

Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts

Bemis Center facilitates the creation, presentation, and understanding of contemporary art through an international residency program, exhibitions, and educational programs.

Residency Program

Since 1981, Bemis has provided more than 1,000 artists dedicated time, space, and resources to conduct research and create new work. Bemis offers artists private live/work studios, financial support, technical/administrative assistance, and opportunities for intellectual discourse about contemporary art. The Sound Art + Experimental Music Program is a special track for artists working in sound, composition, voice, and music of all genres. Participating artists receive financial, technical, and administrative support, along with dedicated facilities for rehearsing, recording, and performing. The Curator-in-Residence Program provides national curators the opportunity to participate in the Bemis Residency Program and organize exhibitions and public programs at Bemis Center.

Exhibition Program

Bemis Center's exhibition program features solo and group exhibitions of artwork in all media by local, national, and international artists. Exhibitions are always free, open to the public, and frequently introduce the community of Omaha to the most experimental and provocative art forms today.

Public Programs

Artist-driven, community-responsive programs provide opportunities for the public to learn about and be inspired by the visual arts. Through artist-led workshops, ARTalks, open studios, panel discussions, film screenings, and performances, the community has direct access to artists and to their diverse approaches to art-making and interpreting the world around us.

LOW END

LOW END is Bemis Center's music venue and an integral part of the Sound Art + Experimental Music Program. The unique artist-designed space features free live shows by local, national, and international sound artists, composers, and experimental musicians. These performances aim to not only build new audiences and a greater appreciation for nontraditional forms of sound but also to liberate artists to take risks and present truly avant-garde work.

Alumni Program

Designed for artists who have participated in Bemis Center's Residency Program or have exhibited at Bemis, the Alumni Program ensures the organization's ongoing relevance, connection, and impact to Bemis alumni by providing financial resources, unique opportunities, and expanding their professional networks.

Gallery Hours

Wednesday 11 AM – 5 PM
Thursday 11 AM – 9 PM
Friday 11 AM – 5 PM
Saturday 11 AM – 5 PM
Sunday 11 AM – 5 PM

Book your visit at bemiscenter.org/visit.

Admission

Thanks to the generous support of individual donors, local and national foundations, and corporate partners, Bemis Center offers free admission to all of its exhibitions and public programs.

Photo Policy

Visitors are welcome to take photographs without flash. Please refrain from photographing other visitors without their permission. Tag us on Instagram or Twitter @bemiscenter or #bemiscenter or on Facebook @Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts.

Accessibility

Access details are available at bemiscenter.org/accessibility and the front desk. Ask staff for assistance.

This gallery guide is available in Spanish at bemiscenter.org/media/pdfs/summer2021.pdf.

Esta guía de la galería está disponible en español en bemiscenter.org/media/pdfs/summer2021.pdf.



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The Nebraska Arts Council, a state agency, has supported these programs through its matching grants program funded by the Nebraska Legislature, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Visit www.nebraskaartscouncil.org for information on how the Nebraska Arts Council can assist your organization, or how you can support the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

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ALL TOGETHER, AMONGST MANY: REFLECTIONS ON EMPATHY

Curated by Rachel Adams, Chief Curator and Director of Programs

June 5–September 19, 2021

EXHIBITING ARTISTS

Joshua Bennett (Boston, MA), Lee Cannarozzo (Buffalo, NY), Lizania Cruz (Brooklyn, NY), Cass Davis (Chicago, IL), Brendan Fernandes (Chicago, IL), Marcus Fischer (Portland, OR), Jeffrey Gibson (Hudson, NY), Cameron Granger (Columbus, OH), Ekene Ijeoma (Cambridge, MA + Brooklyn, NY), Seitu Ken Jones (St. Paul, MN), Molly Joyce (Fairfield, CT), Christine Sun Kim (Berlin, Germany), Glenn Ligon (New York, NY), Kambui Olujimi (Queens, NY), Jaune Quick-to-See Smith and Neal Ambrose-Smith (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation, MT), Julia Rose Sutherland (Mohkinstsis (Calgary, Alberta) on Treaty 7 territory), Stephanie Syjuco (Oakland, CA), Jordan Weber (Des Moines, IA), Carmen Winant (Columbus, OH), Jody Wood (Brooklyn, NY)

BEMIS X CENTER

“Solidarity is rooted not in our capacity to cross divides and understand each other, but in recognizing we have the obligation to care for each other no matter what stories they tell about themselves, no matter if they refuse to speak, and no matter if we have any sense of ourselves reflected in them.”

