



Provision  
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## PROVISION

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# DEAR READER,

I'D LIKE to give you some background for the publication that you're holding.

Last year I was invited to propose a project for Converge 45, and this is what I provided:

*Provision is a periodical publication conceived in the spirit of Converge 45, with qualities to match: temporary, nimble, open-ended. Provision is a platform for collaborative expression, and an experiment in building a community by making a forum for discussion, reading, writing, and art-making.*

*Provision is not a catalogue. Though it is a means of publishing and distributing work by artist-participants, it's not designed to be a record of Converge 45. It's the work itself.*

*Provision is not a journal. Though it has critical writing and responses to work, it doesn't pretend to correspond to any standards of academic or journalistic publishing; the only standards it has meet are those decided on by the community of artists and writers who make it.*

*Provision is best thought of as a venue of Converge 45—more mobile and flexible than the museums and galleries where works are seen, longer lasting than the other public sites of performances and readings.*

I chose the name Provision for the associations it suggests: Provision as in “provisional,” a temporary thing that takes shape to serve a specific need; Provision as in “provisions,” the food taken on a journey, a nourishing necessity; the affixing of “pro” to “vision,” which suggests looking toward the future. In Portland, as in many smaller cities around the US, members of the art community often lament the absence of a critical discourse. There are several reasons for this lack. The scene is small and people are reluctant to piss each other

off. Local publications don't support robust criticism. National art magazines—such as *Art in America*, where I work as an editor—only provide erratic coverage, and that's unlikely to change for the better, as these magazines face declining subscriptions and ad sales. Provision came from my interest in creating new platforms for criticism, and the possibility for doing so by partnering with an institution willing to foster a space within itself for dissent.

Converge 45 seemed like the perfect platform for an experiment in building this kind of critical space. From a practical standpoint, Converge 45 is a temporary event, so if we fuck it up we can move on without too much embarrassment. But more importantly, there are contradictions and problems built into the inception of Converge 45 that cry out for critical attention. As a visitor to Portland from New York, I'm not the best person to talk about them. When I came here for the preliminary sessions of Converge 45: YOU IN MIND last summer, I reached out to manuel arturo abreu and Victoria Anne Reis and asked them to help me put together a workshop that would produce the writing for *Provision*, drawing on the audience of home school, the informal pedagogical program that started in fall 2015. At the first session of the workshop, I listened to the participants discuss their skepticism about the way Converge 45 acts as a marketing campaign for Portland and its art institutions. Last summer, the organizers reached out to project spaces around the city to include their programming in its listings, but provided no further support or communication beyond that inclusion in a brochure. It seemed like a bald attempt to instrumentalize the cultural capital of these projects to build up the image of Portland as an “alternative” to other US cities, a

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project space of a city—an image that obscures the history of Oregon as a white supremacist colony. The idea of “regional art” that persists here—and was the focus of the 2016 Portland Biennial—often serves as code for white male painters’ complaints about the lower market value of their work. We are all approaching Provision as a chance to speak to these issues with transparency and honesty.

As I said above, members of art community often say they want more critical discourse. But when a critical voice appears, it often provokes discomfort and protest. Art is personal. Criticism hurts. But criticism—if it’s good criticism—doesn’t come from an aloof and impersonal space of judgment. Criticism is just as personal as art is, and it can come from discomfort with the conditions structuring an art community that others take for granted.

Many members of the workshop—like many others in the Portland art scene and beyond—feel that institutions expect a certain “radicality” from them because of how their identity positions are read. This situation creates a “commodified criticality,” where identity positions are instrumentalized to obtain grant funding and exhibition opportunities, and artists and writers end up helping institutions perpetuate systems of exploitation. At our first meeting, we talked about wanting to reframe critical discourse as something more than the oppositional stance that functions as a circuit in an exploitative feedback loop. We want to think of criticism instead as a form of care—a way to nurture a community, to make it more convivial and conscientious.

