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The Cahlo Wade Depot Art Gallery at Mississippi State University in Starkville, MS recently hosted Gelfand, an exhibition of recent work by Jerry Gelfand, the godfather of analog photomontage. This recent work was inspired by his friendship with the intaglio artists Marc Pfeiffer, who currently works in photogram, and the late Carol Flinn, a well-known artist and photographer. Gelfand’s work explores the intersection of digital and traditional art forms, as well as the interaction of disparate elements in the photograph. Despite the availability of digital image editing technology, Gelfand continues to produce his work in the darkroom using multiple enlargers, marking, and dodge to create a unique aesthetic that is neither an analog nor a digital image. This traveling exhibition is curated by Amy R. Viegler, director of the University Galleries at the University of Florida. The exhibition has been traveling for many years. Its next stop is the South Coast Mall Art of the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Visual Voices: Contemporary Cherokee Art just opened at the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson, MS. Visual Voices: Cherokee Art was established as well as emerging Dickinson to force. The exhibition explores the rich diversity of the Cherokee people, their history, and their culture. It features works by artists who have been inspired by the traditional art forms of the Cherokee nation. The exhibition is open to the public and runs through June 2.

Delta Arts Alliance in Flowood, MS, Natural History of Delta Nile Waves, a photographic exploration of the African American cowtown community in the Mississippi Delta. Delta Nile Waves highlights the little-known African American subculture that moved to Robe’s Crossing, Mississippi. The exhibition includes photographs of family and friends, who were part of the African American cowtown community that lived in the Delta. The exhibition is open to the public and runs through June 2.

The Frist Art Museum, in Nashville, is currently hosting Making America: Modern through May 27th, offered glimpses of life in America in the Dust Bowl. In the Conte gallery, Dorothea Lange: The Politics of Seeing, a major exhibition of the work of the well-known photographer Dorothea Lange. Lange’s photograph of a young boy in a mask is one of the most iconic images of the Dust Bowl. The exhibition includes over 100 photographs from Lange’s most famous projects, including her iconic images of the 1936 San Francisco waterfront and her photographs of the 1939 World’s Fair. The exhibition is open to the public and runs through May 26th.
Becoming as practice as performance as Becoming: I am the orange, and You Can, Too.

It’s like I can’t unsee it. You find meaning in what you assign meaning to. This, I suppose, is the essence of art.

In some past, an orange was just a citrus fruit that I’d eat sometimes. Sometimes, through some accumulation of decisions and acts, an orange nor I is not, and never has been, simply a citrus fruit. Now and forever, the orange is some container, a sign, in dissolving the boundaries of time and space, to see beyond the veil of this plane of existence, some fissure collapsing past, present, future.

There are approximately 1,200 steps from her door to my door, depending on length of stride. There are approximately 120 to 200 breaths in between her door to my door, depending on length of stride. There is an open palm. I am feeling into each on the exhale. In between some thousands of exhales, I am learning to measure distance and time as a heartbeat. How far is she from hearing mine now? How many times will I beat before I get the words out, too stuck to my tongue I love you. In time, like my hands stick from the greatfrost, and the scent lingering in my lungs. How long can I hold on to the taut? How long will it sting in the breaks in my skin? I wonder how her lip is healing or already healed? If the greatfruit burns or stings in a painful or pleasant way, or a bit of both?

I’m having difficulty understanding this construct of time. How does it give it take for a gap to close? For insurmountable distance to Become closeness once again?

I am holding a Future in my heart to heal the Present and the Past.

I cut open fruit and let the acid drip into me. I hold it to my face and walk the block to breathe in the scent. Let it sting. I’m feeling into it. I love you.

You can’t unsee it: A thread marking time and distance (or yet, not yet, not yet). We could measure this impossible distance in strategically placed oranges, or time in how many “I love you.” I failed to utter or how many cigarettes I’ve wanted to smoke this week. I’m learning to measure distance and time as a heartbeat. How far is she from hearing mine now? How many times will I beat before I get the words out, too stuck to my tongue I love you. In time, like my hands stick from the greatfrost, and the scent lingering in my lungs. How long can I hold on to the taut? How long will it sting in the breaks in my skin? I wonder how her lip is healing or already healed? If the greatfruit burns or stings in a painful or pleasant way, or a bit of both?

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You can’t unsee it: An orange on the other side of the fence I pass everyday on my way to work, marked #transformationalorangesculpture. It waits patiently. What I can see and can’t see simultaneously: the orange transforming its insides to Become a goo held in a container.

We heal in relationship to ourselves, others, and the world. Like the fruits marking this distance of could/did/didn’t/did’t you now between two bodies and infinite worlds, I am transforming in unexpected ways.

—the self is also a creator, the principal work of your life, the crafting of which makes every one of us an artist. This unfinished work of becoming ends only when you do, if then, and the consequences live on. We make ourselves and in so doing are on the gods of the small universe of self and the large world of repercussions.” (— Rebecca Solnit, The Faraway Nearby)

—I believe in Grand Transformations. I believe every one can hold an orange in their belly and Become. This artistic practice is a sculptural process in Becoming: transformations of matter/transformations that matter, the ongoing, unfolding practice of creating self in collaboration with everyone else making themselves to create worlds and possible Futures. This is a practice of making art/objects in a process of evolution of self: what does it mean to make yourself?

A small split in the peel features and gives way to mold, then rot. If I peel open before the wound festers, I can consume the pungent gooey insides, to Become something new. To peel open entirely and consume offers new possibilities in Becoming. I am breathing in the Potential.

Healing, after all, is not about Becoming whole, or arriving at any destination of completeness. It is to see the possibility of a Future and embody that in the Present. It is an ever unfolding, refining process. I am the orange smashed into the sidewalk, run over in the parking lot, squashed under a mattress in the由此, waiting patiently to succumb to rot on the other side of the chain-link fence. I am the orange digested to Become forever part of a stranger who found me somewhere between here, the Past, and some Future. I am the orange discarded, to slowly dig down, bury myself, and sprout something new: some impossible fruits. I am the orange transforming, healing, in the simultaneous holding of broken and whole, Future and Past Selves contained in a peel as Ashberry Mineer Brown states, “Healing behavior, to look at something so broken and see the possibility and wholeness in it” (Emergent Strategy)

Hello my name is Liz.

To ask again, if I change my name, what is your name? Hello my name is Liz Clay.

Hello my name is Liz Clay.

Hello my name is Liz Clay Tide.

Hello my name is Tide Clay.

Hello my name is Tide Cloud.

Hello my name is Tide Cloud.

Hello my name is Tide Cloud.

— I don’t know what my name is anymore.