– Aruna D’Souza from “Empathy will not save us”

All Together, Amongst Many: Reflections on Empathy brings together a multi-generational group of artists who are in constant dialogue with the complex narratives of structural injustices and cultural heritage and make art as a civic and empathetic act. Several works facilitate or employ participation, offering views of how we can engage in civic life during the intertwined crises of systemic racism and COVID-19, and emphasize the joining of voices to transform our culture.

This exhibition was originally slated to open in July 2020 during intense social unrest, an increasingly dysfunctional political system, a global pandemic, and as a precursor to the US presidential election. One of the tragic results of this tumultuous period was the gradual fading of human empathy from everyday life. And while a shift has begun to attempt to dismantle systemic racism and discrimination, injustice and violence against people of color—George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Omaha’s Zachary Bear Heels and James Scurlock, among countless others—continues. Coupled with a global pandemic resulting in extreme isolation and the deaths of over 3 million people worldwide, human connection and deep understanding of each other’s struggles is imperative. While empathy is a personal transformation and not a collective act¹, this exhibition serves as both an opportunity for listening, learning, and self-reflection, and as a catalyst for social and political action. It is only through individual and collective work that we, as a global society, will realize a truly equitable existence for all.

All Together, Amongst Many is a collection of personal stories—from the artist and the viewer. The artists invite the viewer to think and care about other people; to hear and believe their stories; and perhaps see a reflection of their own personal experience. The exhibition encourages us to sit with others and to contemplate

LEE CANNAROZZO
APRIL 13, 2021

I’m slowly processing everything that’s happened in the past eighteen months and everything that continues to unfold. We’re all living through a pivotal moment in history in which we’re reckoning with the past, while at the same time being propelled into the future. Everything is weighing heavily on my mind. My work primarily deals with how the past shapes the present, and so I inevitably see historical echoes in everything that’s happening. I believe that empathy develops out of understanding, and if anything, the events of 2020 and 2021 have crystallized that idea in my mind. Historically, empathy has been a part of my practice, but now more than ever, I feel a deep sense of responsibility as an artist to only put things out in the world that foster a sense of understanding and compassion.



Lee Cannarozzo; *Your Grandparents/Their Children* (detail), 2019; Neon Sign, arduino controlled electrical outlet, and an edition of the 1910 USIC report; Dimensions variable; Courtesy of the artist.



Cass Davis; *Harvest, Revival*, 2019; Corn, cast soil, baling twine, hand-woven Jacquard textile mounted on aged cedar panel; 62 x 43 x 4 inches; Courtesy of the artist.

our differences and our commonalities. It’s an exchange: a way to put ourselves in someone else’s shoes and reach for understanding, compassion, and solidarity.

It is important, in this space, to have the stories of the exhibiting artists. I asked each artist how this exhibition being presented at a different time and world context than originally planned has changed their perspective and how empathy played a role in their practice prior to 2020 and now. Some of their responses are reproduced here.

– Rachel Adams, Chief Curator and Director of Programs

CASS DAVIS
APRIL 20, 2021

In the midst of this pandemic, I survived a house fire. An arduous process, I relied on the generosity and empathy of others who helped me through it all, and also recognized those who were not capable of empathy around me. For me, empathy was key to my survival. I consider myself to be an empathetic person, having experienced my own historic trauma. Empathy allows us to hold space for another individual’s experience, that although may be different from our own. Empathy is our collective tool for survival. It’s the one thing that can possibly bridge the existential gap between our different human experiences.

