

The Making Of: Publics + Liberation

A Conversation with Jenné Afiya, Fire Angelou, Emeline Boehringer,
Kory Sanders, Kimi Harauer, Sarrita Hunn + Malcolm Peacock.



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A conversation with: Jenné Afiya (Balti Gurls),

Fire Angelou (Daughters of the Diaspora), Emeline

Boehringer, Kory Sanders (Beauty Grrl Collective), Sarrita

Hunn (Temporary Art Review), Malcolm Peacock,

& Kimi Hanauer (Press Press). Also featuring amazing

crowd participants: Jessica Hyman, Brandon Buckson, April

Lewis, Zoey Howell, Rain Ifill, & Ciera Vegas

introduction

On an evening in December, a group of us gathered together to talk about what it means to make a public, considering our immediate context of Baltimore City, post the Trump election, and throughout the various histories we each brought to the room. This discussion surveys our various attempts and approaches to carving out intentional public spaces that work against and in spite of oppressive structures. We gathered at the storefront while it was still in the process of build-out to discuss these ideas and brainstorm what this space could become. One common thread throughout the conversation that stayed with me is that building publics, in whatever form that takes, is one approach towards finding our collective liberation; something that this conversation attempts at defining. In *Bodies In Alliance* and *the Politics of the Street*, Judith Butler referencing philosopher Hannah Arendt, speaks about the space that is formed between bodies that gather publicly, what she calls the space of appearance, and its potential to produce a sense of freedom for its participants. I was reminded of this quote, as we gathered that night to discuss;

Freedom does not come from me or from you; it can and does happen as a relation between us or, indeed, among us. So this is not a matter of finding the human dignity within each person, but rather of understanding the human as a relational and social being, one whose action depends upon equality and articulates the principle

of equality. Indeed, there is no human on her view [Arendt] if there is no equality. No human can be human alone. And no human can be human without acting in concert with others and on conditions of equality. I would add the following: The claim of equality is not only spoken or written, but is made precisely when bodies appear together or, rather, when, through their action, they bring the space of appearance into being. This space is a feature and effect of action, and it only works, according to Arendt, when relations of equality are maintained.

Like Butler talks about Freedom, our liberation is necessarily dependent on the conditions of equality between us. The process of building a public, if it is with the goal of liberation, must be comprised of physical gathering and genuine human exchanges over time that have the potential to produce collective action and critical discourse at once. Beyond gathering with other bodies publicly, we must be constantly reevaluating, and investigating what our collectivity means. My hope is that Press Press can aid in the struggle for our liberation by bringing the space of appearance into being on occasions such as this one, and others to come throughout the life of this project. Thanks for picking up this copy of our zine and we hope you enjoy the read!

Kimi Hanauer, Press Press



Bb is an interdisciplinary project that was located at 427 N. Eutaw Street in Baltimore from November 2014 until August 2016, when Press Press moved in. The following images that intersect the conversation, highlight the physical transformation from Bb to PP.



Kimi: One of the reasons I reached out to you guys was because it felt like everyone here gathers publics through different approaches and to slightly different ends. To start the conversation, I wanted to just ask how that action (of gathering IN public, or gathering A public) functions in your work?

Jenné: So Balti Gurls started online, and that's the biggest public, right? We started online, mainly because of money, or lack there of money; an Instagram account is free, a Facebook page is free. So when we decided to go public, (because we weren't always public, it was like a year of being private first) that was the way we decided to do it. I see so much other organizing going on online, particularly on Instagram and Facebook, particularly by people of color or feminist organizations, and I'm wondering, what about those platforms has made them accessible in that way to these specific groups?

Emeline: That's interesting for us because Beast Grrl as a zine, was never something that was conducted primarily on the internet. It's interesting—the play between what kind of group you can gather online and what kind of group can you gather in a physical space. Brining my work out of an internet sphere and into something that was physically tangible was really empowering for me and others in the organization. It also helped us become cohesive as a group.

Malcolm: I'm thinking about these definitions of public, the actual definitions of them, because we are talking about the internet, dissemination, and how we go about bringing things out. I get really scared about the internet. We live in a passive culture overall and the internet is one of the most active things we have access too. So I worry about the accessibility of the web and how privilege is so inescapable. Sometimes I don't want to make a Facebook page for an event, but then I'm like, this is the easiest and best way I can give the information I have to everyone I care about, plus people that I don't know, (and that I hope when I meet them will care about one another). As much as the internet is accessible, you kind of already have to have an in into that sphere...