Love, what are you Becoming?

Transformations aren’t cheap. I’m digging, with dirt-caked hands. I’m growing hungry at my Past in process to some Future. I can be gentle with myself in process. Desire, after all, comes from a position of lack. I am an orange in love with possibility, hunger for the horizon. An orange in segments is no less an orange. This practice of utopian embodiment is a way of tasting that, even if we can’t get it now, we can get it, in another way at some other point in time” (Jan Verwoert, “Exhaustion and Exuberance”).

I’m staring into my eyes in the mirror, seeing all iterations of self contained in this body. Every version is here in these eyes, in this skin. Each past self and each self to come, here in this present, to lose each and every one generously.

I am always a work-in-progress. But also I’m exhausted. My heart pounding in my chest. May this crack the surface of what has kept you in isolation. Can’t rouse, but will.

I am the orange, and You Can, Too. Can’t unsee it.
From Crisis to Utopia: Implications of the Future Subjunctive

We communicate our conditions of being through a spectrum of languages and mediums. As language is when it comes to bridging ideas and connecting individuals from different backgrounds, the concept of the contemporary functions as if there is a shared subject position that is equally accessible and capable of being engaged. It is my argument that this position is an imaginative zone that hosts and reifies itself in culture of the imagination. 

When assessing keenly to then navigate beyond the borders within this space should not be overlooked, but rather simultaneous anticipation and projection of the future collective wishes, doubts, fears and irrealities. The position is an imaginative zone that hosts and capable of being expressed. It is my argument connecting individuals from different backgrounds, as language is when it comes to bridging ideas and building off past tense forms via the past subjunctive.

Comparatively, there is no future subjunctive in English. Instead, such messages are conveyed through an unspecified time. Discuss potential futures subject to an unreal condition event. When these forms are brought together, we can tense illuminates what in the future will be a past condition of being. Essentially, this is a disavowal to its users is a philosophical comment, or a wonder how artists would design the future and its very presentness. Essentially, this is a disavowal of its negative and positive aspects. Negatively, it involves a disavowal - a disavowal of its future perfect tense and what can be gleaned from and built upon by deconstructing this linguistic technology and where such translations are observed in art.

The subjunctive mood is the mouthpiece of our imagination and therefore is commonly marked by one or more conditional clauses; while the future perfect subjunctive to refer to an unreal situation possibly in the present or the future. If we were to fight for each other, the crisis would have been over. When forming a sentence like this in German, it is important to formally analyze the aesthetic implications of two rules: 1. The only verbs that are always conjugated in the subjunctive are the modal and auxiliary verbs. The infinitive forms of sein (to be) and haben (to have) remain unchanged.

a. The passive subjunctive uses the helping verb form of werden (to become).

b. Sentences utilizing the subjunctive mood in the future perfect tense have more than one clause, one of which frequently contains the speculative condition of sein (to be). Ontological analysis of such syntax structures could support the claim that the retention of the infinitive forms of haben and sein signifies the specificity of perpetual presence. What this aspect of the future subjunctive conveys to us is a philosophical comment, or a conceptual “given” that we already have everything we might have already had, and we already are everything we might or might have been. Such a reflexive condition seems to me as very “if the law” now is dependent on two parts of a whole; the imaginative unreal unbound by time and the projection of a potential future outcome. Peter Osborne investigates this superficially dualistic concept as a strictly contemporary one in his book The Postconceptual Condition (2008):

“[T]he contemporary is a utopian idea, with both negative and positive aspects. Negatively, it involves a disavowal – a disavowal of its own future, speculative basis – to the extent to which it projects an actual conjuncture of all present times. This is a disavowal of the futurity of the present by its very presentness. Essentially, this is a disavowal of politics” (Osborne, p. 37).

Here, Osborne argues that the contemporary as a subjunctive negates beliefs that look utopia in some far past or future reality; in favor of the lived present – and that this is “an act of the productive imagination” that reenacts and strengthens the projection of the “conjunction of all present times” (Ul, 4). The natural development of this contemporary situation can be traced throughout German art and culture of the past century. A hundred years ago, the seminal German design and art school, Bauhaus, mediated the convergence of modernity by approaching design initiatives as a means of achieving total construction. Bauhaus wondered how artists would design the future and effortted toward an integration of fine art and industrial manufacturing processes across a spectrum of mediums. In my view, this was done as a resistance of the fear of “flux” (New Tim), or the perceived threat of the end of cultural traditions and norms. Bauhaus produced work that embraced the present times, or what artists considered as crisis, and left an aesthetic and pedagogic legacy that propelled Modernism and still seems futuristic today.

Architecture and language naturally complement and parallel each other as means of expression; each use base structures to support a unique contextual front. Similarly, music as a medium for communication requires a containment of ideas disciplined by the spectrum of human hearing. In 1981, the German musical group Kraftwerk composed their album Computer World: seven tracks that seem to be deployed in time due to their enduring futurism and relevance to our current political and private realities. What might be considered an archetypical masterclass is really a strict testament to the realities that the members were experiencing at the time.

The foresight conveyed within their music is not merely intentional, rather effortlessly conveyed by rooting deeply into the technology and social realities of the present. Pascal Benuzzi quotes founding member Ralf Hütter’s description of the album in his book Into Machine and Music (2004): “[we]re living in a computer world. So we decided to make a song about it” (Benuzzi, p. 17). However, the album does not illustrate a utopia of human lives and technology converging. A careful uncertainty remains as to how this technology will shape and control our lives; take for instance the lyrics in “Computer World”: “Interpol und Deutsche Bank, FBI und Scotland Yard / Flensburg und das BKA, haben einen Daten-“

“Interpol and Deutsche Bank, FBI and Scotland Yard / Flensburg and the BKA, have our data there” - Kraftwerk

Computer World’s growing anticipation that technology would merge with our private lives characterizes most of the lyrical content in the album. Nevertheless, speculations of such technological developments are never proposed explicitly; rather, Kraftwerk distinguishes the realities of the present and communicates these situations in simple forms. This act alone begs the listener to consider the “conjunction of all times”, or, just how far the lyrical interpretations will remain relevant into the future.

Today, the momentous conjunction to connect through communication technologies reflex itself again through the medium of video. One of Germany’s famous contemporary artists and philosophers, Hito Steyerl, created the film installation Red Alert (2007) as an exercise in displaying the utopian within the most real images. She calls this work “the end of video as a medium for representing something real” (Dijkstra, “Interview With Hito Steyerl: ‘The Medium Is An Information Fiber’”, ArtBlart, 2015). The triumph of screen plays videos that Steyerl collected: all shot by US soldiers in Iraq and Afghani stan. She then pulled the footage to the highest saturation of a bright red-orange, exactly mimicking the color for the “ATTACK IMMEDIATE” alert set by US Homeland Security on 9/11. Her film then becomes an animation of completely frozen images that remains unmoving for the viewer at every point. This formal aspect of the film mirrors the conceptual “given” of perpetual presence and the “conjunction of all times” derived from the future subjunctive.