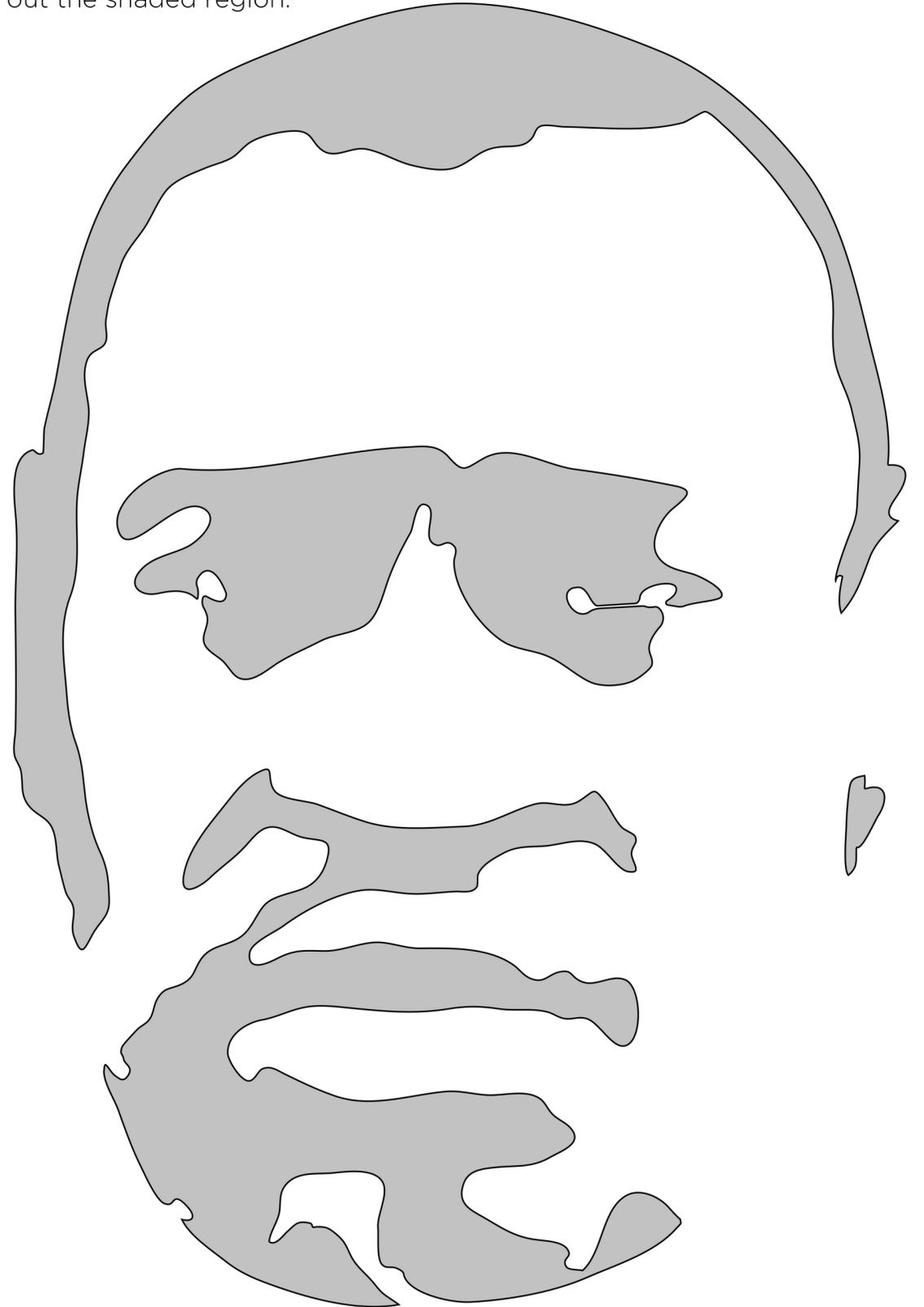
I write this on the day of the verdict of the Derek Chauvin trial. I think of the memorials for George Floyd, of the offerings of yellow and colorful flowers, the painted murals and candles, the vigils—a painful beauty, a gesture of immense love and loss. An apparition of his absence.

I think of the face Derek Chauvin made, upon hearing his guilty verdict, that could not be hidden by his covid mask. Of complete, genuine surprise. That in his current reality, he could not conceive of the possibility that he may be held accountable for the murder of a Black man—something that has become so normalized it has the affect of collective dissociation.

I’ve been told empathy is felt in my work, that my work both critiques the rural, white, Evangelical roots I came from while also being able to speak from within that space. I see my practice as a criticality encoded within the language of the rural, the Evangelical, whiteness. I want the communities I come from to see themselves in the work, to be drawn to it, but to also encounter a criticality that is so quickly dismissed otherwise.

My artistic practice continues to be a space where I feel I have the possibility of contributing towards holding these systems accountable. It’s the one tool, the one mode of existing that allows for true critical discourse for me. I think over this past year I have changed a lot. But while the content and critique in my work are the same, I’ve grown aware of just how clear I need to be in my words, my intent, and my message. As artists we have a power to speak in coded means, which allows our voice to permeate spaces it otherwise may never enter. In my studio, I think I’m still reworking the balance between the poetic, the expressive, and the direct.

Single Layer.
Cut out the shaded region.



#blues4george by Seitu Ken Jones

Memorialize George Floyd in the streets and on the boarded up storefronts across the United States and beyond. Depending on size and paint supplies accessible to you, there are many ways to create a #blues4george portrait.