We had this Google Doc we've been writing in for this conversation that's been really awesome and I was thinking, there's this piece I want to make that has all these cars, but I can't afford it. And I want all the information in the piece to give this narrative, and I can't do it electronically... I mean, I can't ask everyone to bring a smartphone, that's just not going to work. So then I was like, ok everyone can read all of these things—but if we are really trying to be accessible, can we confront the privilege of reading? The privilege of literature? I don't want to project into your work or anything [Fire], but it's so amazing to see your work as an audience member. It is a privilege to be in an environment, isolated in a certain

way, where I am comfortable enough to take what you are saying in. It's a double edge sword and there's ways of working around it. I think, maybe a publication is an interesting space to play with and navigate this tension—it's accessible but possibly highly inaccessible as well.

Fire: For me, public has always changed. It might be a website or however you get your stuff out there, so the internet is definitely a public space, but it's still a very privileged space. An important thing for me as an artist is to have multiple spaces, multiple publics. If you have a blog, also have a printed version of what you do. I think public should change depending on who your audience is, if your audience is low income black women, maybe you not gonna post it on Facebook and share with your friends, maybe you have to go where they are.

For the open mic I host, *The Art of Conversation*, I literally go outside and walk around the block and say, Y'all trying to come through? Like, it's a spot, it's at my house, it's a public space. Ya'll can come holler at me, I live up the street. It's 3 dollars though. Public should change for your audience, but sometimes I feel like you can get comfortable in the type of space you are used to. I'm used to performing, I'm used to publishing on my blog, whatever. Be diligent in that your audience needs to have different

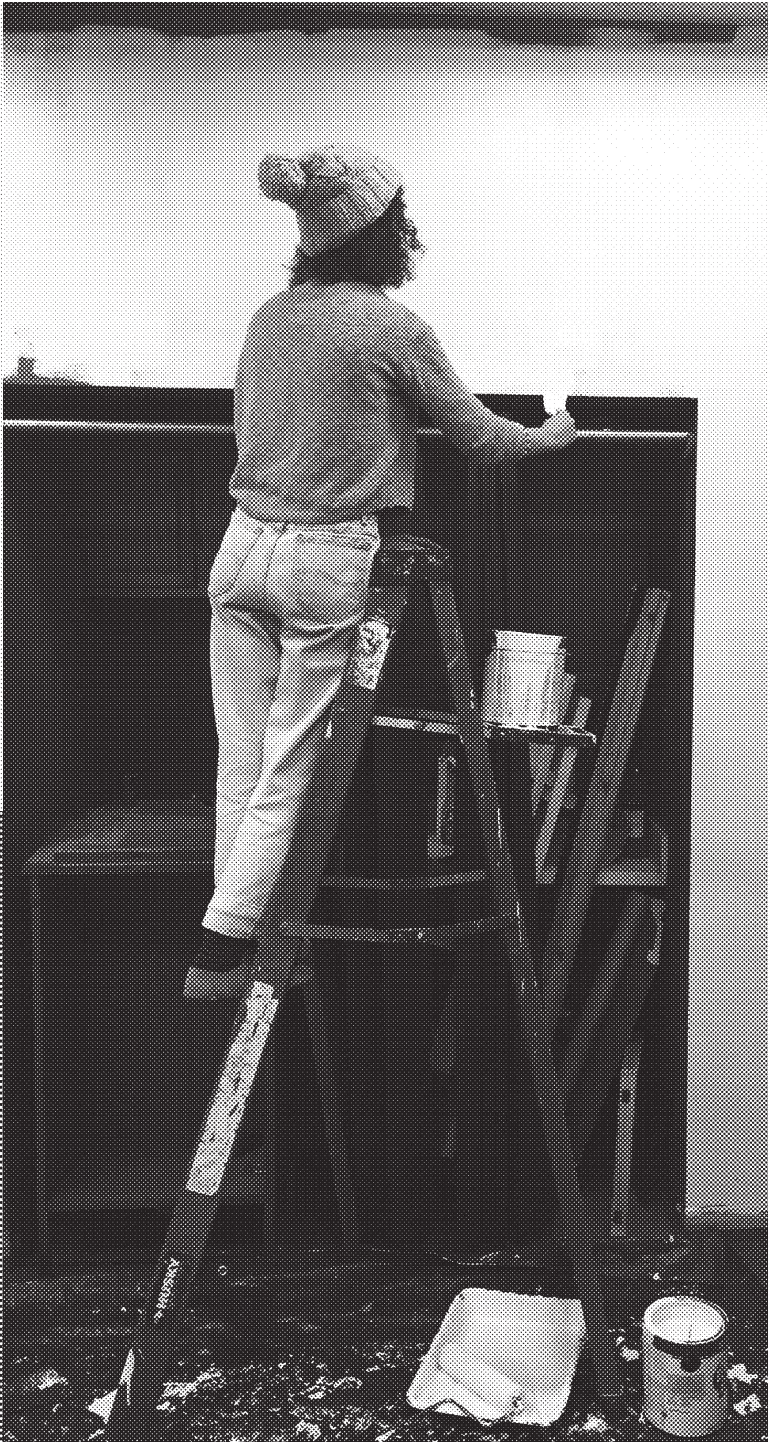
ways of getting engaged with you. And it may not always be comfortable for you. I don't always feel like going to talk to people on Greenmount, but if I want to engage with the public space I'm creating, then I myself, have to be public to them.