The successes of the installation are tied to Hito’s presentation of the utrecht within such documentary images and their inability to convey reality. In her own words: “Such art is not an image but the medium itself. The medium is an information filter and it influences our perception.” (Dijkstra, 2015). At this point, film became merely a message of this monochrome situation of pervasive crisis; there was no longer an entry point from which to surmise meaning. This disavowal of a potential future outcome for the medium of video as an information filter restitutes Red Alert as an act of the productive imagination, unbound by time through its demonstration of the unreal within seemingly rigid realities.

In his book, The Postconceptual Condition, Peter Osborne argues that, “the concept of the contemporary projects a single temporal matrix of a living present” that booms as increasingly inevitable (Davies, p. 27). This contemporary perspective activates a migration away from the future and all its promises and relocates utopia into the present. Comparatively, the future subjunctive replicates this narrative by channeling unreal temporalities into the productive zone of the present. There is essentially a push to reject the past, the new(ly) and all other crises in favor of the shared, present now.

In “Computer World”, the medium is used as a means of criticizing the “flux” (New Tim), or the perceived threat of the end of cultural traditions and norms. Bauhaus produced work that embraced the present times, or what artists considered as crisis, and left an aesthetic and pedagogic legacy that propelled Modernism and still seems futuristic today. Architecture and language naturally complement and parallel each other as means of expression; each use base structures to support a unique contextual front. Similarly, music as a medium for communication requires a containment of ideas disciplined by the spectrum of human hearing. In 1981, the German musical group Kraftwerk composed their album Computer World: seven tracks that seem to be deployed in time due to their enduring futurism and relevance to our current political and private realities. What might be considered an archetypical masterclass is really a strict testament to the realities that the members were experiencing at the time.

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In his book, The Postconceptual Condition, Peter Osborne argues that, “the concept of the contemporary projects a single temporal matrix of a living present” that booms as increasingly inevitable (Davies, p. 27). This contemporary perspective activates a migration away from the future and all its promises and relocates utopia into the present. Comparatively, the future subjunctive replicates this narrative by channeling unreal temporalities into the productive zone of the present. There is essentially a push to reject the past, the new(ly) and all other crises in favor of the shared, present now.
This lesson was echoed after I graduated from the American Academy of Art and began to work as a portrait painter. Being able to “perfectly and automatically” replicate the sitter’s likeness is not enough. A portrait artist needs to develop their sensibility in order to use the medium to capture the spirit of the sitter. I found public art was the vehicle to merge these skills to create a portrait of the community where the artwork will live. When commissioned to create a public work I meet with the organization’s board that selected me, as well as with community members. It’s the community meetings that become most important. I listen to people’s stories and together we find a way to give their message a voice. Our project contributes to the building of stronger neighborhoods and has the capacity to inspire new generations.

It seems important that your art be a form of advocacy for community and social change. Can you talk about this? Have you always worked this way? Do you have any recommendations for artists who are looking to make more of a direct impact in their communities? I strongly believe that visual art has the power to communicate, connect, and break down barriers while building stronger communities. I would like to share with you a quote by Jamie Bennett from ArtPlace America: “When you share an arts experience with someone you can both maintain your cultural identity and share a bond.” The most important thing artists can do to make an impact in their communities is to be present. It’s easier to remain in the studio, disengaged, developing works that ostensibly will engage others. There’s nothing wrong with being alone, working in your studio; I do that too throughout the year. We all need time for self-improvement, reflection, and to create work that echoes our individual voice, but to create and directly engage a public we need to be out there, interacting, listening and building relationships, not networks. Earlier in my career I attended events in order to exchange business cards and hopefully land a commission. I quickly learned how wrong I was. We all, regardless of our race, beliefs, or culture, enjoy relationships; a collection of business cards are just a form of printed card stock. To be Present is to genuinely meet and care for those we wish to connect with. I’ve found that the most meaningful impact comes when the community you’re working in gets to know who you are at an intimate level.

Are there escalating challenges or has your work’s relevance intensified in the current political climate in which peoples of Central and South America are increasingly being criminalized and marginalized? Fortunately not! I believe it is because of the approach and tone that I have taken. The message underpinning my public works is we are all equal in spite of cultural differences, race and ethnic groups we identify with, or our background. Often that message isn’t communicated clearly enough, due to lack of research or vested interest in others. An example highlighting my desire for inclusiveness is my latest mural titled Dreaming Forward/Sanando. This mural was Chatta-nooga’s first Latino mural and the first to be designed, led and painted by a Latino. As a Peruvian-born artist, I am proud of my heritage. The mural could have celebrated this, honoring Pre-Inca and Inca cultures or depicted contemporary influential Peruvian artists. It could have detailed the many Latin-American flags or notable US-born Latinos. Although I don’t see anything wrong with cultural pride, I knew that this would limit my audience. In addition, attempting to represent the diversity of 20+ Latino countries could present a chaotic composition, potentially alienating viewers. Public art is for all and should reach as many viewers as possible, while creating opportunities for individual discussions. This particular mural depicted four children representative of the main influences present in Latino culture: the Indigenous, African, European and Asian. The only fact that makes this mural Latino is that the artist behind the brush is Latino. I love it that anyone, regardless of their ethnicities, can understand and identify with the message of the work. Often, mural art is associated, or confused, with graffiti, but your work takes on more classical techniques. Can you give me an idea of your artistic background and influences? Before I started my academic training in 1999 at Chicago’s American Academy of Art, I trained for two and a half years under master portrait painter, Harry Ahn. I also took elective classes in human anatomy and had the opportunity to dissect cadavers. My artistic influences are the Renaissance and 19th century European masters.

Are there any specific differences between your mural work and your oil paintings? In what ways are they alike, or different? Can you tell me about other aspects of your arts and cultural contributions, in particular ways in which you serve the community? My approach to oil painting and mural work is the same. I get to work on both in my studio as well as with volunteer to pose as reference for the artwork. For my mural work I use an indirect painting method known as the “parachute technique.” This process consists of painting on multiple 5’x5’ squares of primed polytab fabric. This allows me to paint in my studio, especially during winter and inclement weather. Once finished, my mural team and I install the fabric onto the primed wall, paint any surrounding blank area, and later protect the work with a sealer and anti-graffiti varnish. A very rewarding step in my mural process that doesn’t happen in my oil painting is the opportunity I have to engage with the public. The community gets to participate during the design and underpainting stages. I also get to meet and work with other local artists and emerging artists. I hold workshops with these artists as they eventually become ambassadors for the project, as well as assistants during our community painting parties, and mural unveiling ceremonies. Through these interactions we build new friendships, but most importantly the community is able to meet people from other cultures, backgrounds, and with shared goals. Every public project is more than an application of paint on a surface, it is a positive spark in each person, which is then spread in the community.