How to create your own #blues4george with one shade of blue paint:

1. Download the stencil from tiny.cc/b4gE or cut out of here
2. Print the stencil out or trace it on some spare cardboard
3. Cut along the lines and remove the hatched areas using a utility blade, Xacto knife, or scissor
4. Start painting

Get permission from local businesses, organizations, and building owners to place a portrait on their boarded up windows, sidewalks, walls, or other locations across your neighborhoods. Take photos and share your results on social media. Be sure to tag it #blues4george and @seitukjones. For more information visit seitukenstudio.com/blues4george.

AMERICA WILL BE

AFTER LANGSTON HUGHES

By Joshua Bennett

I am now at the age where my father calls me brother when we say goodbye. Take care of yourself, brother, he whispers a half beat before we hang up the phone, and it is as if some great bridge has unfolded over the air between us. He is 68 years old. He was born in the throat of Jim Crow Alabama, one of ten children, their bodies side by side in the kitchen each morning like a pair of hands exalting. Over breakfast, I ask him to tell me the hardest thing about going to school back then, expecting some history I have already memorized. Boycotts & attack dogs, fire hoses, Bull Connor in his personal tank, candy paint shining white as a slaver's ghost. He says: Having to read the Canterbury Tales. He says: eating lunch alone. Now, I hear the word America & think first of my father's loneliness, the hands holding the pens that stabbed him as he walked through the hallway, unclenched palms settling onto a wooden desk, taking notes, trying to pretend the shame didn't feel like an inheritance. You say democracy & I see the men holding documents that sent him off to war a year later, Motown blaring from a country boy's bunker as napalm scarred the sky into jigsaw patterns, his eyes open wide as the blooming blue heart of the light bulb in a Crown Heights basement where he & my mother will dance for the first time, their bodies swaying like rockets in the impossible dark & yes I know that this is more than likely not what you mean when you sing liberty but it is the only kind I know or can readily claim, the times where those hunted

by history are underground & somehow daring to love what they cannot hold or fully fathom when the stranger is not a threat but the promise of a different ending I woke up this morning and there were men on television lauding a wall big enough to box out an entire world, families torn with the stroke of a pen, citizenship little more than some garment that can be stolen or reduced to cinder at a tyrant's whim my father knows this grew up knowing this witnessed firsthand the firebombs the Klan multiple messiahs love soaked & shot through somehow still believes in this grand blood-stained experiment still votes still prays that his children might make a life unlike any he has ever seen. He looks at me like the promise of another cosmos and I never know what to tell him. All of the books in my head have made me cynical and distant, but there's a choir in him that calls me forward my disbelief built as it is from the bricks of his belief not in any America you might see on network news or hear heralded before a football game but in the quiet power of Sam Cooke singing that he was born by a river that remains unnamed that he runs alongside to this day, some vast and future country, some nation within a nation, black as candor, loud as the sound of my father's unfettered laughter over cheese eggs & coffee his eyes shut tight as armories his fists unclenched as if he were invincible

BRENDAN FERNANDES APRIL 20, 2021

Over the past 18 months I have felt so many feelings, many that were new and challenging in my body and mind. There has been fear, loneliness, sadness and shame—and each of these in new and unexpected ways. Over the past months, I had to push through to think and make in new ways too. Resilience is a big part of how I feel we need to move forward. In the beginning I felt that I was going to lose my practice, as it is so heavily based on bringing bodies together in space and acting out in intimate ways through touch and closeness. In my work I am always trying to find ways to enact solidarity, to gather and create community through empathy and mutual understanding. Empathy can be a tool to dismantle binaries. It can cross the field of “us and them,” “self and othered.” It can also be a way to deepen and activate our understanding of one another, and this can help us to build more meaningful support in our communities. Given all the events of the past 18 months, I believe that this kind of activating empathy is becoming more and more important. When our actions become informed by empathy and our empathy triggers us to act, we can come closer together, even in a virtual world, and find new ways of being and supporting even during these challenging times of upheaval and change.



Brendan Fernandes; *Free Fall 49* performed at Getty Museum June 16, 2017; Image courtesy of the J Paul Getty Trust. Photos: Sarah Waldorf and Tristan Bravinder.