How do you, the reader, fit into this? There are artists and curators who tell viewers that the work isn’t complete without their participation, that they are collaborators in the work. I like the idea of an engaged, active audience, too. Yet an insistence that the act of viewing is participatory or collaborative sounds hollow to me. I understand participation as action that affects the final form of a work in a way that’s not predetermined by the person who conceived it. Collaboration means that I learn from you as much as you learn from me. Neither of those words are applicable to your relation to Provision: it’s already printed, and you’re reading it. But you can talk about it and act on it, and maybe make something else from it in the future. Provision is a vessel for discussion, dissonance, and dissent around Converge 45. But it’s not supposed to be a container for those things. They’re supposed to keep flowing.

—Brian Droitcour

# ISSUE 1

Choreography for Looking at an Art

Enter and look around the space  
Decide on a plan for moving around the artwork

When you arrive at the artwork or aspect of the artwork that you like  
the most

Remain for two minutes  
Ask yourself questions about the art

When you arrive at the artwork or aspect of the artwork you like  
the least

remain for four minutes  
Ask yourself questions about the art

When satisfied  
Exit the room

# MINDING MY OWN

I APPROACH Converge 45: YOU IN MIND with myself in mind. The curatorial vision centers subjectivity; I figure I'll do the same in the hope that you, dear reader, might find it interesting or even try it out yourself. What roles/life experiences/frames do you carry around to help you understand what art is and how it operates? My approach to art and art criticism has a few different origin stories: my early-00s candy-raver days, Weird Twitter ca. 2010, and the three-way calls of my preadolescence all feel relevant. But most of all, the work I do and have done as a mother has shaped how I see, feel about, and respond to art, the artists that make it, and the audiences it attracts.

[Some ways that art is like a toddler, from a mom of a 3.5 year old: Demands attention/cannot survive without an audience; sometimes messy/violent; sometimes surprisingly insightful; reflects the nature and intention of its makers and keepers but also does its own thing in the world]

My child demands that I approach her—including but not limited to her attempts to understand and explain the world, her mistakes, and her jokes—with generous tenderness, forgiveness and understanding; but she is risky and dangerous, and therefore also demands suggestions and corrections. I do my best to offer her both, and in doing so I also must acknowledge that my jokes, explanations of the world, and commands also fumble around and fail more often than not.