Lastly, can you talk about any upcoming projects you are currently working on, or have planned? I’m currently completing a sculptural portrait of Dr. Emma Rochelle Wheeler. I started this project last year during a 12-week Residency at the Creative Discovery Museum in Chattanooga, TN. For the residency I wanted to create a piece that would remain in the museum, particularly for kids that, due to physical challenges, have fewer opportunities to experience art. Dr. Wheeler suffered sight-related problems as a child but went on to become an inspirational figure in Chattanooga. In response I produced a tactile portrait, one that honored Dr. Wheeler and could be touched upon as well as touched by Museum visitors. At the moment I’m fundraising in order to produce a mural in collaboration with refugee groups in southeastern Tennessee.
and also, when you ask. All versions are equally valid, a communal past and present. and Humpty Dumpty exist as disputable and shared are commonplace. However, because of the multiplicity childhood, he treats them impersonally, like paint, in Hancock collages images directly from his The same is true of the gas can, and Humpty Dumpty. You know this because you have held one before. Hancock about childhood memorabilia representing for the past is spoken to, and it responds. Nonetheless, he calls the painting a monument. Hancock, Espinosa, Dicamillo, Craig, and Lambda understand that the past activates according to who is remembering, and also, when you ask. All versions are equally valid, between people and throughout time. Revisit a memory a day after it takes place, and one is seeing a different past than they will looking at the same memory a year later. However, both these pasts were equally felt, and, in the mind, equally real. In this way, one lives multiple lifetimes through memory. In the work of five distinct contemporary artists in Athens, Georgia, an amalgamated past is spoken to, and it responds.

Juan David Espinosa creates a collective experience by putting an inner conversation on display. In The Sensational Plant, he projects on a wall a video of himself as a toddler in a public garden in Colombia, he runs towards red and orange flowers, grabbing at their petals and laughing as family members run after him, carry him back, set him down, and let him run away again. A sobbing distillation is laid over the film, and an uneasy noise amplifies and recedes. In the performance area there are three white pedestals, with three baby Mimosa pudica—sensitive plants. While the video plays, the adult Espinosa paces around the pillars. When his toddler self reaches out to grab flowers, his present self touches a plant. The plant folds inward, remaining there for thirty seconds or so before opening up again. The present Espinosa concentrates visibly, never acknowledging or making eye contact with his audience. While his toddler self struggles, he murmurs to himself, too softly to be heard. At the video’s end, as a male relative picks up the toddler one last time, Espinosa says, barely audible, “I hate how much I miss you.”

Later, discussing the piece, Espinosa talks about his childhood in Colombia. He remembers dragging his hands through large swaths of sensitive plants, and watching the subsequent wave of recoiling stems. The Sensational Plant presents the idea of Home as solid reality, evidenced by the home video and the plants’ response to touch. Yet all these also operate like relics or artifacts, not only cataloguing the existence of Home, but the uncertainty that Home still exists, or can exist again in the way that these elements do. Espinosa, as he paces between present and memory, shows his conversation with the past and what became of it.

Aiden Dicamillo, a painter and interdisciplinary academician, takes an active stance against the traditional past, as they use art to reclaim the history of their womxn ancestors. Assigned female at birth, they consider themselves part of a line of womxn whose lives are shaped by warped translations of the New Testament and male leaders of the Christian church. Oversexualization of physical forms, and the brutal dictation of lives that spring from it, produced a gendered cultural role that Dicamillo inherited. Contemplating both the relic’s brutality and redundancy, they create artwork that quarrels their childhood and their family history through genderless, boldless paint-tops, as well as allies of personalized genitals and spirits. They leave no foothold for binary terms and linearity, revealing the conceptual and unknown. When Dicamillo’s grandmother died, her life was treated with forms of documentation and memory that became a form of violence against her. To Beak Ceder is Dicamillo’s response and grieving process.

The piece monumentalizes Dicamillo’s grandmother’s death, and quarrels her history by separating her memory from her sex and sexuality. Jewel tones of scarlet, pink, amber leap from the surface to wear the gaze. In scale, the piece dwarf’s its viewers, and the massive blue hexagons in a moment of suspended gravity. Despite undulating space and flowing gradations, the soul depicted remains sharp, and dangerous—a set of kitchen knives left unattended on the table even though children are nearby.

“When Jacob wrestled with god, he built an altar made of stone and anointed it,” Dicamillo writes. “She was thick. She was strong. And that’s god, and I had to construct a monument. It’s anointed in rage and gentleness.” In the monument to their grandmother’s soul, they realize their family history. Similarly, the religious imagery, queer symbols, and solemn ballads of Caleb Craig’s work grue the loss of a childhood and adolescence. Raised in a patriarchal Christian household marred by poverty, his identity and expression were often discarded or decorrupted. Although Craig has his identity and expression now, he feels his personal history as a very real loss.

“I feel stunted,” he tells me, “in that way.” The disparity between his childhood self and the self that was able to act in the world is something he revisits and explores in his art. In his performance piece Hierophant, Craig stands in front of a wall, upon which is projected ever-shifting geometric patterns of vivid colors. Beneath him there is a high throne. Hanging from the ceiling there are three illuminated, color-shifting prisms. Craig sings solemn self-composed ballads addressing, for the audience, unknown people and forces. At the end, he climbs upon the throne. He places a replica of a papal coron on his head, takes up a cross, and lifts his hand in the benediction: two fingers up towards heaven, two fingers down towards the earth.

His power mirrors the Hierophant, Craig’s birthday. Tarot visualizing the bridge between heaven and earth. However, the Hierophant’s visage is solid—he, the architectural surroundings, and kneeling attendants make him a pillar. Meanwhile, Craig’s clothes expose his form. He is seated on a throne of translucent cloth over skeletal wooden beams. His headband and ornaments are bone white, and donned before the audience. His prisms echo the compositional pyramids in use throughout art history, but the prisms also shift colors and float disconnected from one another and from the ground. Seated in front of a flow of form and light, clothed in symbols both transient and permanent, Craig’s bridge between heaven and earth seems as fluid as rainwater.