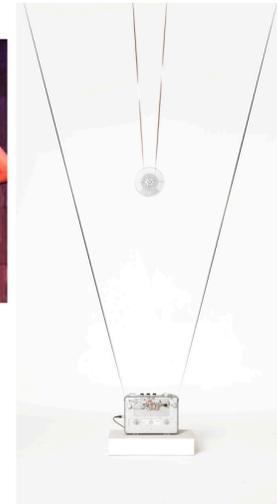


Image: (right) Marcus Fischer; *Untitled (Words of Concern)*, 2017; Tape recorder, tape loop, spindle, sound; 3:00 minutes; Courtesy of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Purchased with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee and the Director's Discretionary Funds; © Marcus Fischer; Photo: Jim Golden.

MARCUS FISCHER APRIL 19, 2021

As I was assembling *Untitled (Words of Concern)* on the eve of the 2017 inauguration, here was a reason why I used one particular concern as the capstone before the loop starts over. It came from choreographer David Neumann and perfectly sums up what I felt like was the one of the biggest issues that surrounded us then as it surrounds us now.

“The dismantling of understanding and respect for the complexity of the human experience.”

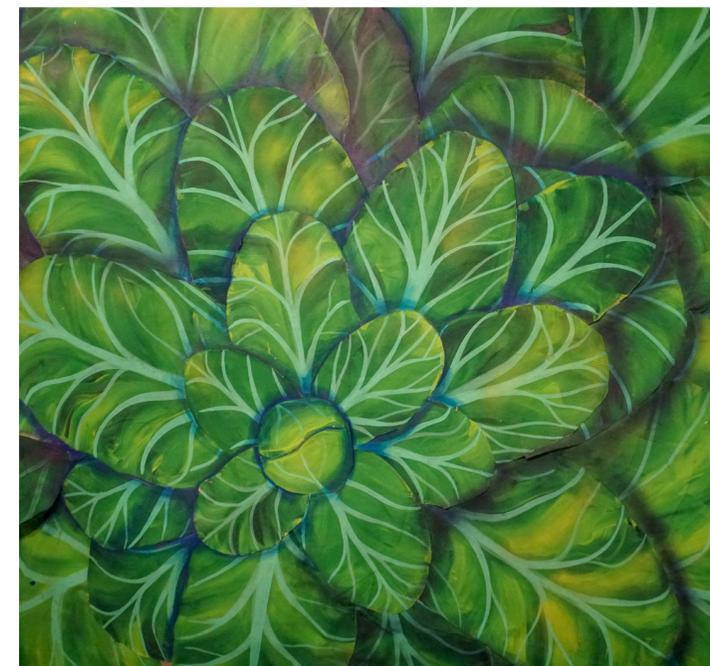
To me, David is speaking to the growing lack of empathy we are seeing play out all the time. When people are unable or unwilling to put themselves in another person's shoes and see things or feel things from another point of view it becomes far too easy to distance themselves or pretend their situation is insignificant. While it seems like such a passive or harmless action, it is anything but when our lives are so complex and intertwined.

When looking back over the last year I am struck by what an intense experience it has been on so many levels. From the personal to the global. It was a year of struggle and isolation. One filled with anger and fear where there was an abundance of despair and a shortage of hope. In one way I was lucky enough to have come through the last year with my family relatively unscathed with our home and health intact. In other ways I struggled deeply with my mental health and lost all motivation to create or connect. I have spent the last year withdrawn from my friends and my creative community while trying to work through it all. On a daily basis I try to stay hopeful while making tiny steps to get back to a place where I feel myself again. My biggest take away from this last year has been about the importance of empathy and understanding. Through the lens of social media, brief messages or the now ubiquitous Zoom we can only see one facet of a person or a story. It is important to acknowledge that we are all struggling right now in different ways. The way one person is struggling may seem trivial if you compare struggles with another person or perhaps their struggles might dwarf your own. Without empathy and understanding we will all get buried in our own situations and be unable to help ourselves or anyone else. Even the simple act of acknowledging other's pain instead of comparing scars is a powerful thing.

In the years since I recorded it, David Neumann's quote is something that is constantly playing like a loop in my head, reminding me to never lose my understanding and respect for the complexity of the human experience.

SEITU KEN JONES APRIL 20, 2021

Contemporary psychologists often debate about the types of empathy and the role that empathy plays in our lives. For me, in order to feel a compassionate connection to someone you must have a deep love for self, love for family, love for community and love for the world. At the heart of empathy is love. In the last 18 months, I lost my mother, lost folks to the pandemic, we collectively lost folks to police violence and lost folks to gun violence, I feel pangs of hurt in my heart. Soon we will embrace again and share a meal. Eat.



