

Event Transcript

December 3, 2020 - support structures *Opening Reception: A Virtual Walkthrough and Conversation with Sara Reisman, Danilo Machado, Jeff Kasper and the Artists of Art Beyond Sight's 2019-2020 Art & Disability Residency Cohort*

Sara Reisman:

Good evening and welcome to the opening reception of support structures, a virtual walkthrough and conversation with the artists of Art Beyond Sight 2019, 2020 Art and Disability Residency cohort. Before we begin please note that this event includes ASL interpretation and captioning. I want to point out our ASL interpreters Leanna Jillan Tapnek and Blair Fell. Hello, Leanna and Blair and our captioners Lee Chapman. To enable captioning, click on the CC button on the bottom of your Zoom pane and you can opt for the full transcript to be visible or just subtitles. For further access instructions, please refer to the chat section. My name is Sara Reisman. I'm a Caucasian cisgender woman with dark shoulder length hair and green eyes, under a bright white light. I'm wearing a black shirt with silver and gold sparkles, and a bronze necklace with a curved spike pendant. I'm the Executive and Artistic director of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation which is based in New York City, where we've supported art and social justice through grant making for the last 25 years.

And since 2015 at The 8th Floor, we have been organizing exhibitions and public programs that address the themes of social justice and political import. Tonight's gathering is the much anticipated opening reception of *support structures*, an exhibition featuring the work of the current Art and Disability Residency cohort, including Alex Dolores Salerno, ee miller, Lizzy De Vita, Michelle Miles, Michael DiFeo, Sandra Wazaz, Terry Huber and Zoey Hart curated by Danilo Machado. The Rubin Foundation and Art Beyond Sight had planned to open *support structures* in early April of this year at our exhibition space, The 8th Floor. Leading up to the lockdown in March, we collectively understood that an in-person exhibition in the gallery, even if the virus had abetted would be problematic and certainly not possible in April. Do we remember April? The program will begin with a walkthrough of the work featured in the exhibition, accompanied by brief artists talks. This will be followed by discussion with curator Danilo Machado and guest artist educator and ADR alum Jeff Kasper, and will conclude with a Q&A between the audience and the artists.

This online exhibition has been realized through what I consider to be a carefully thought through approach to access, one that has been shaped by Art Beyond Sight alongside the artists and exhibition curator. I hope you'll agree that when you visit the *support structures* website which went live today, this group of artists and curator have realized a project that is the embodiment of access in a virtual format. Congratulations to you all. And I think there's a link to the website in the chat section as well for those who want to take a look. For those who are new to Art Beyond Sight, they're working powers disabled people to be active, creative and powerful participants and contributors in the arts and society at large. As a catalyst for equitable change, ABS fosters collaboration and exploration of innovative, effective and impactful solutions to realize full inclusion. The Rubin Foundation was proud to have been an early supporter of the Art and Disability Residency in 2016. And so it's wonderful to see this group come to the

completion of their residency tonight.

Before tonight's program begins, I'd like to take a few minutes for a land acknowledgement to consider our respective relationships to place. We are gathered virtually in many locations at once, Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and in this time of isolation, many, many other places. Most if not all of which are unceded lands. As this event is organized by the Rubin Foundation, I'll address the specific site where offices are located near Union Square in New York City, thereby acknowledging Lenape community, and its past, present and future generations. The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation and The 8th Floor acknowledge being founded upon exclusions and erasers of many indigenous people, including those on whose land where the Foundation is located.

This acknowledgment verbalizes a commitment to the process of working to dismantle the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism. And because much of our lives are now conducted in non-places like Zoom and FaceTime and Skype and whatever else, I'll take a moment for a virtual land recognition with language devised by Jill Carter, who's a professor in the Indigenous Studies and Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies departments at the University of Toronto. Carter writes, "Zoom has erected its headquarters in San Jose, California, while Skype has erected one key arm of its operations in Palo Alto, California. This is a traditional territory of the Muwekma Ohlone tribal nation. Current members of this nation are direct descendants of the many missionaries tribal groups from across the region. We who are able to connect with each other via Zoom or Skype, are deeply indebted to the Muwekma Ohlone people, as the lands and waters they continue to steward now support the people, pipelines and technologies that carry our breaths, images and words across vast distances to others. So thank you."

On another note about the question and answer period, please submit questions using the chat function at the bottom of your Zoom screen. You can ask questions throughout and towards the end, one of us will sort through them. When we open up the discussion to questions, we'll pull questions from the chat and call on you, giving you the option to speak or have your question read by the moderator up to you. And so now it's my pleasure to introduce Art Beyond Sight vice-chair Cheryl Rosario. She's the founder of CGR consulting, a firm that's focused on philanthropy, diversity, equity and inclusion. So glad you could be here with us today Cheryl.

Cheryl Rosario:

Great, thank you so much Sara. Thank you so much. Again, I'm Cheryl Green Rosario, I'm a fair skinned African American woman with limp brown hair. Tonight I'm wearing a black and white tweed type jacket with a brocade flower. I'm wearing a dangled silver earrings and glasses. So it's great to be with all of you tonight. This topic is close to my heart. And it's been so great to be involved and then come to tonight where we actually get to see the work and share it with all of you all. So as Sarah mentioned, I'm the vice-chairman of the board of directors of Art Beyond Sight and chair of the advisory board for the Art and Disability Residency. I'd like to thank the staff at The 8th Floor and the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation for their generous financial support, as well as all the staff expertise, your insight, your partnership, and for the support structures exhibition and its public programs. Art Beyond Sight supports emerging disabled future leaders of the cultural industry whose creativity leverages disability, unity and power.

With three cohorts of talented ADR alumni and an upcoming fourth cohort beginning this winter, we've reached a critical point of momentum for fostering community between ADR artists, many of whom are gaining recognition at the heart of the Disability Arts Movement.