Lambda Celsius taps the hypermodern experience. Heightened opportunity accompanies heightened influence and loss infrastructure for the future; this uncertainty means that individuals live multiple lives through the perception of potential realities as realized ones. The individual shifts between what they can consider themselves will happen, and so flicker from life to life from moment to moment. Hancock, Espinosa, Dicamillo, Craig, and Lambda Celsius, in their practices, represent the ways in which artists reposition themselves not as subject of uncontrollable events, but as omnipotent editors of their inner beings and experiences. Through art, performance, and inner selves, the relationship between the present and the past is allowed space to exist as more dialogue than loop, religion and self-identity formed by the calls and responses. In this way, artists create and live multiple pasts through the revisiting of memory, living sideways as well as forwards.
Carl Pope and I sat together for four hours. Enjoying each other’s company, we chatted about art, ate biscuits, and read his book together. I found the man kind, tender, and brilliant. The acclaimed artist is known for his meticulous installations, community-based collaborations, and poster projects. Although he has shown in museums such as the Whitney Museum and the Cleveland Museum of Art, he also values the immediate impact he can make through his grassroots community projects. His poster series The Bad Air Smelled of Flowers has found an iteration in a literary collaboration with visual artist Nicholas Mroczek, entitled The Apotheosis of Black Lives Matter, the book unfolds with cultural analysis that provokes questions about confronting history, understanding the present, and imagining the future. As we turned the pages, the eye-catching, text-based images drew me in, and the poetic words begged me to think. Digging into his art requires extensive cultural literacy and readiness to face your own presumptions and adherence to conventions. I left our conversation with a reading list and renewed commitment to self-honesty.

Sara Lee Burd: What were some early experiences in your life that steered you to make socially engaged art?

Interview: Carl Pope

Carl Pope: My high school photography teacher was a grassroots social activist, feminist, and protester. She taught me that art could be a tool for social change. Those ideas that I got in high school from her about how it was photography that changed public opinion about the Vietnam War that affected me. She said it wasn’t the protest. It was the daily inundation of horrific images of the war that changed public opinion. Her engendering art? Is your third collaboration with Tennessee State University (TSU). Why do you value your students and the people of Nashville to participate in Nashville Visionaries?

Carl Pope: The community-based project, Nashville Visionaries, is your third collaboration with Tennessee State University (TSU). Why do you value your opportunities to work in Nashville?

Carl Pope: I really see this as one of the ways TSU could participate in civic revitalization through the Nashville’s art scene. If we are going to truly revitalize our communities, we have to include the arts. We have to engage the creative community in a way that is supportive and authentic. The way to do that is to continue to show how vibrant that community is. That’s what I wanted to do with my residency at TSU and the people of Nashville to participate in Nashville Visionaries, I was an invited artist to all those “visionaries” and had an overwhelming response. Calling the exhibition Nashville Visionaries gives the voices included authority. Why did you want people to self-identify as visionaries?

Interview: Carl Pope

That was part of the whole thing. It was to view art with whatever vision they wanted to share with anybody who saw their work. Not just showing the creativity vitality of the community, this project gave them the permission to really explore the imagination. We are coming to a time in our society when creative ingenuity and innovation needs to be encouraged as an answer to the growing problems facing us in the future. Look at the global economy. It’s not more money that’s going to save us, it’s going to be how well we imagine solutions to the growing limitations ahead. It feels like there is a continuing investment in the creative vitality in Nashville, art will begin to contribute more and more to the city.

What do you think the role of empathy is for our future?

We need to understand things, but if we experience it in our lives, the dimensions of it deepen and widen.

Interview: Carl Pope

The kind of thinking that is so prevalent in this society is thinking without feeling. People think about the deaths in Syria and Iraq, militarized police action, killing of black people, but few of us feel what it is we are thinking about. I can intellectually articulate the difference between seeing and thinking and thinking with feeling. The reason why things remain the same is because nobody wants to feel what it is happening when they think about it. You are forced to make a decision about it if you are actively feeling. When you see people who are really feeling the death or despair, they lose their minds with pain, and they become sensitized to all of it. That’s what for me is the waking up of empathy. It’s the moving away from the intellectual and conceptual to a thinking with people. When people actually want to feel the outrage is unstoppable. Where do you see us going as a society if we do not make changes in our thoughts and actions?

Interview: Carl Pope

We are headed toward the collapse of the American Empire, the United States’ dominance, and the global monetary system. The best way to meet that is not to steal and hoard wealth, it is to strengthen one’s ability to imagine and create. That challenge is going to be different for each one of us. To use creativity to meet the unexpected in productive ways. That’s what Nashville Visionaries is about.

Your art does not look futuristic, but it is connected with time travel. The quotations from the past you include in your posters echo truths of today and perhaps tomorrow. Would you call yourself an Afrofuturist?

Interview: Carl Pope

I was 19 years old listening to Funkadelic albums. I saw George Clinton land the mothership in Indianapolis in the 70s. I am an Afrofuturist that does not look like other Afrofuturists because I am not hooked up with kites in trappings. Those issues of time travel and future past are part of my work, though. I am not using the flashy, impress-face visual markers, but it is there in the way that I implement my ideas. It is about using imagination that is unhinged by the limitations of the body, this is the way we approach conventional ideas, what we can and cannot think. I think Afrofuturism offers new possibilities, but you aren’t going to see me wearing silver knee-high boots with a matching Afro and Apple computer.

So you are a luddite futurist?

Interview: Carl Pope

That is not what I am doing. I am an Afrofuturist – I would have to be in the desert outside the shining global city in the future. I would not have access to that technologically advanced society, but I can think in the same way as the people in the shining global city. I imagine, how can I as an Afrofuturist think in the same kind of ways, but without access to that technology. I always thought that the technologies for someone like that would be the technologies available in a person’s consciousness. Whether you want to call them psychic gifts or superhuman abilities. Where I would place myself as an Afrofuturist is thinking of those technologies not as mechanical or electronic, but as abilities that lie at the edge of human possibilities. Those capabilities are available to me as I realize my potential as a human being without a scientific intervention or computer. Are you fighting for the individual or society with your art?

Interview: Carl Pope

I want to create a culture that is a part of our evolutionary process. Becoming a cog in a machine is the antithesis of my evolutionary process as a human being. This is America, you want to be a machine? You can be that. I’m not interested in that. My challenge is to develop my subjectivity. For me what explodes the issues of the simplicity, racism, white supremacy, colonization, object corporate capitalism, neoliberalism, homophobia, toxic masculinity, and all of that is a healthy relationship to truth and self-honesty. My revolution is a revolution of self-honesty. Dropping the defenses or fears that keep you from pursuing self-honesty and feeling the truth of things.

