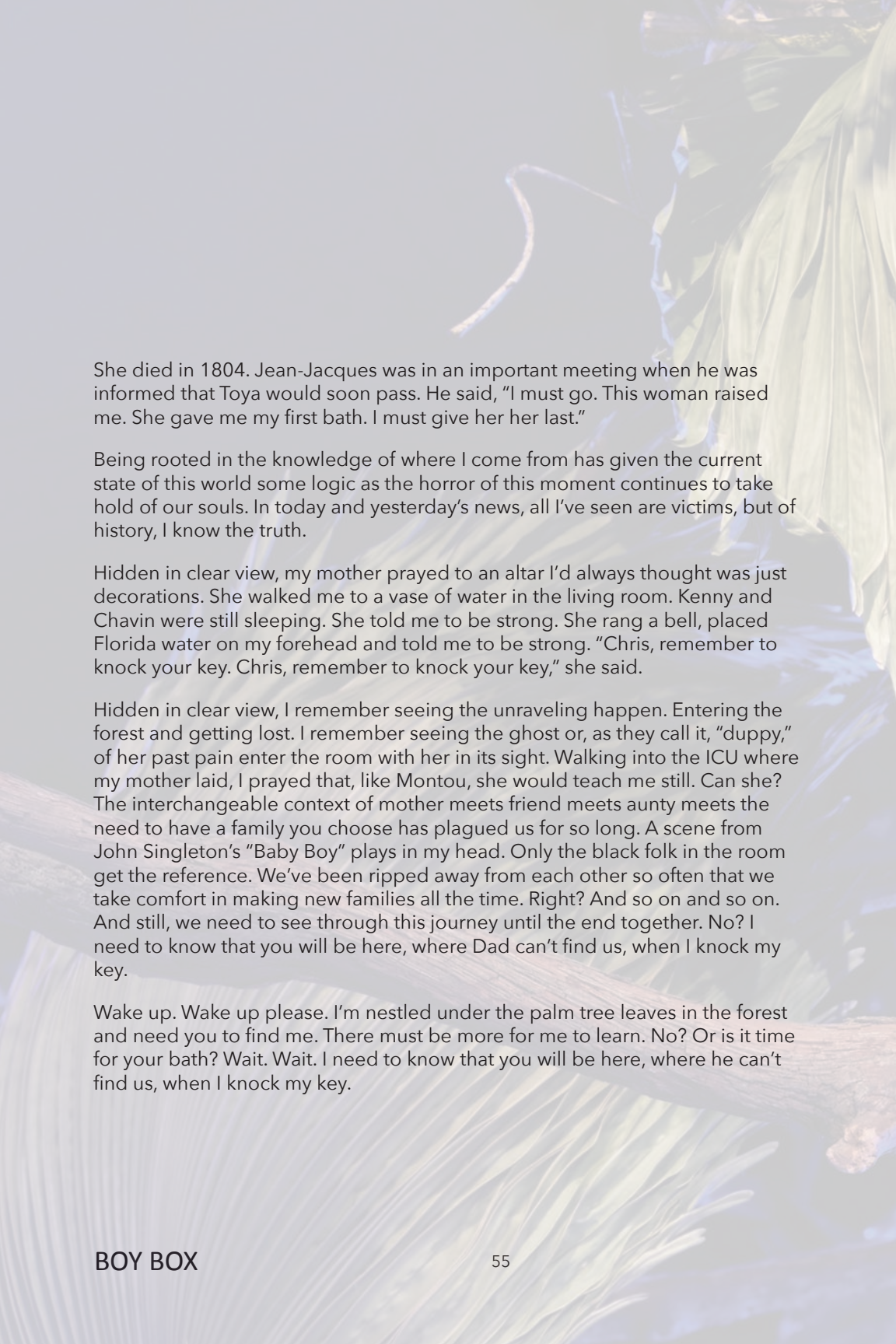
In the Caribbean, you just work to live. But, we're in a country now where I could work to work and also aspire to be happy outside of just working and labor. I'm going to go to this thing called art and everyone's like, "why?" and, well, should I just be a farmer? It wasn't easy, but I made up my mind to go be happy for myself and, indeed, live out the words my family was telling me, to live this American life, find happiness and find space for myself. I realized, I am the oldest, there aren't any precedents, I just need to do it. And that meant coming out, and that meant starting projects like RAGGA NYC. That meant being an artist, even though all my family was just like "An artist? What is that? You need to get a job!"

Christopher Udemezue, *I need to know that you will be here where he can't find us when I knock my key*, 2021, audio transcription.

Victoria "Abdaraya Toya" Montou. A woman from Dahomey. The Kingdom of Dahomey was a West African kingdom located within present-day Benin that existed from approximately 1600 until 1904. She was an Amazon warrior. "Amazon" was a term used by European slave traders to refer to African warriors. She was part of an all-female fighting coalition. These Dahomey warriors were referred to by many names throughout history but, most commonly by the term *Mino* which translates to "our mothers." Our mothers. She was captured by a rivaling ethnic group in Africa, sold into French slavery, and brought to the colony of Haiti. It is said that *Mino* were known for never submitting to slavery. It was a headstrong, suicide or Kill Everything Before You mindset that *Mino* warriors had. As the story goes, after a few days on the plantation in Haiti, without anyone who spoke her language on the plantation, and no one to organize with, she decided death was the only way out. She escaped into a forest and made up her mind for suicide. In preparation for taking her own life, she collected herbs and the things she needed to perform a few ceremonies. As she was preparing, she heard a woman cry out in the bushes. What Toya found was a woman giving birth to a child who later would be known as Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Before the woman died, she begged Toya to please take care of her baby. How does someone take care of a child in this situation, let alone a baby? Toya made the sacrifice. She decided to return to the plantation with the baby. Before she left the forest that night, she raised the baby up to the night sky and made a pledge to the child: "I remain alive to help you grow up strong, but you must do for this land what I could not do for Dahomey. I could not keep Dahomey free, so you must keep this land free."

She taught Jean-Jacques how to lead, how to fight, and to become the leader of the Haitian Revolution; the first ruler of an independent Haiti under the 1805 constitution. Under Jean-Jacques, Haiti became the first country in history to permanently abolish slavery. The Haitian revolution was the only revolution to abolish slavery that went on to form a state.

Even when Toya and Jean-Jacques were separated by slavery and sold into different plantations, they always found their way back to each other. Later in life, she created her own military unit against the French and fought alongside Jean-Jacques until she was indeed able to see the makings of independence in Haiti.



She died in 1804. Jean-Jacques was in an important meeting when he was informed that Toya would soon pass. He said, "I must go. This woman raised me. She gave me my first bath. I must give her her last."

Being rooted in the knowledge of where I come from has given the current state of this world some logic as the horror of this moment continues to take hold of our souls. In today and yesterday's news, all I've seen are victims, but of history, I know the truth.

Hidden in clear view, my mother prayed to an altar I'd always thought was just decorations. She walked me to a vase of water in the living room. Kenny and Chavin were still sleeping. She told me to be strong. She rang a bell, placed Florida water on my forehead and told me to be strong. "Chris, remember to knock your key. Chris, remember to knock your key," she said.

Hidden in clear view, I remember seeing the unraveling happen. Entering the forest and getting lost. I remember seeing the ghost or, as they call it, "duppy," of her past pain enter the room with her in its sight. Walking into the ICU where my mother laid, I prayed that, like Montou, she would teach me still. Can she? The interchangeable context of mother meets friend meets aunty meets the need to have a family you choose has plagued us for so long. A scene from John Singleton's "Baby Boy" plays in my head. Only the black folk in the room get the reference. We've been ripped away from each other so often that we take comfort in making new families all the time. Right? And so on and so on. And still, we need to see through this journey until the end together. No? I need to know that you will be here, where Dad can't find us, when I knock my key.

Wake up. Wake up please. I'm nestled under the palm tree leaves in the forest and need you to find me. There must be more for me to learn. No? Or is it time for your bath? Wait. Wait. I need to know that you will be here, where he can't find us, when I knock my key.

Karen Yvonne Hall, *Soy Carlos*, 2020, text excerpt.

Hall heard this musical piece coming out of the drain while washing dishes. Due to their auditory processing disorder, in combination with their early childhood musical upbringing, they sometimes hear everyday sounds distorted as music. For example, they could interpret the sound of a passing garbage truck as a marching band. This phenomenon happens often for Hall, especially when they hear the sound of running water.

Me dicen que soy irrational
Que no debo a guitar
A mi me duele
Me duele el alma
Me dicen que soy demasiado emocional
que así son los maricons
A mi me duele
Me duele el alma

Soy Carlos
Y yo soy un hombre
Y soy fuerte!
Soy Carlos
A mi me van a respetar
Oh te voy a dar

Soy Carlos
A mi me dicen
Que no llora
Y se un hombre
Soy Carlos
A mi me van a respetar
Oh te voy a dar!!

La gente no me escuchan
(Louder) La gente no me escuchan

Yo tienes 10
No sabia que hacer
Mi familia
Me forzaron con una mulher

Soy oy oy oy oy oy oy
Carlo o o o o los
A mi me dulle e corazon

Soy oy oy oy oy oy oy
Carlo o o o o los
A mi me dulle e corazon

Soy Carlos
Y yo soy un hombre
Y soy fuerte!
Soy Carlos
A mi me van a respetar
Oh te voy a dar



Above, Detail: Karen Yvonne Hall, *Scene in Dominican Republic* from 'My dad has started his journey in healing his inner wounds,' 2021, painting on shaped canvas.

CU: I grew up in a black, suburban town called Uniondale. In the 90s, black masculinity meant DMX and Jay Z and “big pimpin’, spendin’ G’s,” and that is not me. I am listening to a different type of music. I love that song, [but] I don’t want to dress like [that] and I don’t want to do those things. So, my entire life has been trying to figure out how I fit into any of this, and defining it for myself and that’s come out in my work and research. I don’t know how it happened, because I didn’t really love reading when I was growing up, but now I’m a complete nerd and love history books. When you know where you’ve been, you can know where you’re going.

It all started to pull together when I started to do interviews of people for RAGGA, and they would give me little notes like “Did you know the Haitian revolution had involvement in vodou?” I’d thought vodou was just scary things and cutting off chicken heads, and it actually was an African-based spirituality that inspired people to have the biggest rebellion in history. There’s so much information out there that I don’t know that relates to history, and identity, and sexuality, and blackness. People have conquered us or tried to separate us and confuse us. Bills in the United States like the one they’re trying to pass now to hide history from kids in school—this is an intentional act to keep people ignorant.

KYH: In the D.R., they actually have a completely different perspective of history, in terms of Haiti, and they actually teach that Haitians are bad. They don’t teach them that Haitians liberated the D.R.