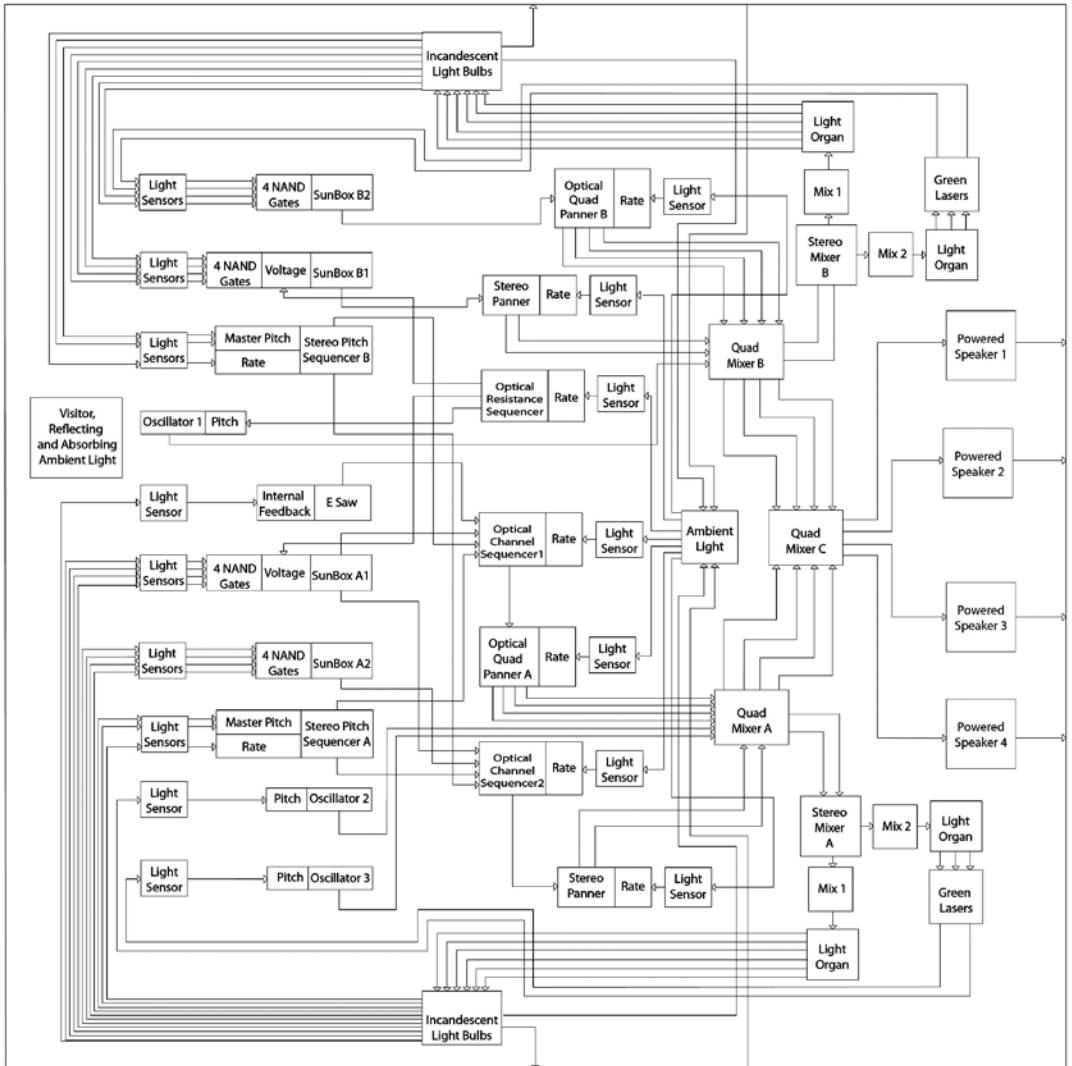
[Things I asked my kid to do/not to do on 08/05/2017: Do eat some tuna fish; snuggle me; be careful; be gentle; drink water; help me.

Don't kick the dog; use the cabinets as a kind of stairs; use too much glue; put the stuffed koala in the pool; put lotion on the stuffed koala] I like art best when it demonstrates its failures and its processes, and makes visible the sometimes ugly or underappreciated work and support structures that surround it. When we visited the section of YOU IN MIND at PNCA on 08/06/2017, one of the galleries was in the process of being installed. The abandoned, gaping toolboxes, sawdust piles, and clear plastic ripped and taped across the floor—the traces of the work of installation that would eventually be erased from the room—were the tenderest things about the whole show to me.

[Other things besides babies that people call “their baby”: Projects; pets; pet projects; boats; sex partners; romantic partners; houseplants?]

Let me say: not all white art moms relate to their motherhood like I do. Some of them/us deploy motherhood on behalf of violence, for example, by flattening the difference between their own experience and others'. For me, I hope and aspire to relate to my motherhood in ways that generate care: about art, people who make art, and people who are affected by art, especially people who are affected differently than I am and can see patterns of violence, harm, and pain that I can't. I hope your life helps you care, too.