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Kimi: Another thread in the different ways of working you all present, when it comes to gathering publics, is the creation of intentional, specific types of spaces. Another question I have for you guys is obviously, it is important to create these spaces, but what is it specifically that you are reacting to with these different projects? What is the motivator to create your own publics in whatever form that's taking?

Kory: With *Beast Grrl*, a lot of the work that we started with, was coming from the people we knew, and how feminism influenced us as ninth graders. I felt like my place in my world was hindering me and making me feel like I wasn't enough. When you look at the work that we get now for the zine, it's grown a lot, even though it's some of the

September: In the process of redoing the space, painting walls from grey to pink, and starting to think through shelves and tables.



same people, the work has changed so much to incorporate current events and more.

Emeline: I totally agree. I think for us, regarding multiple publics, it's become these concentric circles; the way that your work radially moves out. That reflects what gets produced, too. I think in our first issues you can really see that we were just a small group of people and the zine was a way to make our work concrete. In the later issues, as Kory says, you can see the work is move-- people who tell someone else and they tell others. Our last issue was called Cultivate, our 10th issue, and it was all about growth, growing, and how you reflect on those changes. In the context of your art audience and the public that you create, that's been something that's influenced our printed material and the way that we think about our work. There was a time when it was just the three of us, and now there's a whole group of people. I think it's interesting to see the evolution of projects as they grow and change in mission, and how your audience changes the mission of your work.

Kimi: As an outsider, it really feels like your project has facilitated its own community of people that surround, feed and cultivate the work (the work being, one another), and that's a piece of art in itself.

Emeline: Totally. I mean, we changed our name from a zine to a collective; having a publication spawned so many social interactions and events; where it's also about action and actually talking, not just the zine. There's something about our publication that's a little bit final; something dies a little bit when it's put down in print. It's interesting how you can take that to also keep going, you don't let your work just stop at the publication, you use that to be part of a movement.

Jess: A good example of that is when you have a release event, reach a bigger audience, and create an extended conversation about whatever is at hand. It's a kind of merging those two different forms of public in that way.

Jenné: I think it also is interesting how depending on the type of event you do, your audience changes. With Balti Gurls, we have that; it's venue, time of day, weekend or weekday. We do all types of events, we've done a quarterly music show that's all women of color called Edge Control, and it's always at night but the venue changes. It's interesting to see who comes where. Sometimes those groups converge and sometimes they don't, and it's interesting to see how it radiates—that's such a good word. It's really interesting how even in a city this small, there's all types of ripples going on.



September:
Spreading word
about the library
at book fairs in
New York, New
Haven, and be-
yond!

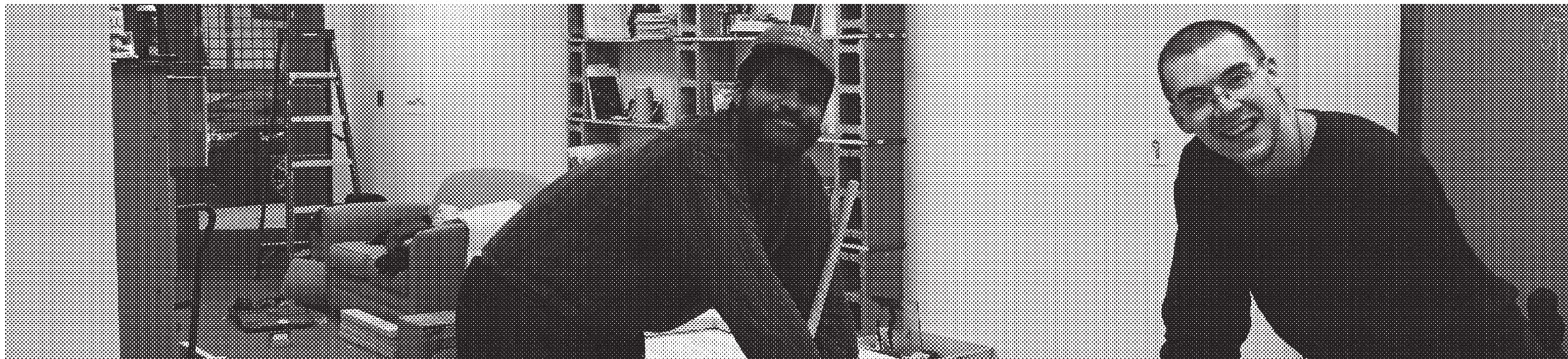


Even in a city this small, there's all types of ripples going on.