CU: How could you not tell people that? It’s the same piece of land! That’s really, really bleak.

KYH: It’s to make Dominicans hate Haitians, honestly. And hearing you say that about the ancestors—I met this Haitian tour guide. We spoke for hours, this wasn’t a part of his job, but he told me that the Haitians called upon their ancestors and used vodou to help different Caribbean countries and different countries liberate themselves. So it wasn’t just them, it was the people spiritually fighting that battle with them.

CU: And if you don’t know that, then you’ll see movies, where they have white powder on their faces and they’re scary, but [when] you do like the tiniest bit of research you’re like, “Oh wait, I’ve been lied to.” Something I keep realizing [is that] people are aggressively, actively, to this day, in 2021 trying to keep me as ignorant as possible so that I don’t even know what masculinity is supposed to mean, especially in relation to blackness.

CU: What about you, what has masculinity meant to you? How has it shown up in your life?

KYH: You mentioned transphobia and homophobia in Jamaica—when I went to the Dominican Republic, I completely forgot that that was the thing, and I had a moment where I forgot myself and I went to the beach with this man at night—horrible idea. I thought he wanted to dance with me. He asked me if I would have sex with him and I said “hmm, maybe if you were a woman” and then he was like “are you gay?” and I was like “oh I’m bisexual and a lot of women in my country are bisexual, leave me alone.” He was like, “Okay, American.”

CU: My gosh that’s intense.

KYH: I tried to play it that way, because in that moment, I was like oh wait you may actually hurt me.

CU: Yeah that’s intense. I’m sorry.

KYH: Oh, it’s okay. I was completely fine. My friend says that when we are too stupid to protect ourselves, our ancestors come and protect us.

CU: That’s very true.

KYH: So, when I was a kid, I really did not like the whole girl thing that was assigned to me. I did not identify with that. I identified with Buttercup [the Powerpuff Girl] who’s kind of like a roughy tomboy, and I just wanted to play all the time and to play with boys. I wanted to play in dirt. I mean I liked to play with girls, too. I wasn’t one or the other thing, and I’m still like that. When I was 15, I went to the LGBT Center on 13th street, and that was my hangout spot. And I went to gay camp.

CU: I love that.

KYH: That place changes lives. Most of the demographics there were poor, queer youth, and most of them in foster care. Honestly, we needed a place to run to. We had problems at home. We could do our homework there. So, I went to a camp and every single day there was a theme. One day, there was a drag night, and that was my first time doing drag ever. My mentor, who is a poly-trans-masc person, taught me their strategy. I looked at myself in the mirror and I was like “Oh my God, I look like my dad!”

That's actually what inspired me to be my dad this time around, because I look like him. And I was challenged by it. I was like "Does this mean I look like a man?" That was my first time starting to accept myself.

I grew up in flushing Queens for a very big part of my life. People there are very racist and anti-black and would take away my womanhood based on me being black. So, just learning to accept my masculine traits or [the] masculinity within me and just not care—even if I am female—I'm actually unsure right now—but even if I am a woman, just to be okay with those masculine traits has made such a big difference in my life. I can feel sexy and beautiful. I do think of myself as an attractive person, and accepting masculinity was a part of that.

So, at 15, after I tried drag, I [didn't] particularly feel like a woman or man, and on some level, maybe I just felt like a kid, because I was one. So I started to go by they/them so I could be whoever I needed to become. Since going to college I've been gender-confused again. I have a very deep spiritual connection—it's not any religion, in particular, but I had a near death experience, two of them. When going through something like that you just feel like a person, and so removed from gender that it becomes very confusing.

CU: How do you identify now? What's your pronoun?

KYH: I go by they and she/her. I let people label whatever they want onto me because I feel so indifferent.

CU: It's okay to take your time. I got dinner with a friend of mine who is in early transition. She was saying "As I'm starting to take hormones and there are obvious things happening in my body, I find myself being thirteen again emotionally. I just want to find joy. I don't want to have to do all these things I'm supposed to do. It's just bizarre. I'm in my twenties and I have a job, and I have things to do, and I kind of just want to be thirteen and going through puberty technically again." and I was like "Then, do that! Allow the patience with yourself to experience that, to find how you feel comfortable."

My best friend is trans, and I remember when she came out to me, she said "I need space to go through what I'm going through so that I can come out of it and then be in conversation with you as a cis-person. I don't want you to feel like I'm running away. You need to be patient with me, because sometimes I don't want to talk to nobody. I'm going through things

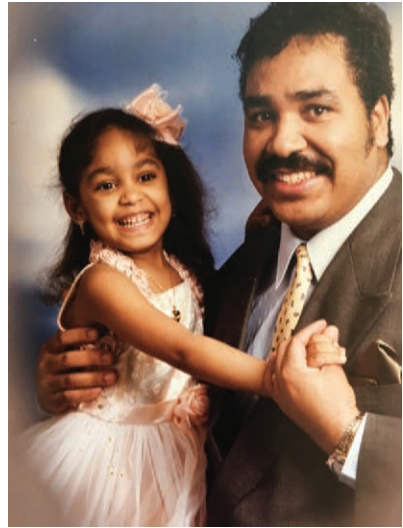
emotionally that are changing my life.” It made me realize that it’s important for us to be patient with ourselves. Identity is not just a one, two, three thing, especially when it comes to gender. Don’t allow anyone to rush you.

KYH: I like what you said to the first friend that you mentioned: just take your time because it is very confusing. I’ve never taken hormones, but I know that hormones give you a second puberty.

CU: It really does. I think it’s okay to take your time. It’s great [that] most of us have a vaccine now, but I know they’re going to cut off unemployment as of September. All these things are going to happen to get back to life and, it’s like we just went through a war, give us five minutes. But, that’s not how capitalism works. They’re just like, we don’t have time for your emotions, and it’s kind of the same way we treat gender. Have a little empathy and give people time.

KYH: You’re right, and that’s such a great way to relate it. What you’re saying that frightens me is that we’re going to go way too quickly back into normal life. [As] part of my video project for [BOY BOX] is that I’m trying to add some quarantine things. Just casually, to signify that this video was being made at this moment.

To accept your transness means to accept your own differences outside the box. I feel like everyone should accept [gender-non-conforming] traits, even if you’re not trans, and then women wouldn’t feel so self-conscious about not being womanly enough. Relationships, romantic ones, are where it confuses me the most about my gender because I’m pansexual, so I date boys, girls [and] trans people. That’s a big part of me being pan. I go to Callen-Lorde a lot, which is an LGBT clinic, and trans women there have asked me how many months I’ve been on estrogen. I feel like



The artist as a young child, dressed in a fancy pink dress with a pink bow in their hair, holding hands with their father who is wearing a brown suit, white button up shirt, spotted tie, gold watch, and a mustache. Both are smiling broadly. Courtesy of Karen Yvonne Hall.

sometimes I'm masculine but then my feminine is completely performative. I have a kind of angular, masculine body, [and] I realized that's what men like! So it's kind of confusing. Being with straight men is confusing, because they will put me into a box. They're like, "Be a woman!" and I'm like, "Oh, I thought I was."

CU: I have empathy for all my sisters who are cis and trans who date cis-straight men, or men who maybe have had queer experiences, but, generally date women. They don't have the language, they don't have the experience. A lot of cis gay men are really bad at knowing how to respect and stand up for other queer people. But as a queer family, at least we're in this family together. Straight men who date within our community may be allies, but allyship can be very gray when it comes to romantic spaces. [It's] one thing to be an ally to me specifically but to be an ally to the community is another thing, when dating interracially. I appreciate that you respect me as your black partner, but do you care about black people in general? It's hard to find those people.

KYH: It's hard to find them. They do exist, but they're rare. People just need to be open.

CU: How does [masculinity] show up in your work, consciously or unconsciously? You're doing a performance?

KYH: Yeah. I wrote a song, and I'm going to sing that song and perform it in an operatic way. I've painted about my dad in the past, so [masculinity] does come up that way, and the way that I paint him is kind of funny, as in, making fun of machismo and it's ridiculousness. But aside from that, my work is mostly about creating futuristic scenarios, specifically in the year 2090, and creating this queer utopia that in upstate New York doesn't exist anymore. It's supposed to be made by all queer folk, so in that space, masculinity is very fluid. In that world, people are allowed to be anything. It's nice to have the freedom in my art to not be binary in any way.

CU: Why 2090?

KYH: Because I wanted my granddaughter to be like thirty years old at the time that the story starts, so that she can be a therapist. If you can't be something in your lifetime, you can write about it or paint about it.

CU: I love that. Shout out to imagination.

KYH: How does masculinity show up in your work?

CU: Well, what I proposed for the show is really, really, aggressively personal. There has recently been some tragedy in my nuclear family, and everyone's fine now, I'm doing okay, but there is a little bit of PTSD that's rippling through my family. I talked to a curator about it a couple weeks ago, and they encouraged me to find inspiration in my work. I often use my work as therapeutic and find ways to say what I'm going to say figuratively and visually. But, I was so down.

KYH: Yeah, that's fair when a tragedy happens, you know.

CU: I talked to the curator and they were like "find things in your work or the works you've done in the past that inspire you and make you happy or give you some hope." I can do that, I've done that before. So, I'm still doing an installation in this space. The work was going to be about specifically my family, it is [now] going to be about the story of a family from the Caribbean, kind of like a folklore. There was a Haitian warrior who led the Haitian revolution. The story of his upbringing is that there was a woman who ran away [from slavery] into the woods and was going to take her life because she felt desperation, and then she heard a cry out in the woods. She followed the cry, and it was a woman giving birth. The woman, before she passed, was like "Take care of my child, please, do something great," and then she passed. The child ended up being a warrior who led the Haitian revolution. As the story goes, that woman was like "When I was about to end everything, this thing happened, and now I feel a purpose to raise this young boy to do great things." I was so struck by that story, because look at this beautiful relationship [between] this mother and child. Also the idea, especially as a queer person, [of] blood family and chosen family. The idea of family is a little more fluid. Often, in black communities, people are like "that's my cousin," but that's not actually your cousin, that's your *cousin*. I didn't realize that's very specific to black people. And how beautiful is it that I can point to the idea of families [being] more fluid in black communities, especially also considering the ravages of slavery, and the continent's violence we are up against.