How can we better approach self-honesty?

Interview: Carl Pope

When you have a hierarchical mindset, you begin to categorize everything in terms of that particular mindset. We do it automatically because we are socialized into a culture that teaches that until a person wakes up to realize what they are doing and rejects it. By default, if you have not consciously done that rejection, if you are constantly reading things that are hierarchical by binary oppositions, if you’re doing that, why racism and white supremacy are so easily ingrained in both unsuccessful black people and unsuccessful white people. It’s the system to which we are acclimated without thinking. Until a person wakes up and says no to that or its conscious influence in every way, they are stuck. Self-honesty is the only way we can break free from being colonized in the mind.

Using text in your art strikes at the power of words. Why do you think language is significant to societal change?

Interview: Carl Pope

People think when they see the sun going down in the sky, the sun is setting. No, the sun is not setting. It is the earth that is moving. Our language defines our reality. “Setting” is not a truthful statement about what we are seeing in the sky. That slip creates a false sense of reality because we allow ourselves to use false language that influences our perspective about what is true.

What kind of art do you imagine will be most relevant in the future?

Interview: Carl Pope

The art that is going to reach people is not the art you see in New York that sells for $20 million. It’s going to be something else that touches people’s sense of urgency. It might be a video of someone getting murdered or a book that sparks someone’s imagination. It is going to easily circulate in the same kind of ways as my posters. I am using creativity to strike a nerve in culture.

Interview: Jacoub Reyes

Jacoub Reyes is a multidisciplinary artist living and working in Orlando. He is a graduate of the University of Central Florida with a BFA in Drawing and Printmaking, a recipient of the Southern Graphics International Grant, and a frequent exhibitor, lecturer, and workshop instructor across the South. For more information and images, visit jacoubreyes.com.

Woodcuts are traditionally executed on an intimate, handheld scale, but some of your prints reach up to eight feet in length. What led you to ‘go big’ with printmaking?

‘Going big’ happened naturally. When I was in college, I would walk around looking through dumpsters and other places where people had discarded things. Oddly shaped and oversized pieces of wood were readily available, and they went along with my eco-friendly ethos. The image is determined by the wood that I find. The scale allows me to incorporate small details while being able to grab people’s attention from across the room. Likewise, printmaking is an empathically planar medium, but I was fascinated to see your recent solo show at Beacon College that occupied the entire volume of the space — with freestanding light boxes, suspended chicken feet, and a labyrinth of rock salt on the gallery floor, in addition to what was on the wall.

I have always been interested in activating all areas of a space. For that exhibition in particular, I wanted to create a counterpart to the graphic work on the walls, which was heavy in Christian imagery. The installation in the middle of the space was an allusion to Santeéa. Over time, the humidity melted the salt labyrinth and the ghostly tracks of visitors’ footsteps made their way around the room. These spatial elements added another layer of discourse to the exhibition.

Christian imagery has been prevalent in your work for quite some time — the road to Damascus, the Lion of Judah, the Pietà. What is distinctive about your interpretation and treatment of these familiar themes?

I use these themes because they are recognizable and reliable but can be read differently depending on how they are framed within a particular context. I use Christian symbols to connect with the plight of enslaved and native peoples. I aim to find a place for tradition in modernity rather than to destroy it. For instance, my Pietà took a very traditional form of La Virgin de Guadalupe but used anonymous refugees in place of the Biblical figures. A mother holds her dead child; her shadow forming the outline of a slain lamb as other mothers of dead children mourn at her feet.

One of your most recent pieces is a woodcut of Columbus’s flagship Santa María, its sails emblazoned with the crosses of the Knights Templar. Again, there is explicit Christian symbolism here, as well as some postcolonial implications to unpack. I used the image of the caravel to represent commerce, migration, grandeur, and power. Columbus’s voyage was a turning point for both the Caribbean and Spain. The agreement between King Ferdinand, Queen Isabella, and Columbus stipulated that most resources that were found in the Caribbean would belong to Spain, and that greatly enriched their economy. They also wanted to spread Christianity to any lands they captured. This led to a crisis of cultural identity and the creation of globalization.

You’ve printed this particular image not on paper but on very colorful and ornate cloth that looks like a vintage Hermès silk scarf. Although you simply describe it as ‘found fabric’, Columbus’s ill-fated expedition aimed to find a new ‘Silk Road’ between East and West, so there’s a clever allusion here, but what else was behind this choice?

I wanted to make a connection with luxury goods, which equate to power and status. I chose a Baroque-like design that is still coveted in fashion today. Sometimes when I look for materials, I find something that works perfectly with the design I’m working on. Sometimes I don’t, and I save it for a different project. Working with found materials is an integral part of my process. It’s ‘discovering’ the discarded or unwanted and making something important out of it.

You also confronted the specter of colonialism with another nautically-themed woodcut that depicts not a caravel but a cruise ship. In this piece, I wanted to explore the ripple effects of colonialism on today’s tourism industry. From discovery onwards, the influence of Europe on the Caribbean was profound. Native populations were exploited and their economies were destroyed with the introduction of sugar plantations. Their social order was reconstructed according to the colonizers’ views of the ‘natural’ racial order — white supremacy and black slavery. This disruption continues today through tourism. It brings changes in value systems and behaviors that threaten indigenous identity. Local cultures are transformed to appeal to tourists’ expectations — craftspeople adapt their traditional forms to suit consumers’ tastes.

Two of your recent prints are homages to the masters: Two Figures (After Dürer) and Chum (After Turner). What other artists do you admire?

I admire traditional printmakers like Gustave Doré, Hendrick Goltzius, Rembrandt, Trian, and Goya. Their use of line, perspective, and light has always inspired me to push my work into different realms. Right now, I plan to print my largest woodblock yet — The Tower of Babel, which will be thirteen feet tall. What’s your next big project?

Right now, I am organizing an exhibition with two other teaching artists at the Cornell Fine Arts Museum at Rollins College, which will showcase a yearlong project by students with diverse learning backgrounds. I will also be attending an artist-in-residence program in Mexico, where I’ll be working on a series of large woodcuts focusing on the transmission of diseases to indigenous people. And when I get back from there, I plan to print my largest woodblock yet — The Tower of Babel, which will be thirteen feet tall. And lastly — the question I ask every artist I meet — what’s your favorite color? Black.
Interview: Rocky Horton

Rocky Horton is a conceptual artist living and working out of Nashville, Tennessee, with his wife Mandy Rogers Horton and their four children. On November 25, 2018, Rocky launched a self-declared artist-in-residency through an ad in the Nashville Scene. Over the course of the year, Rocky is creating work in direct response to Nashville and its community; the residency will conclude on November 25, 2019.