For both The 8th Floor and the Rubin Foundation, disability is part of diversity and disability justice is part of social justice. The disability community and our intersectional allies face unique challenges, including financial, medical and social barriers. Compounding these inequities, the disability community was one of the hardest hit by COVID-19. Past ADR symposiums and exhibitions have been attended by arts and education organization staff seeking to hire disabled artists. Creating a support structure to increase disabled artists and cultural workers employment is an important goal, if not the most important goal, for the ABS board of directors at this time and I would say throughout our history. I hope you will join us in sharing this exhibition and its public programs to realize professional advancement for these artists while celebrating their timely work. Again, we really appreciate being a part of this collaboration with you all and a welcome to everyone tonight. And now I think I'm passing the baton over to Danilo. Thank you.

Danilo Machado:

Thanks, Cheryl. Thanks, Sara. And thanks everyone for being here. My name is Danilo Machado and I'm the curator of *support structures*. I am a brown person wearing a dark blue button up shirt with a Nick Cave scarf with different colors, pink and yellow. I have black hair and a mustache and am wearing pink glasses. And it was in January or February, I first get to know the work of these amazing artists. It feels like many, many lifetimes ago, January and February. And since then, we've been on this journey. Putting together this exhibition, first in person and now virtually. And I'm so thankful for all of these artists, and getting to know their work has been so life giving, especially when the world continues to turn upside down. And I'm so excited to share all their work with you all tonight and through the next two weeks in this virtual exhibition. And I'm excited to have you all hear from the artists themselves. So we'll have a short walkthrough for each of the artists. And we're going to be starting with Alex.

Alex Dolores Salerno:

Hi, everyone. And I can't see the screen but I figured that the screen for the audience has the images up. So thank you all so much for being here today. I'm Alex Dolores Salerno, I'm a white Latina person with dark brown shoulder length hair, and I'm wearing a red turtleneck sweater. Oh, there's the image. To give a brief background on my practice, I'm an interdisciplinary artist and I work to critique standards of productivity, normative embodiment and the commodification of rest. Primarily through sculpture with used objects, as well as photography and more recently film, I aim to argue that in order to celebrate diverse body, minds and capacities, it's necessary to reconfigure our relationships to time and value away from the capitalist agenda. The first work, and my first work in *support structures* is titled *At Work (Grounding Tactics)*, and it's part of a series that I call *At Work*.

This slide on the screen shows a black bedframe on a grey floor against a white wall. Instead of a bed on the bed frame, there's a diamond plate and dust shield rubber flooring cut to the dimensions of the frame. Flooring like this one and the diamond plate texture can be found in a

variety of spaces, but its primary function is to withstand the impact of heavy foot traffic in machinery, and to keep workers safe and productive on their feet. Along the sides of the bed are several storage cubbies, six of them are visible. And then each one are arrangements of emotionally, spiritually or physically grounding objects, tools and texts. I think of them like sculptures within the sculpture. For me they're reminiscent of an altar someone might create in the bedroom. Each arrangement is both abstractly and thematically placed. Some of the visible objects include pieces of wood, a jar of peeling salve, shredded memory foam, a spoon, a massage tool, tarot cards and books such as *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* by Jonathan Crary and the recent *Disability Visibility*, edited by Alice Wong.

Juxtaposing what's on top of the bed frame with what's inside of it, this work highlights the way our society view sleep as an aid to production rather than a need or a right And at least the industrial material to rest. On top of support structures which helps us to navigate with the labor done on our feet and the often erase work that we do from the bed. Through DIY methods and experiential knowledge, particularly that of our mentors and ancestors, the sculptures within the sculpture offer tactics of how to listen to and care for ourselves and each other and dream new worlds as we navigate the constant demand for productivity and reclaim our rest time. Queer quip culture is presented as an anti-capitalist force that centers care and honors the multiplicity of capacities in embodiments. Next slide please.

My second work in the show is titled *Chiron*. Although it's a photograph, I see it sculpturally as a collage of deconstructed symbols. The image depicts the torso of a light skinned person holding a scarred piece of wood. The wood is shaped similarly to an anatomical heart, and it's held in a way that references the Catholic Sacred Heart which symbolizes God's love for humanity. The scars on the wood are echoed across the image, with surgical scars faintly visible across the figures chest. The beige couch they rest upon also carries a scar as the fabric is attached to the wooden frame via a row of nails. The figure makes a hand gesture of blessing, with three fingers pointing up and the ring and pinky finger pointing down, which is called the hand of benediction, and is said to originate as a sign of blessing rather than an open hand due to a type of neuropathy of the first pope.

The title *Chiron* is a comment named after a Greek mythological centaur, a teacher and greatly skilled in medicine. He is known as the wounded healer as he could heal others but not himself. The placement of Chiron in an astrological chart reveals one's healing powers as a result of our spiritual wounds. This work can be read as a precarious blessing, as in the symbol of our interdependency with the environment, both built and natural, our healing intertwine. And now I'm going to turn it over to the next artist, and I'll see everyone in the Q&A. Thank you.

e.e. miller:

Hello. Hi, everyone. I am ee miller. And I'm a white person, queer person with freckles and circular glasses with hair to my chin, sitting in a white room in a rural area with not the best internet connection. So I'm hoping that all my words translate to you. So on this first slide, the whole piece of work I built a website called *going slow in the fast lane*, which is a collection from this past year I've been living on the road of paintings and writing, photographs, sculpture, and an archival video. Kind of started from moving out of New York City and following the

footsteps of my great-great-grandfather, a political cartoonist in the 1910s. When he created an animation in 1910 of a man who kept jumping in front of carts so he could, with his insurance, get a nice settlement. Which I just think is telling of our system still today. So yeah, the travel all kind of goes through musings of writings on insurance but more personal I like this image that's up on the screen now of my relationship with my grandmother. And this is a painting of an Aquarius full moon. I painted this right when I left New York but superimposed it over an image on Table Top Mountain and California when I started living on the road. You can go to the next slide, actually. Please.