People can trace their lineage, but maybe there was an uncle we don't know, and so you were raised by this person, and now you call them grandma, but you don't know who your actual great great grandfather is, or whatever the case may be. Families are more mashed and more blended. That's obvious with the queer community, you make your queer families [with] those who get you through in life, and you choose those people. So, the installation I'm doing is to be a reflection of the events of the story as much as possible. And then I've been writing a kind of long poem that I'm going to read in the space. [The installation is] going

to have audio playing. I thought it was a really beautiful blending of a moment of desperation [with] a spark of hope to be like, "I want to make a new family with this kid I just saved and teach him to go save the world so we're not trapped in slavery forever." I love this mother and child. It's not really his mother, but his mother through this moment.

KYH: It's beautiful that when she wanted to give her life away, she was presented with the gift of new life.

CU: Exactly. Her name was Victoria Montou. She's known as the aunt of Haiti's first empire, and his name was Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Americans don't know about this. As a first generation kid I was like, this is so beautiful.

KYH: There's something that sounds so spiritual about it to me. I really do think the ancestors are watching out for certain people.

CU: It's true. It's very real. Lord knows, how we got through is not by luck.

KYH: Yes, that's me on a constant basis.

CU: There must be something else in this room, because I don't know how.

Detail: Christopher Udemezue, *I need to know that you will be here where he can't find us when I knock my key*, 2021. Mixed Media Installation with Sound. Dimensions Variable.

A detail shot of an installation by Christopher Udemezue, featuring family photos printed and pasted on paper. The installation is set in a dark room, lit by blue lights. The photos are positioned at the center of the installation, surrounded by wood branches, soil, flowers, leaves, and rope.



ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION

Jared Buckhiester
CAConrad

Jared Buckhiester: I was reading your work and thinking about the similarities [between your work and mine]. And they didn't have as much to do with masculinity as with emotional accessibility. Maybe a through line with being a poet is [that] emotion can be forefront, but it's not always that throughline as a sculptor or as an artist. There's far more possibility for someone in the [visual] arts to be more academic and objective about the materials they're using. But emotion is at the forefront in a lot of the things I make. I feel like your poetry empowers the reader. There are many entry points that are quite narrative and still whole. It's a whole part, rather than a fractured part. It is fragmented, but not in a way that I can't put things together. And [that's] not a concern of mine when I make my work, but I'm pretty happy whenever there's a rich group of narratives that can be put together in different ways.

CAConrad: So taking from that, when you're working on these wonderful pieces, the urinal pieces, how does that fit into what you're saying?

JB: I mean, it's trouble, right? That's also something that I feel is similar in your poetry, [that] the trouble is the interesting part, where all the meat is. The urinals and the truck driver photographs were works that I made several years ago, but they came about through pure emotion, in a way. The truck driver photographs started [with] riding in the back of my dad's car. He was driving me to the airport [on a] stretch of highway I had been on forever, and I had my camera and I just started. I was like "I'm just going to see if I can get pictures of these guys I'm passing." And so, I climbed in the back seat and rolled down the window, because the window was bigger. And without realizing it, I was recreating this game that I've been playing since as long as I could remember. It just came about.

As I was editing them and [I would] get a frame of [the trucker] making eye contact with my camera and in that moment, in my apartment alone with the photographs, I feel caught, I feel guilty, I feel shame, I feel like I've transgressed someone else's boundaries. All those emotions were really present. And I'm like "Oh, this is a perfect place from which to make work from. Let's do this again." And none of that felt resolved. I thought that's what I should be showing, the unresolved product of this game. The urinals were an apology to the truck drivers for transgressing their space—I pair them with the truck drivers.

In confluence [with] the history of this nation, this earth, I decided to model them after mesoamerican ceramics so I could spread out the history between the photograph and the gift. I'm putting a lot of symbolism and emotion into them as I'm making them, and letting it be there. The urinals

themselves are bodies to be peed in, so that's a deep problem to begin with, right?

CAC: It's amazing, and you know, the fact that you left unresolved, as you said, is the space for the viewer or the reader of your work, if you would say that. I don't know how you feel about that. I think it's good to have it unresolved, in that sense.

JB: Completely, and your poems are similar. They're presenting you with the trouble of things.

CAC: Well, the poem that they're using in the show, "Memories of Why Stopped Being a Man," the space around [that poem] is for the reader. Before I started using these (Soma)tⁱc poetry rituals, my poems were mostly [aligned] on the left margin, but I would literally feel like throwing up if I left them on the left margin. I started moving them around and the more I pushed them into the interior of the page, the better I felt. Then I was like "this is very strange, I don't know what's happening." The next morning after that experience, a voice came to me and said, "We're trying to show you the violence out of the line. The human world has too many straight lines, and they're violent, and we want you to explore beyond this." I started writing in 1975, but in 2005 I started using these rituals, and it was like the spirits who helped me make this work were like "no more of that, you're not allowed to do that anymore," and I just surrendered to it. I don't even know what they're going to look like.

JB: But they do have nice contours, so you're sort of following some contours, but all that's intuitive?

CAC: Intuitive, yeah, that's a good word, or "guided."

JB: It's surprisingly material-based for poetry.

CAC: Well, I love sculpture. So, I was really excited that we were going to be talking because that's what I think of the poems at this point.

JB: Yeah they're really great. I read the one that was going to be in the show a few days ago, but I re-read some of them this morning and that's not one that I re-read. But, maybe you would read it to me?

CAC: The one that's going to be in the show? Yeah, sure. That material is in my book coming out in September, *Amanda Paradise*. My previous book is called *While Standing in Line for Death*, and the opening ritual to that

book is called *Mount Monadnock Transmissions*. I was at the MacDowell artist residency in New Hampshire when I did this.

I had a boyfriend who was raped and murdered back in, well, some years ago. I met him when we were teenagers. He was in Act Up, and he introduced me to it back in the 80s and early 90s, and we survived all those years. We'd had so many friends die of AIDS. It was so brutal. I've been trying to write about something that nobody wants to hear about or talk about, which is the way almost all of heterosexual society just vanished from our lives for a good period of years. It was a form of violence, just like shunning, like when the Amish do that to their gay kids. It was just awful. But anyway, I was doing this ritual to overcome the depression after his rape and murder, and it was successful. It helped me.

He named himself Earth. He changed his name to Earth, at a time when Earth, the planet, was being raped and scorched by fire. I mean, there's smoke in the air, right now, from the Canadian wildfires where I am out here in Seattle. I woke up this morning with my eyes burning. And that's exactly how he died. He died exactly the way we're treating the planet, and it had never occurred to me until I was sitting on the forest floor in New Hampshire. And I just burst into tears. I had to lay down, I was so upset, on the leaves, and then this beautiful peaceful thing just blanketed me. That's when I had [the idea for] this next ritual, which was to flood my body around the United States—I went to all 50 states to do this—with the recordings of extinct animals. And the thing that kept coming up was this idea of how things got to be this way, and that's where this poem [comes from].

JB: So this poem is very much connected to the death of the earth.

CAC: Absolutely.

JB: Let's hear the poem.

[CACConrad reads:]

MEMORIES OF WHY I STOPPED BEING A MAN

by CAConrad

for Jason Dodge

it's normal
if your cock
gets hard while
you are shooting
my uncle told me
on my first deer hunt
Pythagoras knew the music
of Jupiter and Mercury
long before NASA
but to begin again
no hero itching
at the door
that never-ending search for weakness in
neighbors siblings coworkers rival football teams
after seeing the open body of muscle and blood
we had horrible ideas about what to do with our lives
imagine how they gathered around the first
cannon ever fired sweaty excited rock hard
before he died Kalashnikov confessed
to suffering unbearable nightmares
surrender your nouns to my verbs
he said he said he said he said
in a game of Russian Roulette
I won a pair of glasses
that can see the wind
I walk around town each night watching the
slightest breeze approach dry leaves like a premonition
after a million years of dreaming
the solution is still the same
hold me to your bruised song
until it warms me right

JB: It makes me think about the eroticism of things that are horrific. What I think I'm grappling with is like an arousal template, which is a given and not a chosen. It's a result of a family makeup, the world you grew up in, the things you were attracted to, and the first encounters with sexuality. I mean, a canon is erotic and also horrific.

CAC: And there was a first one!

JB: It's sort of like [you give reasons for] "why I stopped being a man," and the descriptions are oppressive and violent descriptions, but also deeply erotic. The heartbreak is like queers being in love with their bullies, or something, in the most reductive terms, but for you, it's planetary. It's all-encompassing.

CAC: You know, we've lost 70% of the wild creatures. I don't know if you know this or not, but last week in British Columbia, just a couple hours north of where I'm at here in Seattle, over a billion creatures died in one day.

JB: No.

CAC: Yeah. It was 125 degrees. It's never been that hot there ever in recorded history. It's [normally] only 75 degrees. It's a rainforest. And there were over a billion muscles and clams on the shoal that cooked to death on the beach. In fact—*The Guardian* of London just published this thing yesterday—you can smell the death for miles because it's an enormous swath of land. Just dead—these dead creatures. It's going to be generations to get them back, if they come back.

Masculinity is the reason for all of this right now. People try to shut me down when I talk about the church sometimes, but I blame the church for all of this right now.

JB: Tell me about that.

CAC: Well, when I was a child, I went to Pentecostal Baptist church with my grandmother... You too?

And this is the 1970s. I'm just a little kid. And there were these concerned environmentalists [who] wanted to have a recycling center in the county. Not mandatory pickup or anything like that, and you would have thought

the Soviet Union was invading. You know, the Cold War was on. The pastor at church that Sunday read from Genesis. He read especially the part—he repeated it over and over again—about how God gave us this planet to do with whatever we want. You know, that’s the problem. The problem is right there. That book has given permission, especially to men, to do whatever they want, and all they need to care about is getting into heaven. It’s a wrong thinking of it. I have Christian friends who think that that’s ridiculous and that we need to be good stewards, but I believe that that wrong translation, that wrong idea, that very wrong, fucked-up idea, is the reason the planet is about to burn up. Because we don’t need to fucking care about it, you only need to care about the next life, and that is the most dangerous trap that the Christians have set for us.

JB: I don’t disagree. I don’t know where to go from there. I mean this transcript could be like a holding space for a lot of sadness. That’s kind of how I feel this morning.

CAC: Well can I just say this about heterosexual violence? I refuse to use the word homophobia. I think it’s a disgusting word. It’s not a phobia, you know, I mean you’re not afraid of a spider. You’re being violent. I call it a heterosexual violence. It comes from the same book.

JB: Oh yeah. Well, I was raised southern Baptist and went to ex-gay counseling. [I’m] definitely a survivor. Most people who go through that don’t survive. A lot of people don’t survive that. My family has changed, of course, like my mother, who took me there, has changed dramatically. We’ve both done hard work to have a relationship that’s bounded and healthy, but she’s also really loving and a different human being today. But to remain in community with people, and to be able to contain the violence that happened, is hard labor. It’s not masculine, but it’s the hardest kind.