Seitu Ken Jones; Detail of *FoodJustUs Shrine*, 2021; Mixed media; dimensions variable; Courtesy of the artist.

CAMERON GRANGER APRIL 19, 2021

Images have the capacity to sway imaginations and build worlds. They can illuminate or distort histories and presents, or show us potential futures. As an artist making images of a people that have historically been unable to control the circulation of their own images, I take my position very seriously. “Imaging” a people has the potential to be a very violent process, and I think that potential for violence increases the more the artist isolates themselves from the communities they're making art about. It's always been important for me to pour into my communities just as much as they've poured into me and my work—for them to always be collaborators, not just subjects.

The past year has been filled with grief, and my people have been hit exceptionally hard. There are material needs in my city that aesthetics alone can't provide, and I spent a long time wondering if making art right now was a selfish act in itself. In trying to figure out how I can best show up for my people, the answer I found was to use the platforms my work has given me access too.

Whether it be in the form of a livestream fundraiser for grassroots groups sponsored by a residency I'm attending, a free food program funded by an institution I'm showing with, or a public fridge supported by the local art museum, I'm trying to make sure that the work doesn't stop at my studio or the gallery space, and that it's always something bigger than just me, the artist. It has to be bigger than that.



Cameron Granger, *This Must Be the Place*, 2018; Digital video; 4:32 minutes; Courtesy of the artist.

Community Partnerships

All Together, Amongst Many: Reflections on Empathy connects artists from across the country with local organizations in an effort to highlight their work focused on issues represented in the exhibition. These partnerships will result in a variety of public and private programs. Visit bemiscenter.org/all-together-amongst-many for a list of public programs and ways to engage.

13th & Leavenworth Garden: A Pop-Up Oasis

Asian Community and Cultural Center

The Big Garden

Big Muddy Urban Farm

Black and Pink National

Bluebird Cultural Initiative

City Sprouts

Easterseals Nebraska

Great Plains Black History Museum

Green Omaha Coalition

Heartland Family Service

Heartland Pride

Immigrant Legal Center

KANEKO

Latino Center of the Midlands

The Lincoln Indian Center

Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska

Nebraska Appleseed

Nebraska Writers Collective

NOISE

No More Empty Pots

RISE

Exhibition Acknowledgements

Jared Packard, Exhibitions Manager
Casey Callahan, Program Assistant
Shayla Muller, Gallery Attendant

Installation Technicians

Will Anderson
Nick Miller
Sean Ward

Translation

Esau Betancourt

All Together, Amongst Many: Reflections on Empathy is generously supported, in part, by:



Support for *Art in Practice: The Intersection of Poetry and Visual Art* is provided, in part, by:



Support for Brendan Fernandes's *Free Fall 49* is provided, in part, by the Omaha Community Foundation's Equality Fund for LGBTQIA+.

Support for Seitu Ken Jones's *FoodJustUs: An intersection of food and art* is provided, in part, by:



MOLLY JOYCE
APRIL 19, 2021

I am feeling very optimistic and forward-looking. I am encouraged by the many strides that have been made in 2020 and beyond particularly in relation to disability rights and activism, such as the premiere of the now Oscar-nominated Crip Camp on Netflix, which details a groundbreaking summer camp that helped foster the early disability rights movement. Furthermore, the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act was celebrated in July 2020. At the same time, there is much progress to be made in regards to disabled communities. Many events are still not accessible and labels such as “blind” and/or “deaf” are frequently used with negative connotations, truly not recognizing disability as a legitimate identity.

Empathy has been a continual strand in my practice, however I’ve been hesitant to engage in such a facet more publicly because of a desire to enact communal engagement as authentically and respectfully as possible. I believe this has progressed in the most recent Perspective project, featuring interviews with disabled participants and trying to honor their answers as organically as possible. With the events of 2020 and beyond my view and engagement of empathy has been ever more encouraged, to honor various voices authentically and openly, as I generally gravitate towards art that sparks more imagination and reflection rather than strict interpretations.

What is interdependence for you?

The most foundational part of existing for me.

Molly Joyce; *Perspective* (still), 2020; Digital Video; 29 minutes; Courtesy of the artist.