What prompted your self-declared residency? Why did you choose to begin in November?

Since moving to Nashville, I’ve observed community projects happening here. Over time, the goal ones hung out, but they did not fit within the scope of my work. The goal of my residency is to create a framework within which I can understand and incorporate Nashville as a community and as my place of residence. The November 25th is my birthday, thus it marks a particular time in my life—one year into my residency—thus it marks a particular time in my life.

Tell me more about the Nashville Bedford Forrest project. What is your rationale behind the website design?

I have been aware of the Nathan Bedford Forrest sculpture located off I-65 in Nashville since I moved to town, and I have often made work that is in response to it. My initial goal with this project was to re-contextualize the sculpture, but I wasn’t sure what approach would be most effective. I thought about a parade float that I would either let rot or burn up, but I wanted to develop work with which Nashvillians could directly interact. The leaning tower of Pisa came to mind since I wanted to reframe the monument with humor.

Ultimately, I have developed a web-based puzzle platform in which participants are able to click and drag different parts of the statue around in order to transform it in any way they see fit. This ugly, hyper-racist monument is demystified through creative re-contextualization; it can now exist as a meme. Everyone has an opportunity to creatively by making the weight of a socially negotiated sculpture through more constructive discussions.

Have you planned out your projects for the length of the residency? Was Nashville Bedford Forrest meant to be the initiation project?

Nothing is necessarily planned out by date, but I do have three linchpin projects that serve as a general structure for the year. Nashville Bedford Forrest wasn’t necessarily intended to be the first project; I just worked out that Kyle Jones, the web designer with whom I collaborated on the website NashvilleBedfordForest.com, was available to work with me at that time. Another upcoming project is Pedal Pub Symposium, which will involve various speakers delivering art talks while pedaling around Nashville drinking beer. I have already begun working on Pedal Pub Symposium, and I will be setting up a Kickstarter project for it soon as well.

In your recent work outside of the residency, you’ve been making large-scale, detailed floral paintings. Are there crossovers in the types of work that you create?

The paintings I consider romantic in the high meaning of the term, and the residency is also romantic in its own way. My work is self-effacing, humorous, and hopeful, and that is what ties all the work together. Throughout graduate school I would get in trouble because my work didn’t carry a consistent style or theme, but I don’t dive deep into one thing. Instead, I work on side projects that develop into “the thing.” The projects I am working on, like Nashville Bedford Forrest, are silly and critical, comedic and tragic. Most of my work feels romantic, hopeful, and silly, but is up to something serious. The structure of the residency is as a whole underscores that ridiculous and silly structure visually present in my other work.

Are you worried about brand?

I don’t care. The way I see it, everything has some connection, as long as the relationship between the work is consistent (humorous, serious, romantic). I move about, discover, and allow myself to gravitate towards my instincts in my work. Authenticity in the work is my primary concern.

You are Department Chair at Lipscomb University, co-founder of Coop, have had an opening exhibition at The Arts Company in March, and you have a family. How have you managed your time throughout this residency?

I’m just placing this project into the structure of my life. Lenka Clayton’s artist residency in motherhood is similar; I’m essentially using the same strategy. I have resources here. Where I am now is rich and beautiful.
Southern Fried Queer Pride is one of the fiercest organizations in Atlanta. Created by performer and community activist Taylor Alxndr, SFQP has become a haven for queer people all over the South. Taylor and her team have hosted drag shows, pop-up thrift shops, comedy nights, artist markets, film nights, dance parties, potlucks and just about anything else you can think of. For nearly five years, Taylor has led projects and community events gathering LGBT and POC artists and creatives. The organization’s biggest project to date was 2018’s AT1: A Burning Ball, an event that received national recognition and put SFQP on the map in a major way with coverage from Vice Magazine, Paper Magazine, and more.

Southern Fried Queer Pride has become not only a safe space for entertainment and parties, but an invaluable resource for community dialogue, civic engagement, public health tools, and building grounds for radical vision and protest. We spoke to Taylor about her success as an organizer, SFQP’s upcoming events, and a lot of things to go right. What has been the key to your team’s success in maintaining such a wide, diverse and impactful platform?

Your mission statement and vision for Southern Fried Queer Pride is refreshing and powerful in that it seeks to offer service and visibility for the often underserved and underrepresented queer and arts community in the South. What was the catalyst for SFQP’s creation? SFQP started in 2014 out of a lack of spaces for art and activism to meet, as well as a lack of space for youth and people of color to exist. Most queer spaces then were 21+, heavily bars and clubs, and lacking the arts. We started organizing house parties and meet-ups in people’s houses, which all led to our first festival in 2015.

SFQP offers a wide range of programming in Georgia and beyond, from clothing drives and potlucks to performance art. Organizing at this level requires a lot of talent and hard work, and one of the most remarkable skills you have is that of an organizer. You generously share the space with so many artists and performers and are always welcoming. How do you as an organizer stay engaged and diligent when so much of the world can be draining and exhausting, especially for the QTPOC community?

What do you look for when choosing people and groups to bring into the community? To come full circle and to honor a community that gave me community meant so much to me. And to see the diversity of people of color who attended it was also just so gratifying.

What is the actual capacity as an organization, as an activist, as a supporter or community member, etc.? I’ve seen some of the most empowering gatherings, heard some of the most cathartic community discussions, and witnessed some of the most radical performances of my life at SFQP events. Give me one of your proudest moments with SFQP?

Definitely our AT1: A Burning Ball with Morph that happened last November. When I came to Atlanta, the ballroom scene was one of my first introductions into the community. To come full circle and to honor a community that gave me community meant so much to me. And to see the diversity of people of color who attended it was also just so gratifying.

What are you looking forward to the most for this year’s SFQP festival? It’s our 5th year, which is major for an independent queer arts festival. It’s something I’m still figuring out. Currently, I’m trying to navigate burnout while still being looked at as a resource in the community. I think everyone can understand the idea of capacity more - what’s our capacity as an organization, as an activist, as a supporter or community member, etc.? I’ve seen some of the most empowering gatherings, heard some of the most cathartic community discussions, and witnessed some of the most radical performances of my life at SFQP events. Give me one of your proudest moments with SFQP?

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What's your idea or myth you’d like to deconstruct from the past that can help our future? The myth that if you’re not working, you’re being lazy. This is something I’ve really felt and am working on unlearning. If we all could take time for ourselves to relax, I think we could create and organize more productively.

Are there any important lessons you’ve learned as an organizer or performer that informs your current and future decision-making that you’d like to share?