—Victoria Anne Reis



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## PORTLAND ARTS SPACES

The past, present and future of Portland's arts ecology,  
as crowdsourced by community members

The map can be viewed and edited at [goo.gl/rsKNjN](https://goo.gl/rsKNjN)





ON  
YOU IN MIND  
AT THE GALLERIES OF  
THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST  
COLLEGE OF ART,

WITH EXTENDED INDIVIDUALLY AUTHORED  
RESPONSES TO WORKS BY JIM HODGES,  
SHARITA TOWNE, & CLARE PENTECOST,

ALONG WITH A COLLAGE OF HANDWRITTEN NOTES ON CATHERINE OPIE'S  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF PROTEST MARCHES CA. 2006-2007, TANNAZ FARSI'S  
NAMES OF IRANIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS (WHICH APPEAR IN  
THESE PAGES AS WELL), & STEPHEN HAYES'S PAINTINGS OF  
SITES OF TRAGEDIES AS SEEN ON GOOGLE STREET VIEW

I can't remember an art show that I thought had an  
air-tight ethical structure, which makes me wonder if  
the idea of art as a potent vessel for political discourse  
is something I could defend. On principle, it's something  
I hold true but in practice I'm currently at a loss for  
examples.  
It really saddens me that so much effort  
and work is put into installing these giant  
works that instead of luring me in to  
further making me question why do I  
hate art right now.

It was chilling to see works from PNCA's  
collection of contemporary craft on display,  
donated by wealthy families for safe keeping,  
in spitting distance of histories that the  
city has deliberately erased.

# ISSUE 1

Other 'people's' Things: some questions & comments for 'Jim Hodges'

*"If there is no ethical ground for art-making then why are you touching other people's things?"*

In the arrangement of everyday vulnerabilities into a language that is legible to power: who gets to render the most vulnerable among us into formal objects for consumption? when eating the other, is that violence best passed by sight or through handmade things? when you lifted the cries for help from the signs of the unhoused were you then possessed of the means to resolve your own vulnerability in the face of making? can knowledge passed directly (hand to hand, or mouth to mouth) in the moment be stolen? if you are given access to mysteries then who guards your body from betraying them into acts?

*(the gallery doesn't need a guard because this building is a weapon. if the bodies crying for help are excluded from the space those cries now occupy, no one in that space is capable of responding to them. safe spaces for maudlin viewings of power-over. this grid of mylar blankets is actually a wall of mirrors that distracts people from themselves so by definition insufficiently reflective)*

necessary accoutrements are:

- never people unless you want to carry worry stones in your pocket for every body you can control or destroy.

- sometimes people if you display their vulnerability before power on the disposable objects they are given to survive in the words by which they plead to be allowed to continue.

*(we are all so vulnerable please and thank you for doing the most that you could to remind us that some are always more vulnerable than others every sandbag counts in the flood you can go back to surfing now btw what did you do with the signs? how do you contextualize your own safety & power? does recontextualizing the vulnerability of others give you a language to speak to your own?)*

—Jamondria Harris

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Futurist visions of Black gathering and provocation situate our labor within a reflection of not only what could be, but what could have been.  
—Ashley Stull Meyer

WHAT DOES lack feel like? Tucked into the back of an exhibition dominated by work that mostly traffics collective trauma through the white gaze, Sharita Towne's *This is a Black Spatial Imaginary* presents the partial results of an ongoing research and social engagement project oriented around the refusal to separate past from present or future. Activating historically Black sites from NW and NE Portland and amassing corpses predicated on anti-Black violence, the work grapples with the ways in which critical inquiry, tools of analytic rigor, and archival practice too easily result in necrophilic autopsy and commodified criticality.

About 40 years ago, in concert with city bureaucracy, Legacy Emanuel Hospital

demolished nearly 300 Black homes for an urban renewal and hospital expansion project. As Portland came into maturity as a settlement, the explicit on-the-books racism of the 19th century gave way to the doublespeak and market subterfuge that has become familiar today: urban renewal plans progressed for 10 years and were approved before residents were ever informed of the city and hospital's intentions to raze the community and "correct" the "blight" largely engendered by banks' refusal to give out loans to prospective homeowners. While relocated residents received some financial help in the process, the loss of their roots, civic pride, and sense of home could never be repaid. Today, the hospital claims to "own up" to its violent mistakes, but no truly reparative measures have been taken, and N/NE Portland continues to experience intense gentrification.