CAC: Can you talk a little more about that, when you just said it’s not masculine? It’s brilliant. Yeah, the labor of it.

JB: It’s not masculine labor, it’s emotional. I don’t know how to describe it other than that it’s emotional. It’s like a totally different kind of courage, and a different muscle. It’s like a healing muscle that has nothing to do with power.

I had gone to Syria with a boyfriend who died in the early 2000s and it was the first country I’d been to in the Middle East where there was a war. There have been wars in the Middle East since as long as I can remember,

but the earth was being destroyed and the people were being destroyed and I'd met those people and they'd fixed [our] car that had broken down in the desert—it was the first time I could relate with deep emotion to what was happening there.

Obama had this speech, around 2010, on the cessation of violence—he used the words “cessation of violence.” That is not masculine. It requires just laying down. It requires almost giving up and giving in, and trying to contain the horror of what's happened without retaliating. And then you can stay in community, if you're lucky. That's the thing that can be transformative. Anger is a really safe space to be in before you enter that space.

CAC: That's a beautiful way of putting it. Yeah, the cessation of violence is a nice thing to say, but the actions weren't behind it. Our current president just sent more missiles into Syria to kill more people. We can't seem to stop killing. Do you know that we've had almost 290 mass shootings in the United States since January? One mass shooting equals four or more people being shot by a bullet, so we're going to have had more shootings than there are days in the year very soon. And that, to me, is a war. I'm about to drive across the country, and it worries me a bit.

I have a boyfriend who is a truck driver, so he and I were very interested in the work you're doing. We meet up when we're on the road, mostly. We've been in all the lower forty-eight States together, which is wonderful. And he told me it's not 2019 out there. He said “you're going to need to be very, very careful.” He's tried so hard to get me to not wear fingernail polish on the road, to try to really tame it down. He says he sees violence every day that he's never encountered before. People screaming and people angry, and just keying cars in the parking lot, just stuff that's over the top. I think about that.

Homophobia or, as I like to call it, heterosexual violence, I believe very strongly, was a very calculated tool of control that the church knew very early on. My Irish grandmother, Pearl, showed me some texts from the first missionaries who went into Ireland. These letters back to Rome, or whatever, saying “oh my God, everybody's bisexual, it's hideous! The men are coming on to us, the women are coming on to us, we don't know who the parents are of all these children they're all raising together. Send weapons and money immediately!” The church knew that almost every human being has at least some kind of bisexual or homosexual thoughts or tendencies in their life. So, what a terrific idea to control the world by telling them that it's a mortal sin to have homosexual thoughts. It gets everybody policing themselves and everybody else around them forever,

until you get rid of it. And it's not going away.

In fact, the word faggot comes from the Inquisition. I remember being a kid being like, why am I called a faggot? It means a bundle of sticks. Well, because we were burned alive, and then we became synonymous with those sticks at the feet of the witches. For people who say that's a long time ago, I'm like, well the word "faggot" is present, so I think there's a bridge and the bridge all comes from the same book. It's hard to talk about it because we're living in a culture that is just soaked in the blood of Jesus. When I'm in Europe performing, people are like we don't understand what you're going on about Christianity. That's because I'm dealing with a form of Christianity that [their] country got rid of centuries ago. It's medieval what's going on over here.

It's troubling to see all these new anti-trans, anti-queer laws. I was down in North Carolina fighting the HB2 law and I got so tired. I'm older now. I'm in my late fifties. I get exhausted very quickly from these things now. So I started doing rituals that were kind of confrontational, troubling. I would blow bubbles and the little kids would come around me and their parents would be concerned, and as soon as the parents would come over—I was sitting down low—I would look up, and I would say, "these are queer bubbles and they are going to turn all of your kids queer." I wanted to have a conversation about this law that made queer people literally third class citizens overnight. A lot of the parents freaked out, some of them did. But it's [about] trying to find new ways. bubbles are round and they're beautiful, and who doesn't love a bubble?

JB: That sounds good. That sounds like an excellent protest.

CAC: I like that one. I did one with Paul from the Bible, his letter to the Romans—it's nine pages. I would rip each page out of the Bible, pulverize it with a little bit of water in a blender, put it in a suppository, and then shove it up my ass. And then, I would go into town ringing a bell yelling the names of the dead. This was after the Orlando shooting, so I would say those names, everybody from Matthew Shepard, Marsha P. Johnson, you name it. My boyfriend, my many, many friends who died of AIDS. That was a little different. The bubbles [were] much more fun.

JB: Yeah, it's a lot to contain. It's a lot for a body to contain.

CAC: Putting the Bible up your ass is a big deal.

JB: I mean the life, before even putting the Bible up your ass. The life is a

lot to contain. The sadness is a lot to contain. I am aware, in a personal way, of the violence of the Bible. There's no space for me in that space. Have you ever seen Rodin's watercolor of Lot's wife as a pillar of salt?

CAC: I've never seen any watercolor by Rodin. I have only seen his sculptures.

JB: I have the watercolor here, but I also have a comic book, which is the illustrated Bible, and the last story in the comic book is of Sodom and Gomorrah and the last image is Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt and they look oddly similar, but this is Rodin's watercolor.

CAC: Oh wow, amazing. Oh boy, thank you for sharing that.

JB: Yeah, these watercolors are incredible. Talk about a man obsessed with his cock. But, he made really nice watercolors.

CAC: Oh, and what he did to Camille Claudel...

JB: I don't know about that.

CAC: Oh, he destroyed her. Do you know Camille Claudel the sculptor? It's just another one of these stories of a man who is very powerful and she was a better sculptor than he was and he just destroyed her, with her brother's help. Her brother was a famous poet, Paul Claudel, and they both resented her because they hated women, and they wound up having her committed. For almost all of her life, she was in an insane asylum.

You know all that negative stuff about the Bible and the church? One of the things I really appreciated [about church] was speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues seemed to be the one place where the men in the room could just drop all of their guards.



Auguste Rodin, *Lot's wife changed into a pillar of salt*, c.1900, graphite and watercolor on paper.

JB: Well, yeah, I never thought about that.

CAC: It was very strange. The first time I saw my grandmother do it, I thought she was having a stroke. I was upset. And then everybody came around putting their hands around her to get the energy. And I was like “Oh, this is a thing.” I was just a little kid. For me, it was like improv class. Speaking in tongues is the reason I kept going back to church, because it was one place in my life where everything could just fly apart.

JB: Yeah, there’s no pretense in that moment. I didn’t grow up pentacostal, but my best friend was, so I went to camp with him. Every night there was a service at the camp where people would speak in tongues and I thought there was something wrong with me because I didn’t feel like doing it. It felt performative in this way. That seemed almost outrageously offensive to me. It’s like when my father became a deacon and all the other men washed his feet for him in front of the whole church. He took his shoes off and put [his feet] in a tub of water and the other men came and knelt in front of him and washed his feet. It was disarming, and also I almost couldn’t stand it.

CAC: Yeah.

JB: Yeah. But, I appreciate that. I never thought about speaking in tongues in that way, I always thought of it as performative, or that if men were doing it, it was performative.

CAC: Well, it is performative, but performance can help you. It’s a doorway, and it’s a window you can throw open. When you perform, your whole body’s involved. You can’t help it to not. I think part of the problem, or the trouble, as you would say, with masculinity, is that we’ve wasted so much time in our culture separating the mind from the body. It’s ridiculous. It’s wrong. And we’ve got to stop it. The mind is the body. The brain is a physical thing, and the entire body has memories. The entire body. The body remembers. And that’s a beautiful thing, when we reconnect that, because one of the problems with toxic masculinity is to keep us separated in that way—to keep the mind and the body separated. But as we’re now rejoining, at this desperate late hour on this planet, I think we might have a shot. Regenerating the soil. Stop destroying the microorganisms, stop laying down poison. These are things that can happen, and it’s happening all over the world. People are turning it around. I’m not an optimist at all, but I absolutely believe that we have the ability to change what’s coming. I do, and it’s not going to be too soon for us to get on board with that.

JB: It is necessary if we want to live. Or, if we want children to live. If we want everything to live.

CAC: Yes. I have a friend who just died a couple days ago—i'm still grappling with it—a poet from Scotland named Callie Gardner. And Callie was just an amazing human being and trans poet living in Glasgow. And they're in the new anthology, [*We Want It All: An Anthology of Radical Trans Poetics*], an incredible book, and I just want to read this tiny excerpt for you just so you can see. This is an excerpt from the poem "Love & Rage, & Rage."*

"i need a new location,
acquaintance;
i will no longer be answering emails
at this address, &
i need new words for all my feelings
because they
(i need a new pronoun for this)
were misused;
i need to be able to speak of
your prominence, &
i need, when you are knighted, to be able
to ride off into the forest,
i need nobody & everybody to know
what (who) you really are (like)

2.

my friend says that you
are one of the only people
she would punch in the face.
i don't want to punch you in the face.
i don't want to punch anyone in the face.
i know I should—
fascists & terfs—
that i should find a red gym in my area,
get strong for the bashing back—
but i don't."

* from Callie Gardner's poem "Love & Rage, & Rage," published in *We Want it All, An Anthology of Radical Trans Poetics*, eds. Andrea Abi-Karam & Kay Gabriel. Nightboat Books, October 2020.

I love how that is like “no I’m just not going to fight that.”

JB: I think that’s what I was sort of talking about as far as the cessation of violence; it requires a real cessation of violence. It requires someone to choose not to respond with reactivity. It requires the intense emotional muscles of holding grief, and being like “this is horrible, but it’s not so horrible that I want it to continue.” And I don’t think that that’s a masculine stance in the way that we understand [masculinity].

CAC: No, yeah, definitely not. Well, how do you feel about our conversation?

JB: Good. It’s nice to get to know the specifics about you, CA. I didn’t know some of [our] similarities and it’s also really—I mean, my mind is a little bit blown about the speaking in tongues being a place for men to lose all their sort of drag, their masculine drag.

CAC: I literally mean this: when I would see men—these horrible, horrible, awful men who I didn’t like—speak in tongues in the church, it was a moment where I wasn’t afraid of them for a minute.

JB: That is really surprising. What part of the country was that?

CAC: Pennsylvania. Rural Pennsylvania. I was born in Kansas. I’m not really a Conrad. My biological father is Dennis McNeil but [my mother] married into this Pennsylvania Dutch community. Very violent place.

JB: How do you feel about our talk?

CAC: Wonderful. Thank you. It was great getting to hear your—you know, I love that you explained how you took those photographs and all the feelings you had when looking at them when you were alone.

JB: Yeah it makes for good work, I think. I try to find that kind of emotional space to decide what the object’s going to be.