Being an organizer has definitely given me lessons in being more sensitive and aware to people’s identities, experiences, etc. Being a performer has taught me time and time again that all of this work and performing means nothing if you’re not having fun.

What would you like to see for the future of the queer community in the next 50 or so years? In the next 50 years, I want to see more internal building and creating. I think since Stonewall, our community has sometimes looked for affirmation and resources from the cisgender, heterosexual world. I would love to see us become more reliant on each other and not cater to the mainstream, straight way of things.

Interview: Taylor Alxndr

Southern Fried Queer Pride is one of the fiercest organizations in Atlanta. Created by performer and community activist Taylor Alxndr, SFQP has become a haven for queer people all over the South. Taylor and her team have hosted drag shows, pop-up thrift shops, comedy nights, artist markets, film nights, dance parties, potlucks and just about anything else you can think of. For nearly five years, Taylor has led projects and community events gathering LGBT and POC artists and creatives. The organization’s biggest project to date was 2018’s AT1: A Burning Ball, an event that received national recognition and put SFQP on the map in a major way with coverage from Vice Magazine, Paper Magazine, and more.

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The work of visual and sculptural artist Zipporah Camille Thompson transports you from the confines of a gallery into an alternate dimension in outer space. Historians are encapsulated in clay objects and woven textiles that lay before you. Uniquely, sculptures are artifacts with ornate details share a tale of personal journey and identity. The cosmic contemporary installations Zipporah constructs evoke questions of parallel universes and the spiritual beings that seek to guide our path.

Aileen Farshi: Can you begin by sharing the inspiration for your first works and how the conceptual process has evolved? Zipporah Camille Thompson was investigating themes such as death, rituals, and self-identity. Early in life, I had a season of loss with members of my family and those feelings of affliction resonated with me. My work was concentrated on death and rebirth. Throughout my childhood, my family would vacate the beach and mountains. On those trips, I scoured the beaches and hiked the woods in search of the perfect seashell or stone. To me, those objects encapsulated a fond experience into memory. A talisman of the perfect seashell or stone. To me, those objects scoured the beaches and hiked the woods in search of the perfect seashell or stone. To me, those objects...
Young Art Writers Project: Interview with Art-Ed Hero Tina M. Atkinson

Where do you teach and what grades do you teach? How long have you been teaching art? I have been the art teacher at Percy Priest Elementary School in Nashville, Tennessee, for 21 years. I have also taught some art education classes at Belmont University.

What is your favorite time of the school day and why? While I plan in the morning, my 4th graders have their recess. I open the art room so they may choose to create, especially in the winter when the weather is poor. It is fun to have the students come in and work, help each other, and chat. I don’t teach during this time, so the students have to work independently and help each other.

What is your favorite lesson or concept to teach? I love to teach clay and weaving. Weaving is great in the classroom because students can get home before the holidays. Right now I am behind with photographing and uploading all of those clay projects.

How often do you collaborate across disciplines and what is a collaboration you are excited about right now? I often design trans-curricular units. By planning trans-curricular instead of cross-curricular it allows creativity to remain center stage as students knowledge-build and research through a variety of other academic subjects. Creativity is a very motivating students are often driven to do more writing and research to further communicate their ideas when they are developing through art.

Who is your favorite artist to teach kids about? My favorites is a Greek Sculpture unit in which students explore Greek mythology and design an original character that could be inserted into the mythology. Students then sculpt, paint and embellish the sculpture. The final step is to write an origin story for the new character, explaining details about famous relatives or special powers the character may possess. Another unit I have been developing for the spring includes studying plant and animal cells. This unit includes micro-printing cellular structures and then re-creating the organism that the micro-printed cell may belong to based on similarities to either plant or animal cells. My target grade is 4th because they missed learning about cells when the science curriculum moved its teaching from 4th grade to 3rd grade. My daughter happens to be in that group, so I decided to fill the gap through art. How would you tell a 15-year-old who is thinking about becoming an artist or art educator?

It is the best job in education! If you are going to teach, teach art. It is challenging and not for the disorganized, but it is the one place kids can still feel like humans. They are allowed to create and express themselves in the art room in a way that is being tested and assessed right out of every other element of education. Find an expert art teacher and spend time in the art room with them. Make as much art as you can, try as much media, and pay attention to your education classes because management is important. But…if you don’t believe that by teaching art you can change the world, then pick something else.

What’s your least favorite thing you get asked to do by your colleagues? My colleagues are very respectful of my time and resources. It helps that I foster a culture of collaboration. A phrase I have used for years is, “I am happy to advise you on your fabulous project!” By becoming the consultant, it allows people to feel comfortable asking for help and advice and absolves me of the responsibility of not meeting someone else’s expectations; each petitioner becomes the leader of the project. Do you let people borrow your glue gun? Yes, I am always willing for people to bring anything to the art room during my planning time or after school that needs to be glued. I encourage teachers to keep their own mini-low-temp glue gun in the classroom. I keep my high temp version in the art room, and they are welcome to visit it when the room is open.

What question do you wish I would have asked but didn’t? What is the answer? If you had the stage in front of administrators and art policy-makers, what would you want to say about why art education is essential?

I would encourage every administrator and educational policy maker to spend some time in an art classroom, not as an evacuator, but to see how this time positively impacts student’s lives. Making art has an amazing calming property that soothes anxiety and pushes worries away for a little while. More than that, it is challenging and fosters students to think about problems from different angles. This ability to approach problems with an attitude of exploration and determination fosters innovation that translates to every field and industry. Creative entrepreneurs, artists, politicians, administrators, teachers, doctors, scientists, inventors, mathematicians, researchers and more all come from the art room where failure is recognized as a sign of fearless exploration and a positive learning strategy that leads to success!

The Young Art Writers Project provides Number 98's students and their teachers throughout the South with a resource in order to encourage dialogue about art. Young Art Writers is also pleased to support art educators through “Art-Ed Hero” interviews. If you are interested in using Number 98 as an impetus to start a conversation about art in your community – with students, nursing homes or other interested groups – or if you know an outstanding art educator that we should feature, please email Michael Mitchell at MichaelMitchell@numberinc.org. For more information about the program, visit youngartwriters.wordpress.com.

Michael Mitchell is an artist (painter/sculptor) and educator in Nashville, TN.
Kenturah Davis + Desmond Lewis
Crosstown Arts
Memphis, TN
February 15 – March 10, 2019

On February 15, Delta Axis and Locate Arts/Seed Space selected Memphis artists Kenturah Davis and Kenturah Davis, who practices outside of Tennessee, to exhibit their work together as a collaborative exploration of every state in which Tennessee artists and promotes contemporary art scenes throughout dedicated to bringing contemporary art to Memphis, TN

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