Malcolm: That's the point where content can influence. People sometimes just hear one word and then they are like, I'll be there. I think, if I'm speaking to Kimi's question about influences, for me it's a lot of storytelling. But storytelling from the experiences of myself or others around me. I think it's really hard to think about your own experiences without thinking about the things that come into your sphere at every second. It was so hard for me to make work that involved other people, before I addressed issues for and with myself. When I do work in Richmond, I don't really do any work alone, there were people that were helping me make my work in the past, and now we all do these performances together. It's like this black family that we've made that's situated in the future. We live in an alternate world and the audience members just visit us. Our pieces continue based on the last time so there is this continuity of this community being built by the narrative that this family is creating. A lot of dealing with the public is also dealing with yourself.

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Sarrita: I think for us, to answer the question really specifically, we were really motivated by the fact that we knew there were all these things happening in all these different places, but not everyone was speaking to each other. You might know the five artist-run spaces in your city, but then there's literally hundreds of projects around the country and that is a much larger movement. So we were interested in creating a publication as a platform for these groups to be able to communicate with one another. But what we learned very quickly is that this works so much better if you follow an organic process – meeting this person, and this person, and that person contacts you, et cetera. This let the platform form in really unexpected ways. I think that's something that you can do as an artist-run publication, but it's not really something you



October: Thanks to Cooper and Andrew we were able to get some shelves and tables together at this time. Here they are setting things up!



can do with a traditional commercial model or even much of an institutional model.

Fire: To answer the question, I'm inspired by my pain and my power to overcome it. That's a big reason for why I do public things. A lot of that is a process in which I teach myself self-love, being able to be confident, like you were saying, this is mine, I did it, I made it. More importantly, to start to build a sense of community as well, along that process. My motivation comes from the pain that I have but also the pain of Black people, and all my work is gonna be centered around Black people, because that's what I care about. That pain, I'm passionate about healing. So I wanna create spaces, conversations, that really get people to talk about that. I ask the right questions to expose ignorance and sometimes that ignorance can help you get to enlightenment. Overall, my inspiration comes from that pain and transforming it into my own form of power. Wow, that sounds real poetic. (laughs).

Malcolm: I have a question but I don't have the words for it... I have thoughts about that and about this idea that people think we woke up at 3AM on the 9th, and were like, Wow it's crazy out there, it's really cold, you need put on a coat! Like, really? I didn't know? We've been in crisis since the conception of the United States. Slavery is a crisis. The way our

railroad system was established is a crisis. I could go on. The other day, Lee (Heinemann) brought up this idea that the way our liberal mindset is that, a big downfall of it is that we don't imagine. We have this blockage that doesn't let us imagine because if we imagine, we actually get scared. Imagining a real revolution would only look like people of color and women being centered, and that is a real loss of power for many people who consider themselves liberal thinkers. On the other side, to those people, they have fantastical ideas about what people like us, the majority of this room, are like. And the imagination of that is really real because they are closer to the reality of that, then we are to our reality. Where do you see what your doing play a role in that development as, not just as a mythical thing, but as something that is actually attainable? Things you can actually put forth a mission towards?

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Fire: That's a good point. It reminds me of when I was talking to my homeboy, he's an organizer in the city and he came to this poetry event. So, I was talking to him and he said to me, I'm not really an artist that's what you do. And I was like, well if you're an organizer, you have to be able to have an imagination. Otherwise, what the fuck are you fighting for, if you don't see nothing? Liberation requires imagination. You're not fighting for anything, if you can't imagine it. For me, as a Black woman, for Black people, it's important and imperative to have that imagination. With my event, The Art of Conversation, it's specifically only for

Black people. People be coming at me like, Why can't other people come through? Because, this is a place where we can talk specifically about us and a place where people feel comfortable coming there. Ain't no white folks trying to come down Greenmount anyway. For me, that's what's imperative. Revolution requires people to have their separate spaces to do that. You can't plan a revolution beside your oppressors. It doesn't work that way.

For some people, revolution is a concept. You know how you can love someone, but just love the idea of them? And then you get in front of them and you're like, Well I don't really know you? Like five years from now you might be cute. But he's real, in front of you right now, and you gotta love that person for what they are. You gotta really, really be aware of what revolution is, and love that idea for real. You have to be aware that you might have to sacrifice your life for this, and are you really willing to do that?

Liberation requires imagination.

*You're not fighting for anything,
if you can't imagine it.*



Besan Khamis' Freedom Printer!

November: The library is starting to come together thanks to donations from friends (shout out to Gallery 4 for all the cinder blocks!)

3 of Jenne Afiya's library picks!

Malcolm: I'm using Blackness right now as a vantage point, but not to say that Blackness is inextricably tied to death, because that's a huge problem, but a revolution at the core means revolt. And at the end of the day, this is a really heavy idea. When people are coming to interact with us around our work, how do we balance us wanting revolution, with their mindsets maybe not being there just yet?