STEPHANIE SYJUCO
APRIL 19, 2021

The past year-plus has seen an exacerbation of all the inequities America experiences—from the rise of a more visible white supremacy (really, wasn’t it always there?), to racialized violence and killings, and unequal access to health care and support for Black and brown communities during a global health crisis. I was enraged four years ago during the start of the previous presidential administration, and I remain enraged today. I can honestly say that empathy plays no role in my practice — now and even historically — since I believe, as noted cultural critic Aruna D’Souza puts it in a talk of the same title, “Empathy will not save us.” By that I mean I don’t believe that my role as an artist of color is to appeal to a larger audience, to tell a story that I and other communities impacted by white supremacy are human enough to deserve better treatment, to be convincing in my humanity in order to elicit more empathy. Our humanity should be self evident. I make my work to create visual documentation from a perspective that has not occupied the center of the larger conversation, to mark the moment and to indict white supremacy.



Stephanie Syjuco; *I AM AN...*, 2017; Cotton fabric, cut and hand sewn by the artist, mounted on the ceiling track; 99 x 276 inches; Courtesy of the artist and RYAN LEE Gallery, New York, NY.

JULIA ROSE SUTHERLAND
APRIL 20, 2021

It’s hard not to become numb to all that is happening around us, feel strained, exhausted, and at capacity. I know many people were doom scrolling, feeling lost and helpless for a lot of the pandemic. The last 18 months have certainly been challenging for myself, my family and my community. The Mi’kmaq nation had constantly been fighting for our traditional hunting and fishing treaty rights and sovereignty. With many deaths, both to natural causes and at the hands of police brutality (RIP Rodney Levi), my family and my community are still healing, feeling raw and drained.

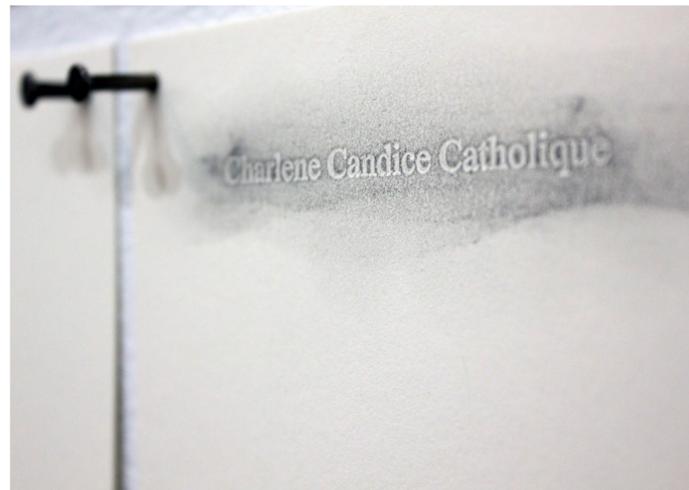
My art practice, in one way or another, has always centred itself around ancestry. The passing of knowledge from my ancestors, paying homage and learning from and about my past, family, and others. It has been fascinating because I’ve been working with exploring alternative healing practices and practices of Indigenous communities, especially of the Mi’kmaq, which I am. In particular, I’ve been looking at the sweat lodge, which involves people gathering together, talking, being close in an unventilated, hot space. I’m also exploring the Sun Dance ritual, which has me thinking about powwows, people coming together, regalias, which are no longer happening in a physical manifestation. This pandemic has been difficult for my artistic practice because I cannot get together with people and do these things, but it’s also creating a dialogue that I’m having online. Often, I’m finding I’m getting these necessary conversations or growth of ideas through just talking with my family more, and I think that’s kind of due to the pandemic. That being said, skin-to-skin contact or that relation of gathering has been problematic because it’s so essential to the work, a lot of which is participatory—it needs to either be witnessed, or it needs to be participated in physically, where someone’s physically touching something, or someone’s physically doing something. I don’t know how that’s going to progress over time.

The work recreated for the show *All together, Amongst Many: Reflections on Empathy* is a memorial, paying homage and respect to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Two-Spirited peoples Turtle Island. The piece is titled *Gepmite’tg (gep-mi-deetk) “Paying homage,”* was initially made in 2019. This work represents lives lost, missing and accounted for; it is a hands-on learning approach, touching and acknowledging these women. There are only 308 names on this list, while this is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of MMIW2S peoples, whereby the list is over 4,000 names long, stretching from 1,950 to 2,021 in Canada alone.

My practices have shifted in the sense that I am profoundly embracing traditional Mi’kmaq materials and techniques within my artwork. The content of my work has always been informed by my heritage and lived experiences, so of course, in the summer of 2020, when a family member was shot twice in the chest and killed by an RCMP officer, it had a massive effect on the way I was making, thinking and processing. This event led to a three-part series titled *Rest In Peace, Rodney Levi*.