Curator Kristy Edmund states that the goal of Converge 45: YOU IN MIND is to incite and engage critical conversations. But most of the other work at PNCA opts for sublimated visual representations of collective trauma. Towne instead mostly eschews the visual, throwing the

*This is a Black Spatial Imaginary* is, in part, a project based on research and inquiry over the past several years into the history and current status of Black neighborhoods and repeating instances of displacement. The work brings into dialogue several sources— official planning documents and records from the City archives, showing the rationales and actions of Portland policymakers; news accounts that depict the framing of the problems and possibilities for the Black community in Portland at different points in Portland's history; materials from community-based organizations that have participated in political and policy debates; and our own work engaging Black community members, from youth to elders and from "the North to the Numbers," in several artistic and urban planning processes. For the most part, official planning documents represent a white spatial imaginary— a term used by scholar George Lipsitz to describe the application of urban planning and development regulations and public investments to support a landscape of exclusion, segregation, and the accumulation of property value for private interests.

One of our primary findings has been that Black people and Black-led organizations have been contesting the white spatial imaginary as a logic for urban planning and development since the Black community has been here. We need to remember how white supremacist ideologies have repeatedly harmed us; we need to remember our histories of organizing and resistance and draw energy from that past. Dr. DeNorval Unthank's 1942 letter to the Oregonian named hostile policing tactics and real estate steering as the real race problems in Portland. Community members formed the Emanuel Displaced Persons Association to speak to City Council and the Portland Development Commission about the injustices of having their homes condemned in order to be demolished for a hospital expansion. Black-led organizations formed a coalition to fight for resources to stop displacement caused by the real estate market's rising when the Interstate light rail line was established. A decade later, neighbors still fighting for affordable housing resources resisted when it was proposed that Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area funds be diverted to build the Jumptown entertainment district. The Portland African-American Leadership Forum stood up to oppose the PDC's continued subsidization of market rate development that continues to push Black people out of Northeast, and to insist on the inclusion of people who have been displaced in decisions about these neighborhoods.

In the past few years, the City of Portland has adopted a racial justice policy framework and begun to create policies to mitigate displacement. The North/Northeast housing strategy provides a priority for long-time Portland families who have been displaced by past urban renewal actions to get access to affordable housing. The PDC, now rebranded as Prosper Portland, has its own equity plan for African-American businesses. Yet the City is careful not to use the word 'reparations.' There is still an empty city block on North Williams Ave, the former heart of the Black business community and home to many families. Last week, Prosper Portland and Legacy Health (fka Legacy Emanuel) announced a partnership to finally develop the land taken 37 years ago, after the City agency pressed the issue of a reversion clause in the original deed of sale. While a project work team will be formed, it is yet unclear how it will represent the historical and current community, and whose vision will be realized. The logic of whiteness insists on the 'highest and best use' and on capital gains. *This is a Black Spatial Imaginary* asks: what might be done with that land if it were in the hands of Black people; if it were reclaimed by the Black community.

How would it be if we were to not only acknowledge the historical presence of Blackness but to enact living claims?

viewer headfirst into a textual archive of transcripts, articles in the *Oregonian*, municipal indices, and more. While the trauma on display here is no less aestheticized than it is elsewhere in the show, this nonvisual component actually succeeds in communicating the violence of past and present Portland real estate, as well as gesturing to the ongoing and necessary labor of uncovering the anti-Black machinations of urban development. If it feels overwhelming to non-Black folks, that's because it is. The gaze of artist and audience is not supposed to be passive. The depth of research Towne presents here on the Legacy Emanuel expansion's anti-Black impact and intent cajoles the viewer into asking how much time and energy she is willing to put in to combat the pervasive effects of white supremacy if few or no visually titillating elements are presented alongside it.