Fire: I think it's a part of the work, like when we have the event at our crib, we talk about that stuff and part of the work is that you gotta change your idea. You gotta be trained through conversation and discussion. Discourse is a very powerful tool. How you communicate what you say and the idea that you give to people. That's why people remember shit their mother's said when they were 4 years old and they still holding on to that shit at 30. The art is the way that you insert that idea into their head and then a few are able to organize around that. That's why artists can be effective. You may not be the organizer but you can collaborate with the organizer, so that you can be the catalyst for that idea. Just imagine if the type of music you heard on the radio was about revolution, would people in the city talk about it? Yes. And that might lead to more collectives, to people actually doing certain things. As an artist, you just have to know your role. You may not be the general. I may not be the general. I'm gonna need someone else to do

that work. I'm gonna write the poems.

Ciera: How do you actually move your audience through your publication, through your work, and through your art? I don't want to fall into that trap of creating this work and then people are like oh that's nice and then just move on with your lives, how can you insight or plant seeds effectively through your work to where you actually see your audience walk away with something they can actually use to make something else?

Jenné: In response to that question and what Malcolm said about waking up after the election, I've been thinking a lot about what it means to be operating out of a space of wanting revolution, but also being tired. Like being very, very, very tired. Like, five hundred years of, systematic, generational, genocide and oppression. I don't even really know how I'm here, how all of ya'll are here. I'll be honest because it's a lot. Sometimes I think, is it a lot for me to ask for someone to take something away from what I do? Because people are so saturated. Even though we talk about revolution as a positive, that's also scary for a lot of people, for a lot of Black people. We are used to operating under a system of oppression, what does not being oppressed look like? That could be just as scary as the revolution itself. I feel like, I'm in the process of figuring out

what that means and answering that question, but I think having spaces for Black joy to be experienced is important. There is nothing wrong with throwing a party, there is nothing wrong with putting together a playlist, and being like, This is what's making me feel good, what's making you feel good? Self-care. I think people can sometimes feel like that's not important. Sometimes when you are an organizer, you can put that self care in the background, not even intentionally, just because you are organizing. It's interesting because I was talking with another Black woman the day after the election, and she was just talking about how this white woman was just so distraught, and she was like, I really just had nothing to say to her. This is just the same keep on keeping on, like, what do you mean? If it's not him it's somebody else. And it's on that national level of the president, but also on a local level of just feeling like you have no power and you have no control over your life. What does it mean to provide space, especially like Black and Brown folk, who are just truly exhausted?

Fire: For me, I would say, white supremacy/capitalism hasn't let up in like 400-500 years? So, I feel you sis about just being tired. I think the important things are, just to put it in perspective, is what you're fighting for, who you're fighting for, and thinking collectively. Sometimes, I don't even feel like going out and talking to people, but I do it for the collective.