Yeah, this next image is, I escaped the fires from the Bay Area and went up to California to visit a friend at a retreat center in Hot Springs, where they were building actually all these individual bathtubs next to the hot springs so they could still have people come visit during COVID to have a more singular experience instead of the communal tubs. And it reminded me of an image that I saw from the 1920s of like hydrotherapy and mental institutions where they would strap bodies and change the temperature throughout the day, hose them down. So just kind of a meditation on how our medical systems have evolved. Where our intuition is for experimentation.

People have been healing in water systems, like in bodies of water forever. So there's like an understanding of why the medical system would experiment with that. And then also like, ways of thinking about class. That there's something different of sitting in a bathtub in the middle of the woods at a retreat center than like forced hydrotherapy. So yeah, on the site I kind of go through these different essays of my thoughts throughout the year, of my own process of trying to make sense of medical structures. Yeah. I think that is all I have to share. So pass it forward to the next artist, and thank you.

Lizzy De Vita:

Hi everybody, I've never been so nervous to sit in my own living room. So good to be here. My name is Lizzy De Vita, I am a white femme person with long black hair, and I'm wearing glasses and what my brother would probably call a very witchy looking dress. Oh yeah, behind me is my living room, there's a few framed pictures and some cheesy foil Christmas trees. And at some point a dog might be showing up here or there. I'm also an interdisciplinary artist. My work is really diverse in form. But it's united by a focus on the structure and language of human interdependency. Put simply, I'm interested in how we come to understand the experience of another person, how we relate to other people, and how we form our identities through relationships with others and really the limits of empathy. And I work to create physical, linguistic and psychological meetings or collisions, where individual or groups identities might have the possibility to shift or bloat or merge or dissipate and maybe become something else.

So this first work here is not actually a work that I'm showing in this exhibition, but in many ways it precedes it, in terms of its lineage. This is a work I created in 2015, where I approached two white male strangers, also they were straight white male strangers. And I asked them to speak to each other first thing in the morning and last thing before they went to bed every day for a month. And I asked them to record their conversations. Over the course of that month, they grew to be so close that they shared things that they were unwilling to share even with the closest people in their lives. And preserving their anonymity, I edited those recordings into a sound

piece that show the way that the language that they used evolved over time to show that intimacy and how they grew from being total strangers to being very close, just through the types of words that they were using. Next slide.

So for this show I had that in mind, I was feeling very acutely the sense that maybe everybody feels at this point that we have an increased isolation from others, and often it can leave you feeling unmoored or adrift. And I wanted to create a support structure for myself in a way through this work by creating a system of accountability. But also I was curious to see what might come out of me and what might grow out of an anonymous communication between myself and others who would consent to that communication. And so the piece will be an email that you sign up for, you opt in through my page, and then you just wait to receive a message and you can reply or not. But this is the piece. So with that, I'm going to hand it off to the next artist.

michelle miles:

Hi, everyone. My name is michelle miles and my pronouns are she, her. I'm a white cisgender woman with brown hair and blue eyes. And I'm wearing my hair in a bun. And I have on a cobalt blue turtleneck. I'm in a room with pale blue walls, and behind me is a bed with a floral yellow headboard. And it's not pictured in the frame, but I'm sitting in a power wheelchair. So this first image is a still from my film titled Blueprints. The image on the screen displays a large rectangle that's drawn in blue marker. Near the perimeter of each side of the frame, though the drawn rectangle is slightly off kilter from the rectangular frame. So I'm a filmmaker, but my artistic origins are actually in painting and drawing. Now I find that in my film work, I still tend to seek sort of an intimacy with the materials that I had when I was a painter, which I think applies to this work as well. For this film I used an animation lightboard on the floor as a backdrop and filmed in a single take overhead shot.

So in the next image, which is also a still from the film, two hands have entered the frame and are adjusting two wooden triangle rollers while holding a blue marker. There's a straight metal ruler that's screwed near the bottom of the frame, and the hand drawn blue rectangle from the previous slide has been filled in with various sized blue lines to create smaller rectangles within the larger rectangle. So in a somewhat literal approach to support structures, in this work I decided to review the blueprints of the house that I grew up in, which I've unexpectedly returned to this year. The narrative that unfolds follows my mother's hands which navigate the frame and picked in blue marker from her memory, the floor plan of the house that she and my father built together for our family almost 15 years ago.

My two eldest brothers are professional crane operators and my father is built and repaired and renovated countless homes, including ours. So I really grew up immersed in conversations about the construction process. And I've developed an interest of my own in sort of how structures are planned out and brought into existence and renovated. I'm particularly interested in the thoughts and conversations behind those small decisions and details that really impact how we function in the space. So along these lines, I took a specific interest in the role, function and form of blueprints as guidelines or instructions for physical spaces which can either prioritize access or not. In the literal sense of bluemark making, and also in the sense of construction plans that prioritize access symbolically represented by the color blue.

So this was not the work I had originally intended to create under the title *Blueprints* for this show, though I use the same title and many of the same lines of thinking led me to this new work. The past eight months, or maybe 10 months now, have added significant specificity to this piece. I originally intended to explore blueprints as a form quite generally using 16 millimeter film, but for this new work using materials I had at home, I decided to focus specifically on the blueprints of the home that I grew up in, which as I said my parents built and which has continued to house and support me over these past 10 very uncertain months. So with that, I'd like to turn it over to the next artist and say thank you to all of you for coming.

Michael DiFeo:

Hi, my name is Mike DiFeo. I am a white cisgendered male. I have dark black glasses and kind of short sweepy gray hair. I'm wearing a dark blue plaid shirt. And I'm in my kitchen, I have like my pantry behind me with a little bit of food and some other things. Yeah. So my work for this show, of course I had to adapt it because originally this was supposed to be an installation. And I was kind of grappling with how to kind of show it in an online form. And I kind of decided to lean on my commercial photography background and kind of document a setup I made in my studio. So what I did here with this image, which is called *put stuff away oh*, which is a singular reminder from a year's worth of reminders that I was able to pull down from Apple's Cloud, and I printed out this year's worth of reminders and I photographed them in the studio.