CAC: And I like that you said that about the form of those sculptures that were like an apology, almost, to the truck drivers, because when I saw them, I was like, these have sort of a hieroglyphic kind of understanding, like they are some kind of magical symbols, each one. You could almost dip them in ink and press them on paper and there’d be a symbol, you know.

JB: yeah.

CAC: Oh, do you see the crows coming over?

JB: They've been fluttering behind you for a little while.

CAC: Yeah, I feed the crows here.

JB: Well, I'm not sure what to say about all the sadness outside.

CAC: Yeah. Take a deep breath. Keep going.



Jared Buckhiester, *Potential Subject at 68MPH 1-85 SC State Line*, 2021, Archival C-Print, 30 x 40 in.

ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION

Rose Nestler
Vincent Tiley

Vincent Tiley: We're in opposite situations. You're in the throes of the most demanding studio moment and I am on the beach.

Rose Nestler: I didn't mention how jealous I was. But, enjoy it.

VT: We just got here today. I'm out on Fire Island Pines, which is perhaps one of the more masculine-coded, queer, gay spaces that exist. I feel like there's a cultural price of entry to a lot of these private, queer spaces and this place has a reputation of being a little bit more friendly and open and accessible to more masculine-presenting people, so it's probably an appropriate place to have this conversation [laughs].

I don't know how illuminating I'm going to be about my experience, or my shifting relationship with masculinity, but I'd like to hear how it intersects in your life and your work.

RN: I am a cis-woman and I identify as a woman, and [use] she/her. However, I've felt, at times, particularly close to masculinity in almost a queer way. I was really into sports—I wasn't initially because I didn't think I was good at sports. But then, I started rowing in high school, and I became kind of obsessed. Like it turns out that I was a really good rower, and I had this super intense crew coach. It ended up shaping a lot of my identity and I realized at that time that it unlocked in things in myself that I hadn't realized I enjoy so much, like squat-pressing and bench-pressing and kind of over-the-top weightlifting. That was the first time that I actually fully saw my masculine side, though I think it was there my entire life, and it was just the first time that I felt comfortable in it and enjoyed it. I became interested in how enamored I was with this masculine power in my own body that I had tapped into. It came up in my work a little bit later, probably after grad school, and in questioning power and gender as a whole. I was enamored with being male or something, at that moment, and it felt really powerful. I think that my work is still questioning a lot of that.

VT: I relate a lot to what you just said. I grew up not particularly very masculine, playing dress up, and things that are very understandable now as things that young gay boys do in their childhoods. I had Barbies, I was not particularly interested in a lot of masculine-coded toys, and I didn't feel like I grew into a kind of masculinity until partly through high school when I started doing weightlifting and felt strong, felt powerful. I was never good at sports, always hated sports, but I was a pretty good weightlifter and pretty good at going to the gym. And that continued into college.

But, my body was always more masculine-presenting. I'm more broad-chested and broad-shouldered. I'm thick in a lot of places, and that always caused a strange dysphoria for me, because I was always so jealous of these thin men or gender non-conforming people who could wear these skinny black dresses and be spooky goth-wizards.

Things got really masculine when I moved to Chicago and started incorporating elements of kink and fetish in my work. I don't necessarily think that those things are inherently masculine, but I think that they get read as masculine, especially when [viewers] realize who I am as the author.

Usually, my performance work is around three hours of intense body restraint, body modification, and being attached to other people. In a way, the time limit is like a ready-made. It's a real time-frame for that kind of kink play. It's a practice that isn't necessarily gendered. I think queer people look at it and understand that it's not necessarily of a particular gender or experience, but for straight society, they understand it as the deviant sex practices of gay men. The work is about anonymity and objecthood, and these moments where identity gets to dissolve, and dissolving into other people. I was really into [Stan] Brakhage's videos about it, like *Cat's Cradle* and his video of him and his wife and child forming this molecule identity, or molecules that they all share. I also became really drawn to Genesis P-Orridge and the "pandrogynne," and her relationship with Lady Jaye, and how they worked hard to share an identity across two bodies. Making the suits that force performers to create a new body together was a practice I was doing for a long time, and now I'm taking that and doing more sculptural work.

RN: Anonymity is a big thing in my work as well. That's something that I appreciate about kink, that it's where the object, or the person or performer has full control over what they're revealing about their body, about their gender, about their power, or about their submissiveness, and they get to show you, but as a viewer or an audience-member, whoever's looking at the work. There's no viewer-power. [The power is] in the object, through what's presented and what's not.

VT: There's a particular piece of yours that I think gets to that point. It's this robe or a jacket that's purple and a hand is pulling back and revealing a cone-breast. I think a lot about what is revealed and what is hidden. And I think in art history and painting, we talk a lot about the voyeur, and the gaze, and the point of view. Like, Manet's *Olympia* is looking directly back at you, and she's not a passive body to just be gazed at, yet she's so available to be looked upon.

I had worked for several months at a performance art gallery where a lot of performances were by young people of all genders, but there were a significant number of young women getting naked and doing something kind of mysterious or, like, making a mess, and I realized that a lot of the audience was at the gallery because this was a little bit like a peep show. There was a sex element to it, and no one was addressing it in their work, and everyone was just kind of showing up to see the naked people.

I was like, I'm going to give you, in these performances, what you really want. I'm going to give you something kinky and raunchy and harder, but I'm going to make it impossible for you to see any of it. I'm going to completely cover [the performers]. They're going to be so passive and unable to move, yet retain all this power because they have this shield against the voyeur. They're going to be active in a completely different way than Manet's *Olympia*. They can't look back at you, but they have this protective skin between you and them. That was a big motivating thing for starting those suit performances. I see that also in your work. There are all these disconnected limbs, or kind of bifurcated bodies. You get the parts of the body that you want. Only the important parts are here, almost like prime cuts of meat.

RN: Actually, a piece that I'm working on is carved alabaster and it's these eight kind of wolf tits, and I knew it was orange alabaster, but I didn't realize how much white stone was in there, so once it was polished it straight-up looks like a slab of raw meat. It's really intense. So that'll be interesting.

There's this great Valie Export video where the character's in a bar and has this bondage outfit on and she'll unzip a little piece, and there's so much expectation, and it's not even her breast, it's just like a patch of arm or something,



Valie Export, *Aktionshose - Genitalpanik, Motiv* 1969/2001, © 2021 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / Bildrecht, Vienna

and then she would zip it back up. And people were paying hundreds of dollars just to come to see her unzip—I really I love that.

VT: Gypsy Rose Lee, the famous burlesque performer from old New York vaudeville, had a similar appeal. She had this huge following, and she was super famous, and sometimes she would just take off a glove. That was the only article of clothing that she would take off.



Nancy Grossman, *Black Landscape*, 1964, leather, fabric, metal, wood, fur, bristle, paper, nylon and paint assemblage mounted to plywood, 49.88 x 38 x 31.5 in. Courtesy of the artist and Michael Rosenfeld Gallery.

One of my big influences is Nancy Grossman. I love everything about her work. I know that everyone knows the heads, but those crazy leather sculpture paintings are also really incredible.

RN: Yeah, I am also really a big fan of Lee Bontecou. Again, going to really intense relief work and material tension, and orifices, and the anonymity and the body, but it's not giving it to you.

VT: There's something about the video artist and the burlesquer—even though it's a stage full of people, it feels like you're the only one that sees [the thing they reveal]. It feels like a secret to you. That's a big mood I'm trying to recreate all the time. With those suits, sometimes there's just toes peeking out, and I want people to think

that they're the only ones that can see them. And again with that conical breast piece of yours, that feels like a similar move, where [you feel] alone with this thing, even though everyone can see it.

RN: Yeah, totally. In sculpture in general, I'm a fan of the details that you see, like when you squat down on the floor and there's a little shim. It's part of the work, but you have this moment where you feel like you're the only

one who saw it, and that's almost more sexy than seeing the thing.

VT: I have these two leather jacket pieces that are in the show. One of which is called *Hunger*. It's a leather jacket that has a grommet in the center of the top of the back, and it's hanging on a bullhorn, but the whole inside of the jacket is lined with resin-cast teeth. So it looks like this big worm-mouth, *vagina dentata*, horn thing. It almost looks like something from that Brad Pitt movie *Seven*. It looks like this giant torture device. It's a biker jacket, and the leather was once part of an animal, and you've got the skin on top of your skin, and it's almost like you're being eaten by the original animal. I covered it in teeth to try and make people feel that feeling, like if they were to put it on, that they'd be getting chewed by the jacket. The other jacket has 12-inch long steel nails sticking out of it everywhere I could put a nail.

RN: And then it can be like a porcupine?

VT: Yeah, or it's actually titled *Urchin*, so it's like a sea urchin and it kind of stands up on the nails like stilts. So, it is a little bit Christian. There's kind of this floating, open-flayed body sticking up on these nails.

RN: I'm showing this toolbag piece that's made out of green snakeskin stamped leather. And it has these Barbie doll legs, or kind of like stocking pantyhose-type silhouette legs. And it's bolstered—it's kind of hooked into this stool that's wood, so it can't move. The stool has two leg holes perfectly made for the legs of the bag. The toes sort of balance on the floor. There's these faux snakeskin white leather tools, like a hammer, a mallet, you know. But the stool legs are like pencil points. And [the top of the stool is] at an angle, so really only this bag can sit on the stool. I'm showing that piece, and then a chastity belt. It's neon orange leather with two stone pieces that are similarly *vagina-dentata*-feeling stone teeth.

You'd mentioned Christianity. Does that come into your work, and how do you do that?

VT: I'm not a particularly religious person, but I grew up going to Catholic school. I've always been a fan of the art, let's put it that way. The art is so, so beautiful—all the old Catholic stuff. I made a whole bunch of stuff as a college student that was my retaliation against organized religion, but [now] I'm more invested in magic or totemic objects, or instilling objects with power or meaning. But, religion doesn't feature highly in my life. How about you?

RN: It's really similar. I'm a spiritual person, but not religious. I did grow up going to church and I was really into church, but for me it was like a materials study. As a kid and a teenager, that's why I went, because I was obsessed with the velvet and the chalice, the pomp and the ceremony, and the singing. Basically, because I'm a theater person, I wanted all that stuff. The music, the materials, and the objects, and the ceremony [were] really exciting to me.

VT: I grew up going to an Episcopalian Church, which doesn't have a whole lot of pomp to it, but I did go to Catholic school, and there's so much sculpture and gold, and then the relics are painted with ground-up lapis lazuli, and Carravagio! Finding out who Carravagio is for your first time is a really special experience. Seeing all those lit up, agonizing dramatic paintings that are so beautiful seems really magical. I guess it's always going to be an influence, but it's not anything particular I'm chasing after or criticizing anymore. The piece that you're putting in [BOY BOX] feels like a giant elaborate pedestal for this bag. Is there an accessories-design masculine-feminine flip—like a purse-tool bag kind of thing going on?