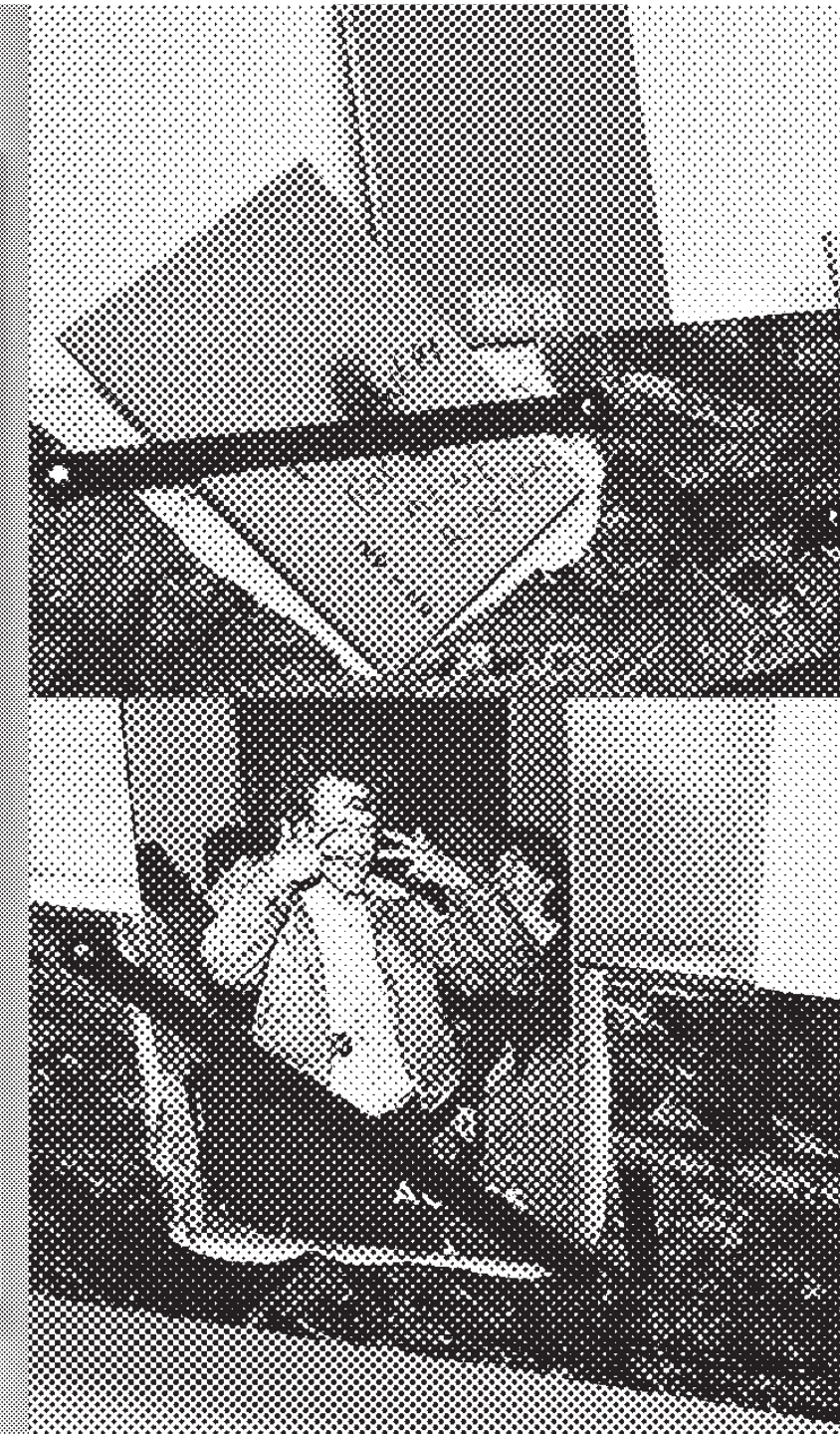
If it's not him [Trump] it's somebody else.

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So if you think about it like that, sometimes it helps to get through the real feelings of like, you're a human being on the planet. We are spirit bodies but we are also in this physical body where we experience pain and physical discomfort and various things. In where we are in this country, it's imperative that we are constantly doing it. White supremacy is always

December: Figuring out more details, like pink cork board and publication seatbelts!



adapting to us, that's why protesting as a form of rebellion, currently, does not work as it did in the 60's. When people protest, cops get overtime pay, media coverage is going crazy and they are getting money. So now, people are getting money based off of people's pain and them trying to rebel against their pain. You gotta be thinking creatively and imagine. White supremacy is always imagining how to sustain Black trauma and Black death. So it's hard and it's fucked up and we shouldn't be in this situation but we have to continue to fight, because this is not just for us, but for people who come after us.

For the impact part, I would just say that the most important thing is that you can facilitate that a few ways, by having discussion, because discourse, maybe after an event, is important and effective; creating a sense of community, something that's recurring, that people can continuously grow from, not just a one time thing. Sometimes that can help to continue to plant the seed and have a discussion about what they got from something. At the end of the day it's like, put it out there, let people feel it. If your genuine, at the end of the day, people want to feel that. I'm awkward when I be hosting and people are like I feel you. Cause I'm awkward and you awkward and I feel that. Just be present with your intent. Pray. I pray. I pray before sex and I pray before I write a poem. I keep it 100. That's just important, you gotta do that.

Don't disconnect from The Most High, however you call The Most High, that's your prerogative, the spirit and the energy in your work, comes from there.

Malcolm: I think being really honest and vulnerable will always leave a trace with someone. Even if it's just one out of a hundred, you did something. It matters because that one person was the one person who was as vulnerable as you, and was willing to be as close as they could with themselves in that moment. Because in reality, empathy and vulnerability are the two things that everyone is seeking. They are the most sought after things and the least asked for things that we have.

Sarrita: I think one way of thinking about impact is also addressing this question of sustainability. I don't mean it in the financial sense, but more in this social imaginary way of, how do we imagine creating the structures that allow these things to happen?

Malcolm: How do we make time for it?

Sarrita: Yes, time, but also it goes back to organizing and institution-building. One of the things that we end up writing a lot about in the postscript of our book is this idea of critiquing through building. How do we not only do the work,

but also create a situation where those projects can sustain themselves or sustain each other?

April: That makes me think of Beast Grrl because you guys are all seniors in high school. What are your considerations about how to let Beast Grrl live after you guys physically are not close to each other and can't physically collaborate as easily?

Emeline: That's funny because that's what our grant people say to us...