Now, the reason I'm interested in my own reminders is because I use these digital reminders, they're more than just reminders, I see them as a digital prosthesis that allows me to be a productive functioning person. I have severe memory issues, and without my calendar and reminders, there's no way I'd be able to meet my obligations. I work freelance, so I work different jobs, different places, and I would never be able to keep it straight. So for me these reminders are a strong support structure. So yeah, I chose to think about them and document them. The work also has another meaning in addition to just thinking of these reminders and documenting them, I'm also kind of referencing commercial photography, which is kind of moved more into the forefront of my life even more so than art making. And by making this work, I'm reminding myself like a good way for me to live is to be making art and expressing myself. You can move to the next slide, which will be a close up of some of these reminders.

You can see some of the individual reminders like stuff like take my meds, put stuff away, take those feelings into consideration. I live with my wife in a very small apartment and I'm not always the most considerate person. So I have these reminders that pop up on my phone that remind me to try to be a better roommate and be more considerate. They don't always work, but they're there. Often there lots of typos. And yeah, I've done work with data in the past. I've had an interest in different declassified government documents and would make compositions with those. But this is the first time I've worked with my own data. I usually don't address kind of disability in my work, or I haven't previously to this residency. And this is new territory for me. And yeah, so that's about it. I'll pass it off to the next artist. Thank you.

Sandra Wazaz:

Hello, everybody. Hi, I'm Sandra. I'm a person with white skin and brown hair. My hair is on the bun, a low bun. I'm wearing a black turtleneck and a black sweatshirt. I'm in my room. There's purple and pink string lights behind me. And I use the they, them pronouns. Hope everyone's having a great time this evening, though I cannot see or have any indication of that. So my piece on the show is a video called, *What's the word for worse than depression?* On the screen there's an image of the earth from space, blue and turquoise lagoon shapes with bits of clouds scattered on top of them. They're the type of clouds that look like popcorn. Black text in the middle of the screen reads, hanging off in the shower rail underneath it. This video is a collage of found video and original text. The sound is a mix of Justin Bieber's *U Smile*, 800% slowed down, mixed with a slowed instrumental of Jorga Smith's track *Teenage Fantasy*. Text moves horizontally up the screen as lyrics to a song played on a karaoke monitor do. I primarily work in video performance, sound and text.

I understand video making to be a sculptural process beholden to light and time. My understanding of light and time are informed by conditions of disability and queerness or non-normative embodied experiences which reconfigure ideas about how life should unfold temporally and spatially. Brain fog from medication makes the world fizzle when I open my eyes. Clock time is irrelevant and I brush it off crawling under the covers. And then it is dark outside once again. Your world is my world. Confused chronicity I look past the window and see the horizon is actually the world's edge. Your smile is my smile. The sky is a permeable threshold. Baby take my open heart and all it offers. Nostalgia and corniness are what I use to access haunting trauma and other embodied ruptures of normative space time. Because this is as unconditional as it'll ever get. Sticking onto the body with an endless loop of suicidal ideation and acute travels to the past. You ain't seen nothing yet. I won't ever hesitate to give you more. Next slide, please. Okay, thank you.

An image of the earth from space in the bottom left corner, there's the part of the earth glowing white with a blue edge. The sun is at the top center of the frame. Bright white rays refract the rainbow. Black text at the top of the screen reads with sincerity. My bed is my studio and my practice is sort of conjuring against the idea that the bed, studio or disability itself are conditions of isolation. Disability and debility are conditions that are ubiquitous, held in common and social. Literally show me a person who has a measured relationship to time. I have a tendency to withdraw. Everything is muffled I fade into noise. Everything is noise, static, monitor fuzz. The fuzzy electricity of a moist finger touching it surface, buzzy, fuzzy, sexy. What if we thought death and life as mutually interruptive states, a shift in the fuzz of one gradient the next? That textural shift was very welcome. Sometimes I'm afraid of slipping back and forth.

I got one minute I guess. Something below the surface shimmering on the surface, surfing on the emotional tides of everything. Every moment I love loving and feel dead. They drown each other, rub each other. Literally I want to say, your smile is my smile. You smile I smile, you smile I smile. At the end of the How It's Made balloons episode I watched on YouTube, a machine blows air into a huge red heart shaped balloon and the heart swells but doesn't break. I'm so glad that narration for that duration and the calmness of my feeling. You smile and I smile could suggest a cause and reaction. But what I want you to imagine is, your world is my world and my fight is your fight. Your breath is my breath and my heart is your heart. Take it away guys. I'm done.

Terry Huber:

Hello, everybody. My name is Terry Huber. I'm a big white guy with blonde hair and a beard, and I have my hair tied up in a bun. And I have a white and blue striped shirt in the background. I'm sitting on a leather couch and I have one of my paintings behind my head. I'm going to have to talk about this first slide. It's a large abstract painting with heavy impasto, it's acrylic. There's blue and purple in the background and lots of swirling colors, blue, purple, green, red, pink, some light blue in there. I work in an automatic style, similar to like some abstract expressionists and like surrealist. It's just, I don't have any prior planning or anything. I just start painting or drawing and just let the images take shape as I draw or paint. Painting for me is a spiritual practice. It's a healing tool that I use. It's a kind of meditation or prayer or trance, it's a tool to go into a trance.