A plastic table is placed in front of three prints and a video playing on a monitor with headphones. I felt like a researcher as I sat down and perused the set of folders on the table, which contained a plethora of information about the Legacy Emanuel expansion as well as the continuing gentrification of N/NE Portland since. The maps and dry catalogs of names, plots of land, and other data points exemplify the white spatial imaginary, in which market speculation and corporate/municipal collusion matter more than actual living people and neighborhoods. Social death means that Black folks exist outside of time and space, can be shuffled around at the whim of city bureaucracy and/or corporate interests as though the roots we put down don't matter, don't even exist, or are "too real to be real" as theorist Katherine McKittrick says.

Towne states that "the white spatial lens is trained on the data and documentation," using claims of "objectivity" to obscure the violence on which such archives are predicated. In the negative space of capitalist realism and its fantasies, the Black spatial imaginary thrives in opposition, not solely unearthing the traces of Black life that haunt these squeaky-clean spaces of gentrification, but situating the

present moment in continuity with this erased, now-uncovered past. Black humanity leaks from these deracinated "objective" archives, pushing the audience to ask: what do we do with our complicity? As we speculate and attempt to fill in the gaps of bureaucratic memory, how do we center the imperative to repay what is owed and undo whatever damage can be undone? Towne does not guide us explicitly, but provides examples in the folders of examples of community organizing against gentrification then and now, such as the Emmanuel Displaced Persons Association, the Interstate Alliance to End Displacement, and the Portland African American Leadership Forum.

In particular, the PAALF's 2013 demand that "Legacy Emanuel must relinquish the still vacant property on the corner of North Russell and Williams, and bequeath it to the African American community in the form of a community land trust," and their commitment to "remain opposed to any development in N/NE Portland that does not primarily benefit the Black community" stand as beacons for the audience. Instead of creating aesthetic value out of suffering, the critical position must foreground a decolonial praxis of giving away generational wealth, resource access, and real property. Everything else is ally theater. Just as profit is unpaid labor, aesthetics is erased violence, and inverting standard artistic paradigms as Towne's practice does is an immensely valuable and contemporary gesture, a testament to how intermedia forms of public engagement and aesthetic intervention against the social death imposed on Black folks can not only defend the dead, but call on us to protect the living.