Kory: One of the reasons that we decided to do the after-school program and bring younger girls together was so that they could share in what we found, through working with each other. A kind of a sisterhood, but also for them to even want to come together and create a zine or take over the collective, or make another branch of it... Hopefully in a few sessions of this we'll find a couple of very willing young people to take over our duties and expand on them as well.

Emeline: Bridging the idea of what Malcolm said, of having an impact on one person and sustainability, that is how your project lives on. Watching someone else be impacted by it and then that goes and influences their life and what they do.

Even if the project doesn't survive in the iteration that it is now, the stuff that you're doing becomes sustainable through the connections you make. So what Kory was saying about the workshop, just sitting down and talking to people and knowing that this important thing to you is being transferred to someone else... I mean that can go in an infinite amount of ways. That's probably the most powerful way to make your project sustainable and continuous—is to make those connections with people and let them run with that. In terms of Beast Grrl, yeah, when we graduate we probably won't be in the same geographic location anymore and the project will change. But the connections and the shared ideas just live on within everyone who you connect with. Collectives spawn more ideas which spawn more work.

Sarrita: I want to press on this as a question. I feel like for me increasingly it's not enough in the sense that impact is super awesome but there's a way in which for this work to happen more people need to be involved, and I'm trying to be intentional in thinking about ways of bringing more people in or taking more of an educational role. Does anybody have any thoughts on how to take it from the step of – ok this person is impacted – to – ok this person wants to help build this thing further? Or their own thing further? Or whatever. Again, I'm interested in not just doing the thing, but in building the structure up.



December: The perfect binder came wrapped in pink ribbon.. some things are just meant to be.

Ciera: As a student, one of the main things I'm noticing is that sometimes people are very good at implanting these ideas, but then they'll give me things like worksheets, and it's hard to learn that way. I think it comes back to accessibility; not everyone can understand or even be able to process being lectured at. Art, in a way, is a type of education. Sometimes just giving people activities, the take away activity during the talkbacks can be effective. There's probably a way that you can put those ideas into work; a way to give the student the power to do the thing.

Fire: Institutions are the only way you're going to be able to impact the masses. You can see that in the church, or when you start a collective and put your name on something. That's a way to galvanize people. If you're going to have one time events, maybe think about what is the institution that's around that can help continue to support people. I don't know what it is about human beings, but people don't always like supporting just individuals. The idea of a group makes people feel like they want to give something to it. For example, if you have an idea to do dance workshops, think about where or how could you frame that under something, so when you're communicating and talking to people they feel like it's a larger community than just you. I think attaching it to a cause, attaching it to a space or a institution—that could be literal, like you

might actually have a building, or you might be like this is the dance collective—I find that things like that help get the masses to you quicker than just saying, I'm doing something really cool, come see me...

Sarrita: So with this idea of working collaboratively in general, as opposed to everyone's got their own space and their own project, you can build momentum just through working collaboratively with other groups of people. Maybe that's also a thread that's going through this discussion—the role of collaboration and the role of collective working versus the individual. This is certainly the idea in the commercial and academic art worlds that you are out to compete with everybody. Counteracting that with just a very simple collective approach...

Rain: So my question piggybacks on this idea of collaboration, especially collaboration amongst collectives, which I think is so rich; just the fact that there are groups of people who have arrived at a certain kind of understanding that is really meaningful. Where do you guys stand with collaborating with institutions that may not have arrived yet at the place of understanding where you are? I ask that because sometimes you preach to the quire, when there are lots of different institutions who have truth, have light, they already have these communities, and it might behoove us to

try to implement and work with and for those institutions as opposed to existing here while they are there.

Sarrita: Not just thinking about collaboration, vertically but also horizontally, working with people up and down.

Jess: Institutions... I mean, their money is nice.

Fire: I think “institutions” is too broad a word, what are we talking about here?

Rain: I had the church in mind. The fact that there might be a church that does a dance thing, but what if that church doesn't necessarily understand your work whether t be with LGBTQ communities? Or something else that they may not have yet arrived at. That's a big part of the black community in general. That's a big part of these things; they have the money, they have the meetings, they have leadership, regular attendance. So specifically churches, but maybe also other institutions that operate within and for the African American community. So not a Hopkins, but other things, not necessarily the church, although I can't really think of other things that Black people are in full control of without any oversight than that.

Malcolm: Beauty. That industry is crazy. The most expensive

hair comes from India. But those women it belongs to are lied to. They are told that their hair is going to wigs, and I don't know who the middleman is...

Fire: Capitalists.

Jenné: Or sometimes it's for religious reasons.

Malcolm: Oh yes, it's like a gift, it's a really big deal! The church, and LGBT organizations, how much do you bend?

Fire: I don't know if it's a bend. It's simply, people don't want to be in the same room as other people who disagree with them.