The act of painting for me, it puts me in a different state of mind that allows me to connect with a higher part of myself that maybe day-to-day we're not always aware of. So allows me to connect with my emotions and also connect with what I believe to be my higher power, which I believe is the creator or you might call it God. It's a spiritual force. I also believe it is love, ultimate compassion. So when I'm reaching inside of myself, I'm also reaching into the creator. And I believe that I create in the image of the creator itself. I believe when we artists create, we are creating just like the creator who created us. So the way I work, it's a spiritual tool of healing. I heal myself, but I also heal others. So I create this artwork, the experience that I have is very powerful and transformative. But I also believe that it's transmitted to the viewer in some way. I don't believe in forcing my beliefs on someone. And I don't generally talk a lot about my work. I mean, most of my work is just visual. I don't think there needs to be a lot of words to explain it because it's really just like a lot of shapes and colors dancing around on the canvas.

So I believe the spiritual power just happens like spontaneously, subconsciously. But it's a very important part of my work, that I'm aware of the spiritual power. And it's helped me in a lot of different aspects of my life. I've gone through lots of depression and suicidal problems, all kinds of stuff. And I think painting is really the only medicine that has helped me get through it. I couldn't be who I am today without it. So I'm really thankful that I have this gift for me, and to share with others. I just want to talk about the next slide. This is a watercolor with some black ink. It has like a green background. The white of the paper is showing through a little bit in some places. There's a purple squiggly lines and some orange blobs. But yeah, like most of my work is all pretty much the same style, but just different colors, different shapes. So yeah, it's just a tool for a visionary experience. So, thank you very much.

Zoey Hart:

Hey everybody, I am the last artist who's speaking this evening before our Q&A. My name is Zoe Hart. I am a white woman person with a round face, dark hair and big blue screen grab glasses. I'm wearing a black and white floral wrap with a different black and white pattern sweater, and behind me are lots of pieces of artwork and nature of different shapes and sizes. So on the screen right now are three photographs documenting the participatory sculpture, *how we spend our days*. A grid of nine beige tiles displays a cacophony of black text, handwritten notes

and typeface reminders interchange and overlap. Across the piece, legible moments of text read, get rent, due to unforeseen circumstances, text about poetic title, anatomical theatre, taxes extension/jury duty excuse, finish NYFA, print NYFA, check NYFA, time is hungry, top priorities, buy spray. To quote writer Annie Dillard, how we spend our days is of course how we spend our lives. This project considers the substance of our time and honors the unique structures we each build to give shape and meaning to what I like to think of, of the meat of how we spend our days.

This iteration of the project highlights pre-COVID ephemera and lists from this current ADR cohort. Initially the lists were processed for laser cutting into the surface of marble tiles. However, the COVID updated revision of the project found me hand transferring a collection of personal notes and lists with a needle onto marble tiles and shards. So while the timeless nature of cut stone can be matched, in our current reality we've all had to reconfigure our relationships with time. The labor intensive process of hand transferring type font text, has in a sense revived these lists. While they no longer hold their specific meanings and practical weight, as I traced and meditated on their content, they've taken on a new significance in their anonymity. Hand processing these lists of tasks became its own task for me, which provided a process-based ebb and flow to my own quarantined days. Next slide. The kindness of strangers rerendered is a slow glitch animation triptych, for everyone's sake I've come to call it a series of new media paintings.

On screen right now is a detail from one of these animations. I'll be describing the content and the context for the image as we see it continue to glitch, distort and fade. The three animations that make up this project, which you can see fully on the website, are structured around the final line of dialogue in Tennessee Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In the 1951 film version of visibly distraught Blanche DuBois played by Vivian Leigh, is on the floor at the feet of a psychiatric doctor who's been called to commit her. As he lifts her off the ground, Blanche's eyes drift out of focus and with suddenly calm bewilderment she addresses us all, "Whoever you are, I've always depended on the kindness of strangers." The animation feature this quote, broken into three subtitles. As we've heard a few times already in this talk, I too have a clinically poor memory. But there's something about the stickiness of this line and the scene that's kept it fresh in my mind over the years. There's a particular feeling, something between resignation and serenity, that washes over this iconic imagery. It casts the idea of kindness in a boldly chilling light. We're still immersed in a culture in an age that conflates care with dependence, necessity with kindness and help with wellbeing.

This body of work is a call to reorient our historical perspective on interdependence and to consider the care structures we choose to enact and uphold every day. So that is my quick work description. And just to conclude this artist's talk section, I want to thank the whole group of artists in the show who have really risen to the challenge of the changing times to continue promoting the messages and the meanings and the important themes behind our work, which resonated both before and during COVID. So thanks to all, and I'll pass it on to the brief Q&A session.

danilo machado:

Thank you so much Zoey and all the artists. And Zoey has definitely been one of my many support structures during this process, especially as adapting it into this new form. And I'm so thankful for all her work and care in helping sort of fulfill this exhibition, along with so many of the folks that you've already heard from. I am so excited to be in conversation with alum Jeff Kasper, who is an artist educator with a background in arts organizing and social practice. His current work involves designing pathways for trauma informed culture by prototyping mechanisms for support via artwork tools, social practices and workshops. He is assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he is undergraduate Program Director in the Department of Art. Kasper is the co-editor of *More Art in the Public Eye*, 2020 and the forthcoming *Practicing Distance with the Operating System* coming out in 2021. And I'm so excited to talk about this exhibition together, Jeff. And there's so much alignment in your work and in sort of your former participation in this residency and in all the rich ideas that the artists all shared tonight.

Jeff Kasper:

Thank you so much, Danilo. Thank you, everyone. I thought I'd say a few words, first about my experience in the residency and also an experience of sort of being together in, also an event at The 8th Floor a few years ago. So I want to say first, that I'm so grateful to be in conversation with you all tonight and I know many of the artists in the show. Hello, thank you. Oh, let me pause for a second. I am a light skinned black man with a purple scarf and black sweater. And behind me is a dusty bookshelf image, it's not real. So as Danilo mentioned, I'm an alumni of the Art and Disability Residency and as well as other programs supported by the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation over the years. The residency really was a place at a time where I was lucky to have cultivated some of the deepest moments of feeling in community with other artists and thinkers. And the residency was like a convening point where I met really, many of lifelong friends and professional contacts. And it was also really a challenging space as well.