—manuel arturo abreu

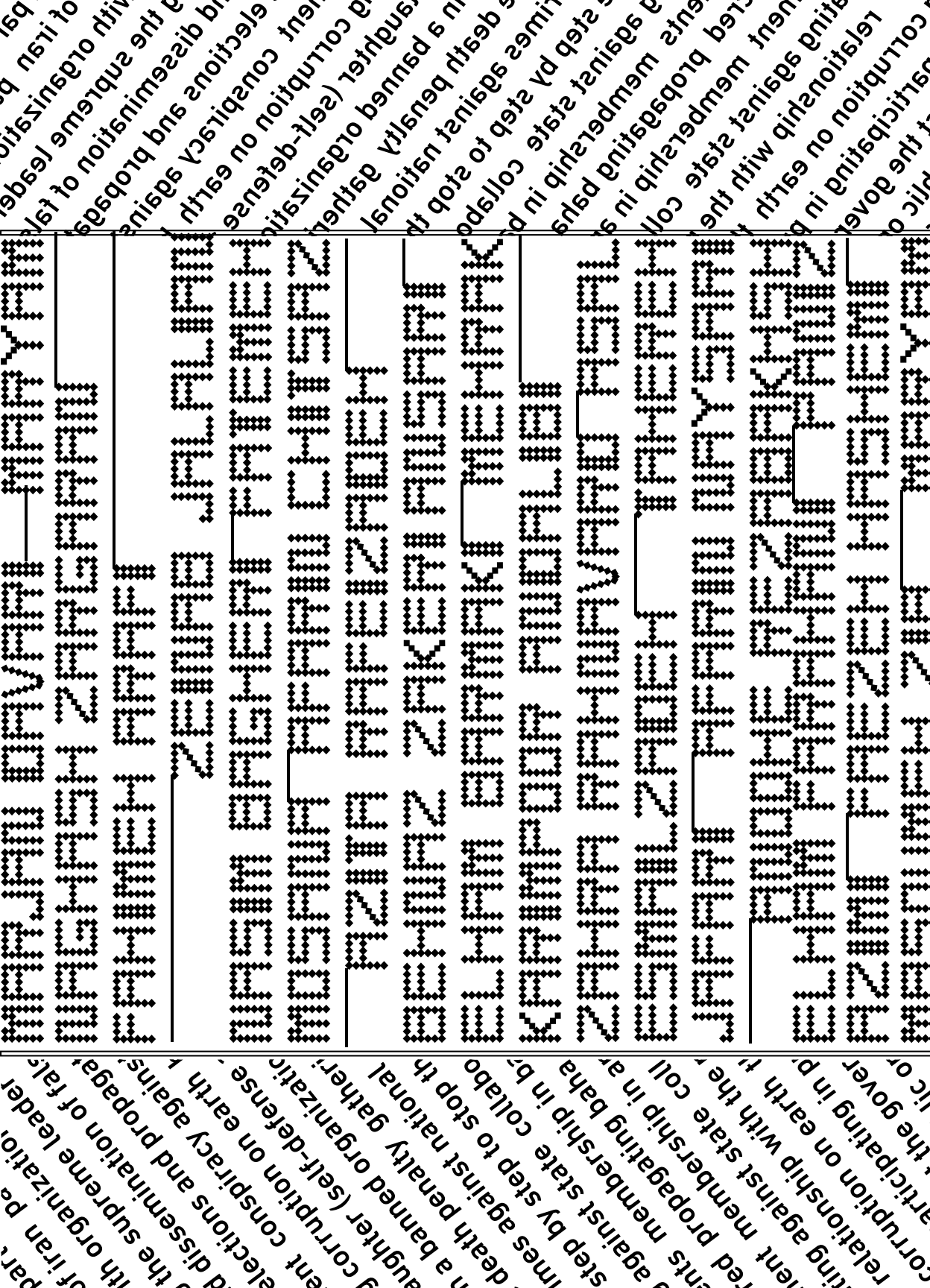
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Opie's work has always been about communities. With her surfers and young football players series she said they were about "temporary communities"- this could be fruitful and troubling ground for the protest images. Migrant workers reside temporarily, families are together temporarily, protests are temporary, decolonial labor is hot, resistance cannot afford to be temporary, marginalized communities have been temporary due to violent obliteration, but does Opie get to equate this gathering of Latinx protesters with surfers and jocks?

Opie's work with surfers, jocks, members of queer subcultures etc. is portraiture. Spending a long time with a subject. Who is pulling the weight of these images? What is the subjectivity of the artist in relation to the work?

"You shot a protest"

Even if she marched it was backward



1. The first step is to identify the problem. This involves understanding the situation, gathering information, and defining the goal.

2. Next, you need to analyze the problem. This involves breaking it down into smaller parts, identifying the causes, and determining the scope.

3. Once you have analyzed the problem, you can develop a plan. This involves deciding on the steps you will take to solve the problem.

4. After you have a plan, you need to implement it. This involves putting your plan into action and making adjustments as needed.

5. Finally, you need to evaluate the results. This involves checking to see if you have achieved your goal and learning from the experience.



Containing Work isn't quite an optar here, as the perforated edges of the space can hardly differentiate between installation, common ground, and the event of a graduation ceremony nearby. Tanaz Farsi's piece splits this divide -

fully understanding the writing plastered on a gallery window almost mocks the viewers' emotional reactions to words like "manslaughter" and "Conviction."

a long list of names in the middle and a stream-of-consciousness / patische flow of newsspeak on either side about foreign policy and conflict.

the positive slant of the newsspeak backlit

The building is inherently implicated - the building used to be an immigrant detention center - the interior walls with scratches & stains were removed before the school opened. Farsi's list of names seems to echo/unearth this; it points to the long history of collusion between contemporary art & state violence.