RN: Totally, yeah. I picked the leather because a lot of people read it as a giant Birkin bag. I like that reading because it's actually a pattern for a Carhartt tool bag. I blew up a Carhartt tool bag so it's one and a half or two times the scale. I like playing with that, and that it has these ultra-feminine, impossible legs, but it can't really stand on its own. It has these symbolic and maybe masculine tools. I remember when I first got my own tool bag, I felt pretty badass. But, again, it was connected to that masculine power. But, also the bag is kind of trapped. It has the tools, but it can't really go anywhere.

VT: Speaking of tools, I remember being a kid and being so jealous of all the tools that femininity had. There's so many things to work with when it comes to femininity. There's this pretense of authenticity with masculinity. It's just as much theater as femininity, but you're not supposed to show it. As a kid, I was so jealous of the dresses and the makeup, and the perfume, and all the hair stuff. It seemed like there were so many toys or tools to create a whole feminine identity, and when it comes to masculinity it's kind of like, just throw on a shirt. Just show up, and don't try so hard, so that people can make their own assumptions about you, because maybe the assumptions are going to end up doing you a favor, because we treat masculine people so favorably.

RN: When I was a kid I did play with girly toys, you know, toys marketed for girls, and I loved dress-up and stuff like that. But when I would play

with Barbies I was never like “I’m the mom and I have four kids.” I would be like “I am the businesswoman. I’m the boss bitch, and this is my Ferrari,” and that was my fantasy. It’s interesting because that’s so tied back to that masculine power. It also goes back to this white-supremacist power ideal that connects to this girl-boss-white-feminism that I was probably somehow taking in. I’m obsessed with the tools of femininity and masculinity but I’m just a tool person and for me, the tools of femininity have always been overwhelming on a personal level. Like, a friend held me down and plucked my eyebrows. I didn’t really come into my more feminine appearance until my twenties. So it’s interesting how I found all the tools of femininity. What I find so funny now is, especially with art girls, you’re supposed to not try. You’re not supposed to wear makeup.

VT: I think presentation and courtship in art circles is like this weird mirror realm. It has its own specific rules and it’s strangely about literacy and affluence. It’s kind of like “Oh, you still do this? How provincial. You shave your armpits?” There’s also a million gay-coded things of doing and not doing things. Like these reflections on, perhaps, your education or where you’re from or what your values are, and it’s so silly.

It feels like your experience of Barbies is kind of what Mattel uses to justify Barbies. Mattel is like “We’re teaching women that they can be astronauts because NASA Barbie. This is Barbie’s car. It’s her car.” And that’s funny to me, because it feels like that’s not really the experience of anyone who plays with Barbies, but for you that’s your truth. I think the experience of a lot of my friends who had Barbies was like, “How do we like destroy them or terrorize them or create infinitely intricate love narratives of jealousy and betrayal between all of our other toys?” Whereas for you, it was actually a power fantasy.

RN: It was. I never cut off my Barbies’ hair or put nail polish on their faces. Actually, my friends who did that really stressed me out. I think I was just drinking the Kool Aid of Mattel and [I thought] this is what women need to do to be powerful: just succumb to patriarchal white capitalism. That was my Barbie experience.

ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION

BB Kenda
Sarada Rauch

BBK: What [masculinity] means to me is an aspect of the fluidity that I experience in my identity. Sometimes I feel alienated from masculinity, [whether it is] self-imposed or by society. Where I find masculinity in my work of late, is as a costume, imitation or exaggeration of my day to day gender expression or experience of being a person. I feel my masculinity in much more subtle and internal ways than when I'm making an artwork that is about, or exploring, my masculinity. In those cases, I don't know if I'm doing more hand-holding for the audience or for myself. I feel more embodied in masculine tropes, be that something as simple as wearing basketball shorts or putting on a mustache. In retrospect, those things feel so shallow, but they're kind of an entryway into a character that explores the deeper feelings.

SR: We are a visual culture, so mustaches, basketball shorts, short hair, are such tropes of masculinity. I'm really interested in how it's day to day [for you], but also how you feel masculine. I don't know how you identify. As a non-binary person, I presented masculine for a long time, with great discomfort. I was assigned female at birth and raised female. My own experience with masculinity is weird. I'm interested in the different forms of masculinity that we can explore, that are beyond one set type of masculinity, that may not be for me, and possibly [not for] both of us, [or for] other people beyond us.

BBK: What fits into what category or what does not feels so culturally and personally specific. I feel this tension between wanting to only speak from my own perspective and my own experience of gender, and what the visual signifiers of that would be. This specific piece that I'm working on for this show [is] very self, inner-conflict oriented. It's coming from the visual markers of what I associate with, and it has to do with the experience that you're describing as well. We obviously had different paths. But I was also assigned female at birth, and raised to be female, and then came out as non-binary, and then did different things to affirm that identity. One of the things was taking hormones and becoming closer with other trans-masculine people. A few things happened, one was a lot of validation of that identity. But then, there's an equal and opposite reaction of looking in the mirror and seeing these changes and wanting to counteract them. So, the whole time that I'm coming more into my masculinity, at least in a physical and relational sense, I'm also feeling more feminine. And that was very fulfilling to have both of those things building, [while] creating this inner tension where no matter which way I'm pulled, the other way is also pulling me just as hard.

SR: I really relate to that. The more masculine I became and was treated as, the more claustrophobic I became within that role. In the same way, the more feminine I present, the more claustrophobic I become. I think you're describing a non-binary experience, which is not everyone's experience. I know a lot of people are like "oh, everyone's non-binary," but I think there are a lot of people who are comfortable in the binary. And that is not what you're explaining. And that's not my experience.

BBK: I've identified in a lot of different ways. I've identified as trans, binary, gender-fluid, gender-nonconforming, whatever, and to me, the binary that is the most constricting to me is the trans versus cis binary. I do identify with the gender that I was assigned at birth and I don't identify with it less because I also identify with other genders. Also, some days I'm like, "I don't have a gender."

SR: I think that is something that younger people have given queer people the gift of. When I was younger, there was much less conversation about this. You were gay, straight [or] bisexual. Of course, that is sexual preference identity, and not gender. I mean, it's so, so much more complicated than it was when I was younger. All of the things that you are talking about, the way that you articulate them, is very helpful for people who are much older than you, who have felt it but not had the language. I'm a teacher, and I think that people who are older don't give a lot of credit to generations going after them, so I'm recognizing that as I see it.

BBK: It's interesting any time I get the opportunity to speak to someone who's queer, or outside of the gender binary, who is older than me. I wasn't thinking about that going into this conversation. I'm also, as a rule, so bad at knowing people's ages. In my own experience of growing up being queer, I had so much more access to literature and online stuff, and even some people in my school who were exploring their sexuality. Now I'm able to articulate some things. I like the idea that they could be useful to people older than me, but it's a funny dynamic. I found out about bisexuality in middle school, so my experience of it was, "oh, I'm definitely bisexual," and then somebody told me that bisexuals aren't real and that they're just greedy. So, I thought that I was just flopping from gay to straight. Through part of college I thought this. And the trans thing was "Oh, he was born a boy, but he's a girl." That's not how you would say that now. But that was my understanding of it. So, even though I knew about these things, [my gender] was always something more different than even the more expansive options that I had. I found out about what my gender was from someone who was older than me, the artist [Genesis] Breyer P-Orridge. I went to a show that they had the year before college, and I saw *The Pandrogeny Manifesto*. [Watching] *The Ballad of Genesis and Lady*

Jaye, I was like, "I don't know why this is so resonant, and this is their thing, not my thing, but this is the first thing that's ever made sense to me." So it was actually someone older than me showing me the way, but without knowing it and through an artistic space, not through knowing older queer people, not feeling seen by anybody.

SR: Genesis was revolutionary. Thank God for Genesis. [BOY BOX's] premise about masculinity is interesting to me. I've had such a complicated relationship with masculinity. Feeling very masculine, not liking the one flavor of masculinity presented to me, which has become more expansive. What does masculine mean to you personally?

BBK: I don't know if I know. It makes me think about the things that I love and hate about people, and the way that gender is structured in my family. What it means right now is inner conflict, inner tension. I'm not sure what concretely it means, if anything, but I know that it is an enigmatic, undeniable force that was planted so deep, or is intrinsically part of me, or probably both. I'm constantly trying to tease out the meaning and to find the way to embrace it without embracing the baggage that it comes with. I hesitate to [say] masculinity is negative, femininity is positive, but I feel that is the association that I've internalized. I want to allow myself to experience whatever masculinity does mean to me, without being ever harmful, without being ever dominating or mean or spiteful, or whatever I associate with the masculinity that I've witnessed within myself and others.

SR: The question "what does masculinity mean to you personally?" is more about deconstructing, dismantling what we believe masculinity is, and it has nothing to do with how I present or identify.



Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, *Two Into One We Go*, 2003, Mixed Media. Courtesy Invisible Exports, NY.

If I was a cis-gendered male, I would hope I'd have the same questions. I don't even know how to define masculinity. I know what it's presented to me with movies and film, and imprints and the outside world, but is that masculinity? And if it is, is it exclusive to a male body? I really do feel it's a construct. It is taking something that, let's say, is natural and putting it into this box. It's a construct to fit consumerism, capitalism, [or] whatever power system we are in now, which is working. We've given it the word capitalism. We've given it the word patriarchy. Basically [it's] just non-equity. And non-equity needs things such as masculinity. Does masculinity exist outside of a non-equitable society? I really doubt it.

BBK: This is oversimplifying, but masculinity is a fascinating concept that's just gone too far, and it's been applied too literally. This was supposed to be for fun, but it's become an instrument of evil.

SR: In the same way, I don't think that this conversation is the same as the conversation about race construct, but there are similarities in power systems. The construct of race—the way that you just described, something that's just gone out of control, can also be applied to the construct of gender, including masculinity. Not with the same repercussions and not affecting people in the same way, but there are similarities and constructed social systems and power systems that are in play.

Definition, in general, is such a binary thing. You have to define something by everything it's not. And that's very uncomfortable. It feels untruthful with experiences that we all have. It's gone off the rails, as you say.

BBK: I feel uncomfortable using any word definitively to describe myself, because I feel much more complicated than any single word, or set of words could describe. I think everyone is too complicated to be described by those things. The racial and gender divide overlap feels so important and intertwined. Of course, they are different. And things are always going to be more challenging for people who aren't white. In my life of limited experience, a lot of the anti-blackness that I've witnessed has been in the form of homophobia and transphobia. We have different struggles, but they do overlap. The struggles of who is what gender, who is being read in what way is specific to how that person is perceived racially, as well. It feels necessarily connected.