I think it was a place where, and maybe some of the artists would also agree, where I was sort of able to push myself and reveal delicate subjects in my work and as an artist and an organizer and a human. And it really meant learning in public while having to live through all the things like triggers, pain, heartache and probably most importantly, joy. And I wanted to share an experience of being at The 8th Floor, the last time I was in an Art and Disability Residency event at The 8th Floor, it was in the space in the gallery. And we were getting ready for a panel discussion. And I was just like, staring off and zoning off into the wall, and sort of into space and on a wall Jerron Herman was like, "Jeff! Jeff!" And I kind of snapped back into focus, and my heart rate was high and I was really excited and overwhelmed. The panel started and I just started to cry, actually. And I wasn't allowed cry so I don't think I made any noise and some folks might have seen me. I was pretty steady and I definitely tried to conceal crying. I just cried because it was one of the rare moments where I just felt supported in a room, and in a room of strangers. And that was because I was in community.

The residency is a network of allies and artists involved that continue to be a network of support. And I really wanted to say is that, I feel like support structures and listening to the artists and looking at their work, it's a lot about support as a survival mechanism. But I really wanted to say that I really believe that in this work support is also about prefiguring and enacting culture. And I

encounter in the work of each artist, in this show a dedication to engaging in practices of support, making tangible the intangible, nature of support and cultivating future cultures was present. So, that's enough. I won't keep talking. But well, I sort of will. But to move on I wanted to sort of say something I was struck with, words that you had mentioned Danilo around interdependency, this term has come up a few times. And you say, interdependency can become a site of creation while also enabling individuals to support themselves and each other with responsibility and care. So I wanted to ask you a little bit to talk a little bit about that.

danilo machado:

Yeah. I mean, it's really at the heart of a lot of the work in this show. And I think when the pandemic started, you saw people realizing the importance of interdependence for the first time, live. And as we know, many folks have always practiced that. And that has always been a part of their lives that it became really clear how needed it was, not just because of the circumstances but an ongoing sort of past and future where it's ever urgent, for sure. And it was great sort of seeing how interdependency played a role in such a range of forms and some of this work. So you have these digital interdependencies, where you have like Lizzie's newsletter depending on you signing up for it to even exist.

And then you have some of this sort of physical interdependency, where you have Alex's sculpture and the objects inside of it, both as physical objects but also as symbols and as text and as sort of objects of healing and objects that conjure communities, also is interdependent. And then what is it mean to be in month eight, nine, 10, of this pandemic? And we continue to depend on our support structures, and will continue to do so even when the circumstances might change and hopefully will get better. But there are so many underlying ways where interdependency is unavoidable. I think it's at its best, it's a practice of care and a practice of generosity. Which I can't see myself living without for sure.

Jeff Kasper:

Awesome. danilo on time, I think we're doing good, right?

danilo machado:

Yeah.

Jeff Kasper:

Awesome. Just to get us into a little bit more conversation, I also wanted to talk a little bit about this idea of interdependence as a disability aesthetic. And for those who are new to the term, disability aesthetics, I'm referring to a term coined by Tobin Siebers. And in a review of Siebers book, Emily and Berta wrote that, "Siebers argues that disability of sight is not merely an interesting philosophical exercise, but has profound implications for impaired people and for society as a whole. If bodies were no longer labeled as defective," it would say, Siebers simply put "impossible to view in our society in the same way." Such would be the impact of this new way of thinking. And such would be the impact of this new way of thinking. For example, how

access bears on things like voting rights and economic theories that cast disabled people exclusively as burdens.

And as navigating in Siebers sort of idea of disability aesthetics, some of the unfortunate uses of disability and impairment as synonyms, I do want to know that what I find valuable in this term disability aesthetics, is how that disability sort of generates an aesthetic value within itself. And I find value and possibility in that provocation and many of the ways this quality is embraced in the practices that we see in this show. Yeah. So I'm sort of wondering what we all think, and sort of... I know I'm feel like I moved sort of act and in sort of through this moment of pandemic and beyond, in a way where care work can really coordinate itself in a sort of maintained way, where we are sort of living in a spirit of mutuality. And I hope that others think that too. Maybe we can sort of move into more questions.

William Furio:

You guys want to move to Q&A?

Jeff Kasper:

Yeah.

Sara Reisman:

Yeah.

William Furio:

Great. I'm just going to start everyone's video, okay?

Jeff Kasper:

Cool.

Sara Reisman:

So should I start with the two questions from the group?

Jeff Kasper:

Sure.

Sara Reisman:

Yeah. So thank you all for those, for walking us through the exhibition. Taking in your individual works, I'm struck by the feeling that you've all created a space of comfort within the dialogue of the exhibition. I'm wary to call it a safe space because what we know to be safe is

continually shifting and fluctuating. But my question for you is, how did the Art and Disability Residency enable you to find a new language to express your perspectives through your art making? And does this expanded capacity for artistic expression affect or change your sense of comfort or conversely, discomfort? So I wonder if anyone wants to take this up? Maybe Zoey? Hi.

Zoey Hart:

Hi. I am going to touch upon this question and maybe expand it in a slightly different direction Sarah, but thank you.

Sara Reisman:

Oh, of course.

Zoey Hart:

I think the idea of comfort and a comfortable space is less one that we created through this show and more of one that we all depend on in our own way anyway. So there's almost a comfort with the expectation for comfortability that really has allowed us to, I think, communicate and navigate through this together and kind of evolve and adapt in the ways that we all have needed to. So I'll keep it brief. But those are my thoughts on that.

Sara Reisman:

Mike, did you want to comment?

Michael DiFeo:

Yeah, I'll jump in. Through this residency, it's just been wonderful to have peers with disabilities who are also in this world with their own struggles, talking about things like brain fog and bad body days, and just not having to hide this part of myself. And it wasn't comfortable to make work about disability. But I'm glad I have and I'm lucky to be surrounded, and with this cohort.