The vinyl in the window gives a sense of false hope. Feels like you are looking into oblivion through this window, where homeless people are passing by and you are watching them through a chilled air conditioned room.

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WHEN I GOOGLED Claire Pentecost, what immediately struck me was her informality. Her website is an outdated Wordpress, different from typical artist websites that are often pristine, as if artworks in their own right. Her statement is simple, unadorned with artspeak: “The motivation for my work is to learn about the world I live in, the world that hosts and sustains me, a world called earth.” Her work is motivated by earth. Not capitalism, not the Anthropocene, not climate change, just... earth.

It turns out that this doe-eyed earnestness and simplicity is part of Pentecost’s crafted public image. Pentecost has dubbed herself a “public amateur,” a person who dabbles in unfamiliar disciplines, inhabiting the position of a hobbyist or a dilettante. She explains: “[the public amateur] is someone who consents to start with ‘I don’t know’ and proceeds by learning things in public view.”

Amateurism is a sweet position to inhabit, if you can. We love newbies. We call them wunderkinds and savants. When people are new yet adept at their craft, the potential of their trajectory is wide and undefined, as big as our imaginations. They are storehouses of untapped promise. To identify as a beginner is to make a claim of innocence. It’s a way of shielding criticism, and absolving yourself of responsibility.

Pentecost’s *Proposal for a New American Agriculture* is a 5’ by 9’ cotton American flag that has been eaten through by worms. All that’s left of the flag is a skeletal border with limp strands of thread where the middle used to be. The label indicates that the worm feast was a process of vermicompost, a process of composting using certain species of worms that yields a nutrient-rich fertilizer.

A destroyed American flag is a politically charged sight. Artists have repeatedly manipulated the American flag to spotlight the country’s overlooked violent histories of oppression. I think of Faith Ringgold’s *The Flag is Bleeding #2* where she dripped blood-red paint on the stripes, and Demian DinéYazhi’s AIDS Flag in which the stripes read “Our government continues to

ignore the lives, deaths and suffering of people with HIV infection because they are queer, trans, indigenous, Black, Hispanic or poor.” Pentecost is a white artist, and it’s provocative that her American flag, to many a symbol of the negation and destruction of life for Black, brown and indigenous people, is used in this instance to enrich soil and foster life for other species. And yet, Pentecost’s distance from the work through her claim to be a “public amateur” keeps me from fully appreciating the work. Pentecost is not the only artist in *YOU IN MIND* who softly evokes political subject matters without fully committing to a stated politics, and I feel impatient by the entire show’s distant gestures.

In many states it is illegal to desecrate the American flag. I don’t bring up legality to criminalize Pentecost’s project, but rather to note that Black and brown people, even those who are artists, are punished for similar acts on a regular basis. I wish that Pentecost would be more overt about her intentions, and own up to the politically charged art object rather than describe it, as she does in her statement, as an examination of “concepts, institutions, and myths that mediate our relationship to the natural world.” When curators and art critics do the work of imbuing an artwork with political intent, Pentecost will get credit. When it is disadvantageous to be overtly political, Pentecost can return to the oblique statements of curiosity about biological processes. Where is the risk?

—Minh Nguyen

Stephen Hayes' painting "Alexandria" June 14 - whose tragedy is this? Tragic for the painter? For the community? Which tragedies get to be painted?

Is the abstraction of these images, the double-triple distancing, relevant?

↳ the brush strokes are broad and swift, giving them an emotional quality not often present in landscape paintings.

↳ The hurried production of these images may be reflective of the split second judgements which are embedded in our culture. Hurried gestures in this case encourage shallow/callow engagement.

Hot violent ghost reverberations?

I feel like the hand is the only tool the artist knows in this scenario how to use.

It makes me think of how museums and their containments of historical artifacts are also gravesites.

Art framing as 'labor' is class-washing... Art framing isn't doing construction. Ever.

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