SR: I do think that some people are very comfortable in binary. A lot of friends of mine are very comfortable in the not-binary, but then I do have friends who are very, very, very comfortable and need the identity of the binary masculine or feminine. And this conversation around "does

[masculinity] even exist," is almost insulting to them because their identity really is dependent on that binary existing. And I have to respect that. Masculinity, for them, is a true thing not to be dismantled. That's very important. But that doesn't mean that you and I have to subscribe to that same notion.

BBK: Yeah, I feel very much in that space of wanting to protect those who may need that. I have used the exploration of different types of markers as a life-affirming practice for sure. I feel a sense of loyalty and protection towards words. Those of us who are trying to play, or trying to affirm through exploring, through change, through that alchemical process of whatever your destination may be, if it's from one side of the bridge to the other, or it's splashing in the water, I feel such a sense of loyalty towards that experience. But I feel an opposite reaction towards the idea of the thing itself, of the word and the things that it comes with: the word being "feminine" the word being "masculine." So I have no answers about how to have those two things coexist.

I really don't share a lot of work that I make. I haven't been in a show in a really long time. When I have presented artwork, it's been me doing drag-adjacent stuff that doesn't even really fit into those spaces whatsoever. I've explored in different ways in different venues and it would take a lot more for me to find a niche, but I don't want to invalidate anyone's experience, I don't want to be like "let's destroy gender" to anybody else specifically, but as far as my own internal world, I have to. I have to destroy it, or else I don't exist to myself.

SR: I relate to that experience and the fact that I have to be one thing. That's not specific to gender. So in general, putting myself into a box makes me very claustrophobic, but I am interested in how people who are non-binary—for lack of a better term, really—are a section in the auditorium on their own. And they get wrapped up into the trans experience or the cis-gendered or binary or there's a lot of experiences that we get wrapped up into. And it's a lack of knowledge of non-binary being beyond gender identity or sexual identity, attraction, preference. People have a lot of different ways of calling that. It's really, at its core, such an identity shift towards not one only and not a polarized conversation that I think is so incredibly hard to talk about. It goes in circles. It's not meant for this world. And so when I come to the conversation, such as we're having, I get wrapped up in these somersaults because it's not a conversation that's easy to articulate. How does one articulate the experience of being "plus"?

BBK: Hearing you say that makes me think about being a child and being so sure that I came from another planet, well before any concept of gender had become an articulable structure to me. I just don't feel I belong here. There's definitely something else out there. And does that feeling ever go away?

SR: No, no. It's interesting. Did you have really intense dreams? I guess I still do, but I used to before I really became an adult. I have just really intense dreams about having to choose, not being able to choose. Really stressful dreams.

BBK: My dreams were mostly and are still about being on missions where I have a task and usually the task is not clear. It's more about the journey. But I can't figure it out in the dream and I'm so stressed out. I mean, it's basically just like being awake.

SR: Honestly I never want to know. I like the exploration. I think the word you used was a journey. Will we ever know? Probably not, but we're exploring it nonetheless.

BBK: I found that my greatest take-away with anything, with trying to understand myself better and give myself the space to exist is I may not feel super, super comfortable and at ease being fluid and feeling in between, but nothing could be any less comfortable, any less livable than trying just to be one thing.

SR: I really, really, really want to swim in that pool of being okay with not being able to define something, and having that be such a strength and a power. What a more powerful situation in that we can't get through the conversations of defining it. That's great. That's a takeaway. I love it.

Detail: BB Kenda, *Me and My Husband*. 2021. Video, r/t: 2'16". Cello performance by Ricki Weidenhof. Original song by Mitski. Courtesy of the Artist.



Sarada Rauch, *Spandex Shield*,
2018. Video, r/t: 2'06". Courtesy
of the artist. Excerpt of an original
song from the music video album
"In the realm of a dying star."

I could build a house with this

Crawl inside and curl up in a ball

A ball like a fist

the size of a heart

punching a beat.

My defense has membraned

like insulating lining.

I push and tug at it

till it fits like a spandex shield.



This is an ancient Greek amphitheater built on top of a Minoan burial ground, in Archanes, Crete. Archanes is next door to Zeus's birthplace. The Minoans were egalitarian and gender expansive. The Greeks colonized them. Zeus was worshipped in Olympia on the mainland of Greece. Mount Olympus is a volcano on Mars. Mars is the god of war in Greek mythology. Humans want to colonize Mars. The ancient Olympic Games were a worship to Zeus, held in Olympia, Greece. The games were for men training for war. Today, the Olympics are divided into female and male. Mr. Olympia is a professional men's bodybuilding contest. The Ancient Olympics were naked because Greeks wanted to show off their masculinity. In the rules for Ms. Olympia bodybuilding competition, female bodies must have a bikini on to compete. Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus. There are six other large planets and many irregularly shaped bodies in our solar system, as well as over 5000 solar systems in our galaxy.

David Wojnarowicz, Video Transcriptions

David Wojnarowicz & Marion Scemama, Collaborative Film Collection, 1989/2014. *What is this Little Guy's Job*, 1989, 8mm video, transferred in Beta and digitalized Color with sound, r/t: 2:05 min Texts and Performance: David Wojnarowicz Camera: Marion Scemama, Courtesy of the Estate and David Wojnarowicz and P-P-O-W, New York.

"I wonder what this little bug does in the world, what his job is. And, if this little bug dies, if the world feels it. [...] if it dies, I mean does Earth feel it? Does something get misplaced? Do people speak language differently, if this bug dies? Does the world get a little lighter in the rotation? ... if the planet gets—goes a little faster if something like this dies, if some little kid somewhere wakes up with a bad dream because this bug dies, or if the air that circled the earth goes a little faster, if this bug disappears."

David Wojnarowicz & Marion Scemama, Collaborative Film Collection, 1989/2014. *Last Night I Took A Man*, 8mm video, transferred in Beta and digitalized. Color with sound, 4:33min. Performance, Text and Images: David Wojnarowicz. Camera: Marion Scemama. Editing: François Pain. Courtesy of the Estate of David Wojnarowicz and PPOW.

"Last night, I took a man home from the subway where he'd been standing against the wall, the graffiti covered car, in black cowboy boots, tight jeans and a shirt open to the third button and sleeves rolled up to reveal a workman's arms and a couple of blue ink tattoos. And when we arrived back at my place, I sat on my bed and loosened his pants with my teeth, while I pulled apart each button on his shirt with my fingers. And I slid my hands beneath the edge of his T-shirt, let my palm slide over his hard and warm belly, and as his T-shirt rolled up my arms with that motion, there were two birds revealed, tattooed in blue ink and flying the distances of his chest. And my tongue moved back and forth, tracing wet lines across his belly. And I slowly stood up and moved my tongue over his pale sides as I lifted his T-shirt above his head. And I could feel and smell his underarm as my face rose up towards it, my tongue taking in the taste. And then he lay me down on the bed to remove my shoes and pants while I played with his hard dick through his pants, and he bent and licked the insides of my legs and thighs and under my balls, and then laid on top of

me, pulling my arms up and around his neck. And he kissed me on my ears and licked across my throat and across my face and down the bridge of my nose to my mouth where he put his warm tongue in. And I got the secondary stages of AIDS. And the man on the TV, who looks like he's got a potato for a head, is telling me and the rest of the country that I must suppress my sexuality. He talks about me in words that make me sound like an insect: "carrier," "infected," and when he shows pictures of me, I'm always alone on the edge of death. He says I must suppress my sexuality, whether a man or woman, whether I'm a homosexual or a heterosexual, whether I got AIDS or not. And he says that since condoms are not 100 percent effective, I must not fuck, and I must not suck, and I cannot caress, and I cannot have desires or fantasies, and each media description from his uninformed lips is that I'm a walking death, a walking receptacle containing skulls and horrible illnesses and disease and cancer and death and he refers to me as nothing more than a disease on two legs and a killer dick with sperm like bullets. And he tells you that I'm on a mission of destruction because I insist on being regarded as a human being that has a need to explore his sexuality. And he tells you that I'm on a secret mission to infect the entire world. The man on the TV is the man in the newspapers. He's got a replaceable head. One day he could be a man and another day he could be a woman, he could have the face of a politician or the face of a doctor, or the face of a research scientist, or the face of a healthcare professional and the face of a priest with a swastika tattooed on his heart. And each and every one of these faces say they are concerned for you because of my existence. And it's fucking ironic, but he takes on the face of a family man who wants to protect his children, because I am his child, and I got AIDS. And don't I think AIDS is something heavy. It's the use of AIDS as a weapon to enforce the conservative agenda, that's what's heavy. Homosexuals or intravenous drug users are expendable in this society, and AIDS is treated the same way that homosexuals and drug users are. And that's why there's been a legal and social murder on a daily basis for eight long years. And in the face of this, in the face of all of this, I'll continue to explore my body and the bodies of other men, and find the possibilities for pleasure and connection. And this will be done with responsibility indeed. And this will be done with a deeper understanding of touch and fantasy in areas of pleasure I've still to reach. And I will not be silent about this. And I'll not crawl into a media grave and die quiet, and I'll not be polite and die like a martyr to make your fucking experience of my social death a quiet and polite thing. I'll celebrate my sexual expression and I'll celebrate the sexual expression of people who've been murdered by this government and the drug companies who care more about profit than life. And I'll resist your corrupt intentions to silence me, or castrate me with your lying media, politics and religion. And if I have to fuck with a gun by my side, I'll do that. And I'll organize and speak loudly and endlessly, and with a smile on my fucking face, and pleasure in my mind and body, and with no guilt, no guilt, no guilt, despite the pressures of the manufactured world."



David Wojnarowicz & Marion Scemama, Collaborative Film Collection, 1989/2014.
Last Night I Took A Man, 8mm video, transferred in Beta and digitalized. Color with
sound, 4:33min.

Performance, Text and Images: David Wojnarowicz.

Camera: Marion Scemama.

Editing: François Pain.

Courtesy of the Estate of David Wojnarowicz and PPOW.

Land Acknowledgement

This is Lenapehoking, the Lenape homeland and gathering place for many Indigenous nations and beings. When the unceded earth breathes again, there will be Indigenous lives here, as there are now and have always been. It will still be Lenapehoking. We learn from the bedrock and commit to uplifting, honoring, and listening to those who are seen and unseen, present and future.

Artist & Curator Acknowledgements

From BB Kenda "Thank you Ricki for your accompaniment, Angela for your guidance, and Mira for your managing."