The quillwork pieces, especially *DEFUND THE POLICE*, are heavily influenced by Black feminist ideology stemming from the BLM movement and the actions and writings of Angela Yvonne Davis and Robyn Maynard on abolition. These two women are considerable influences to me, and of course, were not the first to push forward to the notion of abolition. I am thinking about Frances E.W Harper, Sarah Parker Redmond, Elizabeth Freeman, and Sojourner Truth.

I believe that empathy is a driving force within my practice and has only grown over the last 18 months and that it is evolving and becoming both more complex and more critical to how I navigate the world around myself. It can be hard to take yourself, your feelings, and your experience out of the forefront and prioritize and listen to others; now, I think we need to stop, listen, and try and understand each other.



Julia Rose Sutherland; Detail of *Gepmite’tg (gep-mi-deetk) “Paying homage,”* 2019; Embossed Paper and Sage ash; Dimensions variable; Courtesy of the artist.

JORDAN WEBER
APRIL 19, 2021

To tell you the truth this question of the role of Empathy is extremely hard to answer at the moment mainly because I find myself reserving life energy for the simplest of tasks like having joy and grace with strength for my daughter and my wife as we are expecting our 2nd Earth into a region of pure conflict. I have infinite empathy that has grown even deeper for my people not just in the Midwest but from coast to coast because we are under attack in almost every aspect of our daily movements. I have a radical love and appreciation for my people that post up on the block with their most trusted brethren for survival, safety and camaraderie. There is something safe in this stance of holding one’s corner down that is needed now more than ever as we fight for a monumental shift in the national community occupation by those that swore to protect us but have never truly seen us for who we are or connected with us on our own terms in our own spaces. For the occupier, I have lost all Empathy, there isn’t much more to say on that front but denounce your systems of supremacy, lay down your weapons of destruction upon our flesh and our land so we can properly build our own systems of self sustained urbanisms. If you think we will fall in doing so I implore you to let us thrive with honor and grace without you as we did once before.



Jordan Weber; *Chapels*, 2018; Black owned farm land, marble, wood, burlap, plastic; 36 x 138 x 52 inches; Courtesy of the artist.

What did you want to be?, 2021
Carmen Winant

Carmen Winant’s work examines and challenges the ways that we understand women’s power, pleasure, labor, healing, and liberation to function. By addressing the aesthetic and political legacy of second-wave feminism through a contemporary lens, Winant reflects on and highlights both historical and present-day trajectories that often fail to value the work of marginalized women. The outdoor billboards and installation at Bemis Center include text-based prompts for women’s consciousness-raising developed by The Chicago Women’s Liberation Union.

“Consciousness-raising was a way to use our own lives—our combined experiences—to understand concretely how we are oppressed and who was actually doing the oppressing. We regarded this knowledge as necessary for building such a movement.” – Carol Hanisch from *Women’s Liberation Consciousness-Raising: Then and Now*

HOW DO YOU FEEL
MEN SEE YOU?

S. 13th Street & William Street
May 24–June 20, 2021

WHAT IS A “NICE GIRL”?
WERE YOU A “NICE GIRL”?

60th Street & Ames Avenue
June 21–July 18, 2021

CARMEN WINANT
APRIL 12, 2021

I have long been interested in empathy in my work as a tool of radical action. For this project I was lucky enough to manifest a small portion of a history that has animated my thinking for a long time: consciousness raising. For me, consciousness raising has always been a tool of empathy-building. Women gathering together – in an apartment or shared space of some kind – and unfolding the experiences we have in common (whether they revolve around pleasure, abuse, child rearing, and on) is a crucial step in galvanizing a movement. In other words, we need to be able to not only see and hear one another, but understand that what we see and hear also belongs to us. It is so basic, isn’t it? Before we take to the streets, before we write manifestos, before we conceive of new ways of living, we have to start by recognizing our shared-ness.

During the #MeToo reckoning, I thought a lot about the consciousness raising strategies of the 1970s and beyond. In some sense, this is what #MeToo was, on a global scale, and enabled by technological means: a reckoning with our experiences as being in common, and uncovering the power of that commonness. The last 18 months have augmented that feeling further, especially in witnessing the uprisings last summer. For me, empathy and radical action are profoundly, and invariably, related.

DO YOU ENJOY TAKING
CARE OF YOUR CHILDREN?
ALL THE TIME?

60th Street & Center Street
May 24–June 20, 2021

WHO WAS SOJOURNER
TRUTH? ELIZABETH CADY
STANTON?

120th Street & I Street
June 21–July 18, 2021