Sara Reisman:

So my second question, actually we're going to put up a slide for that just so that there's point of reference. I'll explain this quote, but if you can maybe tune in. And Alex Dolores Salerno's *At Work (Grounding Tactics)* of black bed frame without a mattress, you all might remember that from their description, has cubby shelves beneath the platform bed surface. The cubbies display books and objects of self care. So one of the things that caught my eye in the work was a book with the title, *This Bridge Called My Back*, writings by radical women of color. So it's in the foreword to the book.

And Cherrie Moraga, one of the editors wrote, "the political writer then is the ultimate optimist believing people are capable of change and using words as one way to try and penetrate the

privatism of our lives. A privatism which keeps us back and away from each other, which renders us politically useless.” And I wanted to pose the question in relationship to this quote and to maybe just to the idea of the book, how do you relate to the idea that privatism or individualism is a force that renders us politically useless? In the last eight months we've all been forced more than ever to operate in relative isolation, and I say relative because it varies. How do you think about your artworks potential to transcend privatism and distance? So I think maybe I could call on Alex, since it's in reference to your work initially.

Alex Dolores Salerno:

Yeah, thank you for this question. I think my short answer is that my work is focused on interdependency. And then the longer answer is that, that will always be driving my research is all of the implications behind that. So white supremacist, work cultures, perfectionism, competition, defensiveness, hierarchy, binary thinking, devaluing emotion, ideas of productivity, individualism, among so many other things. And capitalism wants us to feel distant and alone. But if we move towards abundance, care and entanglement, then we can begin to deconstruct and dream worlds away from the oppressiveness of industrial time.

Sara Reisman:

I like that. Sandra, did you want to respond? Maybe?

Sandra Wazaz:

Sure. The privatism which keeps us back and away from each other, which renders us clinically useless. I guess I just generally think of oppression in general, is just still so many different parts of a larger mechanism that just continuously in smaller and smaller pieces just fragments people, like through race or ability or gender or whatever, class. I mean, that's how I think about it. I think that starting from that place, trying to denounce all of that fragmentation. I don't know. It shows like... What's the opposite of the word of fragmentation?

Sara Reisman:

Cohesion, maybe.

Sandra Wazaz:

Cohesion. I mean, I really always think about like, I took this like whatever. So the idea of like the Big Bang happened, and while that was happening, everything that was there was just like the same, it was all touching. And then the thing that happened after that was what seems like a separation of objects, but that is a visual perceptual illusion of separation of objects. But in fact, the material reality is that it is all connected. So I mean, I guess I think about it that way.

Sara Reisman:

Great. Lizzie?

Lizzy De Vita:

Yeah. I mean, I think just to build on what Alex and Sandra were saying, I think it might be useful to sort of tease apart this idea of individualism versus privatism. Because privatism I think is a wholly different concept from individualism because it invokes concepts of space and ownership. And it sort of implies the political abstinence or a hyper focusing on self in favor of things like leisure and consumption. Like Alex was saying exactly, the version of the self that capitalism wants. I think there is such a thing as a more democratic individualism, which is we can all have our own experiences and be separate but still be connected. And even before the pandemic, I spent a lot of my life in relative isolation due to my chronic illness, and specifically in a bed. And yet within my individual experience, I was still able to feel connected through things like social media, through books and films, making connections across space and time.

And I feel really indebted, specifically to the disability community for helping me realize these ways of connecting and for being this incredible, I would say like a hyper intersectional community. Because no one body is the same, no disabled experiences is the same as another disabled person, but somehow we're able to come together and build a community as individuals but also as a group. And similarly the experiences of disabling aspects in society like racism, classism, xenophobia, queerphobia, so on are also different but we can come together and all identify as disabled individuals. And so I think in that sense, for me nothing's changed in my art. Like in terms of how I'm relating and how I'm bridging that gap. I see myself as one individual in a sort of constellation of elements in my work, that are in conversation are themselves but are also together to create a piece and have the potential to also bridge that gap. I'm sorry, I was wordy but Gemini. I'll shut up.

Sara Reisman:

No, it's interesting that you address this in terms of the collective of the group or thinking about community, but also in the frame of your work. So yeah. Thank you for your answers. We have some questions from the chat. And some of them are comments. I can see that there are some more direct questions that have come from Lanz Reuter, Constantina Zabid Sanos and then Anthony Ptak. And I thought that we'd start with, I think the question from Lanz Reuter, if you'd like to ask the question directly, there's a question about the content of your work, if it's about disability. Do we want to open the microphone for Lanz?

Michael DiFeo:

I do.

Sara Reisman:

Okay. Are you here? I can read the question. So I was following up on Mike's comment, I'm curious to hear if any of the artists feel they're making work about disability, agree, disagree, pushback, how does that land with you? And you're welcome to jump in when you'd like to

speak. Or you can refuse.

Lizzy De Vita:

I can speak again briefly to that.

Sara Reisman:

Sure.

Lizzy De Vita:

I think the more exciting motivation for me and I think most of the artists here, is less making art about disability and more making art from a place of disability that somehow lends a unique perspective on to the process of doing things.

Sara Reisman:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Lizzy De Vita:

So I think it's less of a direct relationship. But I think disability and things of access and relationship and support and interdependence are what informed these works that collected speak about, more specifically about disability. If that answers your question.

Sara Reisman:

Yeah. I think Lanz can tell us if that worked. Any other thoughts about that? Disability as the theme or content in your work.

Terry Huber:

I think for me as a painter, definitely my work wouldn't be the same without the struggles and things that I've went through in my life. So it's been a tool for me to overcome a lot of the challenges that I've had with disability. So I can't really say that there's any separation between disability and my work. Although my paintings are all abstract so there's no real subject matter besides just the color and the shapes. But definitely disability, even though it's not obvious, there's no separation from disability in my work.