Angela Conant thanks the participating artists and the EFA Project Space staff, Dylan Gauthier, Judy Giera, Alexander Si, Noa Fenigstein, and Allen Ball, along with Anneliis Beadnell, Guy Ben-Ari, Jenny Jaskey, P.P.O.W Gallery, Mike Ronzitti, Kiki Smith, Max Sherwood and Joan Conant Sherwood.

Deborah Czeresko: This work was made possible thanks to a residency at the Corning Museum of Glass and the help of their amphitheater hot shop team and my many Brooklyn based glass assistants. Thanks to all who worked on it.

Karen Yvonne Hall: "Dad, Thank you for always loving me no matter what! Thank you for being present in my life even when that meant driving 8 hours both ways just to see me. I am proud of you for becoming a better man each and every day! I also admire how you have your own way of doing everything. You set a good example for other men as you have for my brothers. Because of you, there are two wonderful boys out in the world who too will continue to be a living example for the future world we all want to see and be a part of!"

Rose Nestler thanks Charles Benton.

Sarada Rauch thanks Alida Ozolina, Mathew Halpin and Mor Erlich.

Christopher Udemezue: "I'd like to thank my florist collaborator Pamela Koch for their help in building the installation and Karen Yvonne Hall for their help in recording the audio component."

Artist Bios

Jared Buckhiester is a New York-based artist who makes everything but painting. Using figurative representation as a vehicle, he combines autobiographical material with social and political narratives. His practice has been described as “a long-term project of representing beleaguered American masculinity through a gay male lens.” Buckhiester works across media, employing various approaches to rendering. The result is a grouping of discrete works, all of which function as Buckhiester’s cast of characters. A ceramic vessel in the shape of a crouched drill sergeant is like a worried oversized water jug. Base images and materials are shaped like building blocks, forming a crumbling foundation atop of which larger narratives can be made. Buckhiester completed his MFA at the Milton Avery Graduate School of Arts at Bard College, New York, and his BFA at Pratt Institute. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Lighthouse Works*, Fishers Island, NY (2021); Klaus Gallery, New York (2019); *Iceberg Projects*, Chicago (2019); *Agnes, b* Howard Street Gallery, New York (2018); *BGSQD*, New York (2017); *Soloway*, Brooklyn, NY (2016); and *Thomas Rehbein*, Koln (2015), among others.

CAConrad has been working with the ancient technologies of poetry and ritual since 1975. They are the author of *AMANDA PARADISE: Resurrect Extinct Vibration* (Wave Books, 2021). Other titles include *While Standing in Line for Death and Ecodeviance*. *The Book of Frank* is now available in nine different languages. They received a Creative Capital grant, a Pew Fellowship, a Lambda Literary Award, and a Believer Magazine Book Award. They teach at Columbia University in New York City and Sandberg Art Institute in Amsterdam.

Deborah Czeresko is a New York City-based artist and designer, best known for her work with glass. Her work references food, art history, gender, her experiences as a queer artist, and her current practice includes hot glass sculpting, performance, and collaboration. The winner of the first season of Netflix’s *Blown Away*, Czeresko’s skills have been sought after by artists and designers such as Eric Fischl, Robert Gober, Deborah Berke, Anna Seldorf, and FORM Architecture. Her work can also be found at the Corning Museum of Glass in upstate New York and the Toledo Museum in Ohio.

Karen Yvonne Hall is a queer afrodominican New York native painter, opera singer, composer, videographer and scent artist. They focus on world building to envision and manifest a better future. She combines multiple mediums in attempt to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which in German translates to “total artwork.” This genre is most influenced by Richard Wagner which Karen was exposed to in their youth when they received their formal music training. Wagner believed *Gesamtkunstwerk* to be the art of the future where all art forms are unified via the theatre. Karen uses this concept to fully immerse viewers into her world. A world where healing our inner selves and the earth is at the center and the priority.

BB Kenda is an imaginative creator of objects, spaces, videos, and performances. Their aim is to include playfulness, self-exploration, sincerity, humor, and love in all that they do.

Rose Nestler lives and works in Brooklyn. She holds an MFA from Brooklyn College. Nestler has exhibited in the United States and internationally, including exhibitions at König Galerie, Projet Pangeé, Public Gallery, Fisher Parrish, Hesse Flatow, Thierry Goldberg and BRIC. Her work was curated in a two-person show at Spring/Break

in 2019 and she was a Lighthouse Works Fellow in 2018. She will be an artist in residence at the Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans in 2022. Upcoming exhibitions include solo shows at Public Gallery (London, UK) in 2021 and at Mrs. Gallery (NY, USA) in 2022. Her work has been featured and reviewed in *Juxtapoz*, *Vulture*, *Maake*, and *Metal Magazine*.

Sarada Rauch is an artist, poet and musician born in Los Angeles and based in Brooklyn. Their work reenacts popular media and intimate memory, collapsing them into each other to explore the construction of histories and Otherness. Sarada exhibits and performs internationally in spaces such as The Drawing Center, New York; Hessel Museum of Art, Hudson; RH+ Gallery, Istanbul; Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami; Central St. Martins, London; La Conservera Center of Contemporary Art, Cueti; RISD Museum, Providence, among others. Artist residencies they participated in include Open Sessions at the Drawing Center, New York; The LMCC Swing Space, New York; _Hannacc, Barcelona; Greatmore Studios/Triangle Network, Cape Town; and they received the BBK Saxony Fellowship in Leipzig. Sarada was one of the directors of Heliopolis Gallery in Brooklyn. They are an Assistant Professor of New Media and Technology at LaGuardia Community College.

Marion Scemama grew up in Uruguay and Paris where, in the early 1970s, she began working as a photo journalist. In 1981 she travelled as a photographer for a French magazine to New York. Two years later she met David Wojnarowicz and the two embarked on a friendship and collaboration on posters, videos and photography. In 1986, she returned to Paris but then went back to New York in 1988 to help Wojnarowicz with his work after told her he was HIV-positive. In 1991, a year before his death, Wojnarowicz asked her to travel with him through south-western USA, knowing that it would be his final trip. Since 1992, she has lived and worked in Paris.

Born in West Virginia, New York based artist Vincent Tiley received an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art. In 2017 he participated in the Fire Island Artist Residency (FIAR) and was a 2013 participant at Artist Cooperative Residency and Exhibition (ACRE) program. His work has been featured and reviewed in *Art in America*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Performa*, and the *New York Times*. The artist has been widely exhibited internationally including the Museum of Art and Design, the Leslie-Lohman Museum, *AxeNeo7*, *CFHILL*, and the International Museum of Surgical Science. His works have been collected by the Whitney Library, the Leather Archives and Museum, Yale University Library, and the Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Born in Long Island, NY, Christopher Udemezue has shown at a variety of galleries and museums, including the New Museum, Queens Museum of Art, MoMA PS1, Bruce High Quality Foundation, and Envoy Enterprises. Udemezue has utilized his Jamaican heritage and the complexities of desire for connection, tragedy through personal mythology, and public lynching as a primary source. As the founder of the platform *RAGGA NYC & CONNEK JA*, he completed a residency with the New Museum *All The Threatened and Delicious Things Joining One Another*, in June 2017. As lead organizing member of the art collective House of Ladosha, Christopher has shown recently in the New Museum's *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon* 40-year anniversary show and he was a chosen artist for The Shed's Open Call program and exhibition that was on view at The Shed in Hudson Yards, NYC in June 2019. In 2021, Christopher was elected Board Co-Chair at Recess, NYC.

Angela Washko is an artist devoted to creating new forums for discussions about feminism in a variety of forms and contexts. Washko's practice spans interventions in mainstream media, performance art, installation, writing, video art, video games, and documentary film. A recipient of the Creative Capital Award, the National Endowment for the Arts grant, the Indiecade Impact Award and the Franklin Furnace Performance Fund, Washko's practice has been highlighted in *The New Yorker*, *Time Magazine*, *The Guardian*, *ArtForum*, *Art in America* and more. Her projects have been presented internationally at venues including Museum of the Moving Image, Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, the Shenzhen Independent Animation Biennial, and the Milan Design Triennale. Angela Washko is an Associate Professor of Art at Carnegie Mellon University.

David Wojnarowicz (1954-1992) was a multi-disciplinary artist, writer, and AIDS activist. He was a prominent figure in New York's Lower East Side art movement during the 1980s, and his art still proves to be influential. HIV positive, Wojnarowicz often used photography, painting, collage, sculpture, and film to tackle the political issues related to the AIDS epidemic.

About the Curator

Angela Conant is an artist, curator, and educator in Brooklyn, NY. Her work in sculpture, painting, and video abstracts bodily form and addresses the transformative effect that representation (in art, written language and journalism) has on cultural perception. She studies art made as a means of survival. Her practice encompasses curating as well as collaboration on artist-run projects. Conant's work has been exhibited at Electronic Arts Intermix (New York City), EFA Project Space (New York City), Planthouse (New York City), SPRING/BREAK art show (New York City); Glasshouse Projects (Brooklyn, NY), Interstate Projects (Brooklyn, NY); the Delaware Center for Contemporary Art (Wilmington, DE), Neter (Mexico City, MX), The Sunview Luncheonette (Brooklyn, NY), ICA Baltimore (Baltimore, MD), La Mama Gallery (New York City), SARDINE (Brooklyn, NY), Galerie René Blouin (Montreal, QC), Agency (Brooklyn, NY) and Assembly Room (New York City). She has spoken at Boston University's School of Fine Art and at New York Foundation for the Arts, and was awarded a Critical Writing residency at Recess (New York City) in 2013, an Artist Residency at the Millay Colony (Austerlitz, NY) in 2014, and is a 2019 Home School Hudson participant. In 2007, she co-founded The Gowanus Studio Space, an artist-run collaborative in Brooklyn where she served as Artistic Director until 2014. She earned a BFA in Painting from Boston University in 2004 and an MFA in Art Practice from School of Visual Arts in 2013. She was a 2020 Shandaken Paint School Fellow, and is pursuing an Advanced Certificate in Curatorial Studies from Hunter College.

BOY BOX

Jared Buckhiester, CAConrad, Deborah Czeresko,
Karen Yvonne Hall, BB Kenda, Rose Nestler, Sarada Rauch,
Marion Scemama and David Wojnarowicz, Vincent Tiley,
Christopher Udemezue, Angela Washko

Curated by Angela Conant

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

The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA) is a 501 (c) (3) public charity. Through its three core programs, EFA Studios, EFA Project Space, and the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, EFA is dedicated to providing artists across all disciplines with space, tools and a cooperative forum for the development of individual practice.

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BB / E — N#9

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