Sara Reisman:

So there're a number of questions from Anthony. And I wondered if Anthony you want to... What's the most burning question? There's a very lively chat, I think. Anthony, do you want to chime in and pose a question to the panel?

William Furio:

He's not present anymore.

Sara Reisman:

Oh, okay. He left. Well, I don't know if there are more questions. I'm thinking about questions I could add to this. So here's Megan Bent, has a question to everybody. Megan, do you want to ask the question directly? Here we are. Hi.

Megan Bent:

Hello. Do you hear me?

Sara Reisman:

Hi. Yeah, I can hear.

Megan Bent:

Thank you for this. It's lovely to be here and get to know more about all the work. I was just curious to hear more about the experience of being a part of the cohort. And if it had an impact or a shift in your practice or your work? And how so?

Alex Dolores Salerno:

I think I can answer that. I think maybe my answer to that is the same answer to the last question about, is the work about disability because I was thinking about... I guess I could say my work is in a way about my needs and dreams. And I think that being a part of this cohort and in community in general, has allowed me to in a way meet or vocalize those needs and dreams and imagine like with others, and to be able to dream in community.

Sara Reisman:

That's beautiful. Anyone else? So we could go back, there were a couple of questions from Anthony that, let's see. Oh, there's so much here. What I want to say is I really did enjoy, I was like very moved to hear Jeff's comments about the residency program that we did in 2018. For me that was really meaningful just to see a different kind of conversation happened at The 8th Floor, in part because the exhibition was up, that Ezra Benus had curated and was part of. And then to see the space kind of... I think the ownership of the space opened up a lot in that moment. So I appreciated being reminded of that.

Lizzy De Vita:

Could I chime in a little bit?

Sara Reisman:

Of course.

Lizzy De Vita:

Just from a personal perspective, the exhibition that Jeff was in, I believe the panel also was the first time I had ever been in a room with so many other disabled individuals or other disabled artists. And at the time I think I was really coming to terms with my identity as a disabled person, and I felt so intimidated. I remember I kind of had a panic attack and I left. I would say that my experience with the cohort and my ability to even imagine being in a cohort like this came out of previous cohorts actually, and from that exposure as an artist, and lead to all sorts of different connections for me personally.

While I don't think its radically changed my work as an artist, which have always been centered around my experience, which happens to be the experience of a disabled person. I think it's changed me and my ideas of myself as an artist and my presence in the community. So I think that the more we get together, the better off we'll be. And so these things have reverberations in ways. Now, I remember telling my shrink about, I wanted to make more disabled artists friends but then I had a panic attack. And then a year later I was saying, "Oh, well I'm in this show and it's at the same place where I had a panic attack." So I think that in so many ways, like these things build on each other. And anyway, so that's just to go off of what you were saying about even Jeff's residency because I feel like I was sort of a participant in that as well.

Sara Reisman:

Yep. Thank you for that, Lizzy. So there's a question that Anthony posed, and Francisco Arasco kind of repurposed it. And it's a question, as with all art, how do we position for collectors commodity value and currency exchange in the market space and the political space? So it's a hard question. I guess it's a question of how do we balance the value of our work in order to survive with the politics, the political side of what we're doing which probably, for me it drives what I do. So, that balance it's hard to strike. If anybody wants to address that, you're welcome to. We also have a question from the Flo Gruden Hoist. I think it might be a question that was just answered though, by Lizzie. Okay.

Terry Huber:

I can talk a little bit about art and money. Like for me, I make paintings that you can put on the internet, you can so easily. Not everybody here they're artists like marketable that way. I mean, some people do performance and video and stuff. But for me, it's just like a matter of survival. And I mean, even though I don't make any money with my work, because I don't right now. I mean, I still always do it. It's like the money doesn't matter. It's just something that I have to do. Like I have no choice. So in some ways, it's like, yeah, it would be great to make money and it would help me a lot. But like, I'm still going to do it. I'm still doing it anyways. As long as I can get some money to buy some materials or whatever, I can use pencil and paper if I have to, I can use sticks and glue if I have to. I'm going to find a way to make work.

Sara Reisman:

I love that, Terry. I mean, it's a true art life, true commitment to your artwork. That it sounds like you have to do it for survival, if I'm understanding you correctly. So I thought we could go to the website for the moment. And I don't know, William, if you will give us the kind of overview or if anybody wants to speak about this within. This is just to give you a sense of what you'll see on the website. And I want to mention that, I didn't bring this up at the beginning but we have another event coming up on December 17th from 8:00 to 9:00 PM, with the same group of artists or many of the same artists, CARE LAB with interdisciplinary artists and educators Zoe Hart, featuring DJ Queer Shoulders and the artists of support structures. And I don't know if maybe one of you wants to mention what will happen at that event.

Zoey Hart:

Sure. I would be happy to do that quickly. CARE LAB is like a description of literally what it's going to be, which is care and support, obviously is the undercurrent of this show and the ways that we can do that for each other in this virtual space and as artists and as people, as disabled people, abled people, whatever. How we care for each other. So it's going to be like a very an informal, I'm calling it a workshop light, where we'll do some activities and kind of come together in community to practice and discuss different modes of care.

Sara Reisman:

Great. So I think we've reached 7:30, 7:31. I want to thank everybody for coming out tonight and being together. And congratulations to the art and disability cohort of 2019, 2020. When I saw the year I thought that was years ago for some reason. Like, is this the past presidency? I think the work is fabulous. And I think the dynamic here tonight has been wonderful. And I want to thank Cheryl and Elizabeth in that sort of fundamental sense making this work happen and William Furio for organizing on your side. But especially to the artists and Danilo. I think this is a great achievement. And I'm very excited to spend more time with the work and I invite everybody else to do the same. Thank you.

danilo machado:

Thanks, Sara. Thanks to the access workers tonight as well. And particularly to michelle and Mike for this sort of stunning website which has gone beyond anything that I expected and shows a lot of care. And access is not a secondary, it is the material on the website. And thank you all for being here.