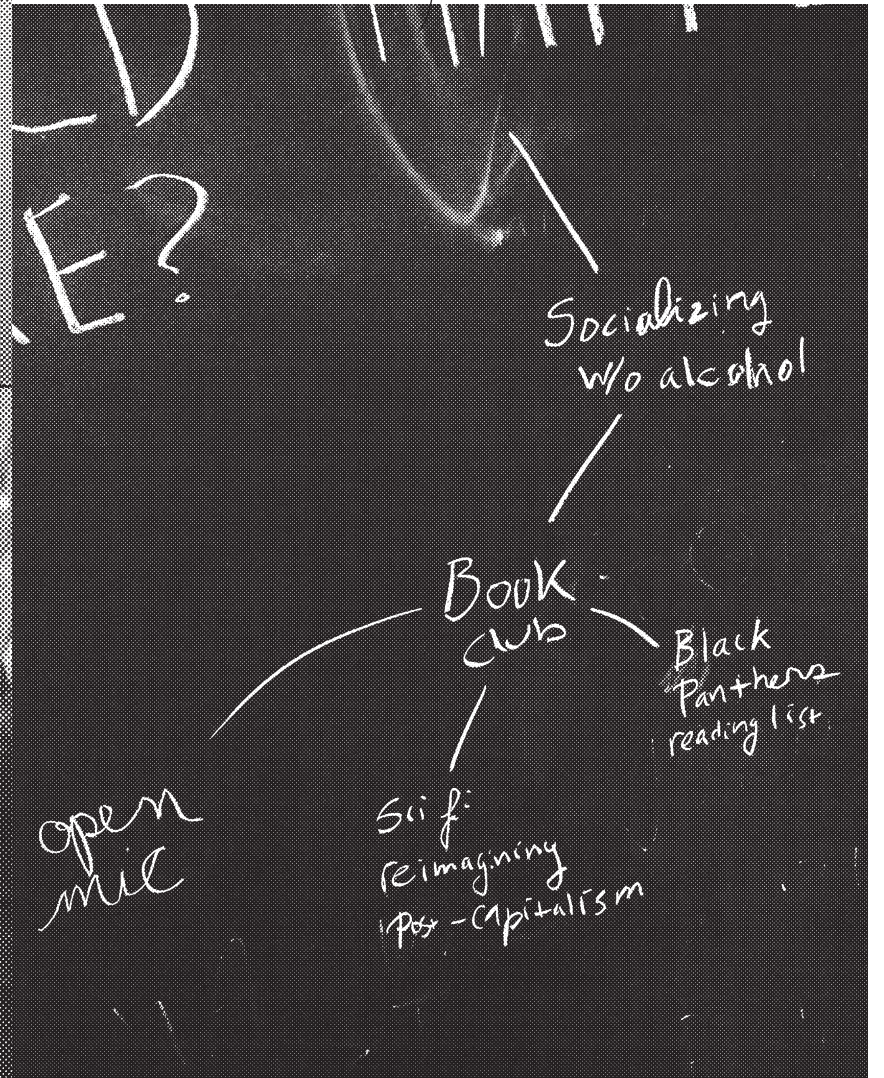
Malcolm: Maybe what Rain is saying, is that it's possibly really fruitful ground for progression? If more diverse groups and modes of thinking come together.

Rain: Yes. I feel like, things like the Black church have actually, over time, given up a lot in order to be successful in this society. It just means that at some point you're giving up something in order to exist.

Fire: Yes. But a lot of people, at least in this generation, aspire to create something. People are egotistical and nar-



December: First event (this conversation your reading right now!) in partnership with Temporary Art Review, served as a brainstorm and in-process preview of the space.



cissistic, so they want to be in the center. In my work, I try to collaborate with different people, and as I continue to do my work, I see myself definitely collaborating with different organizations, from community groups, homeless shelters, churches... As an artist, it's easy to want to create your own thing, but I think that collaboration with institutions are very important if you want to be able to continue to do the work because that's where the community is. Where are people at on Sunday? You can't act like these people don't exist or like they aren't a part of the community work that you're doing. For me, I see that as right where I need to be.

I definitely think that being able to humble yourself, to go into a space that's already been created before you, is sometimes very scary to people, but very necessary. Otherwise you can't learn. You gotta learn from your elders! That's why I don't get when people say, We're not our grandparents, cause, you know, they did fight back! They did organize. All of your grandparents. So I don't understand this idea of wanting to be separated from our elders, from the community that already exists. Doing our own shit sometimes is so prevalent that we don't see the wisdom that we can get if we just listen.

Ciera: I think there's a fear and mistrust in that though. Like,

if I were to go into a situation with an elder, in regards to respectability politics I reject a lot of stuff, and I feel like when I go into those spaces to collaborate I have to hold myself back so much that I feel like, is my message even gonna get across? Or how much do you bend in that situation in order to collaborate? Sometimes when you have an established institution there is an inevitable, this is how we are doing things attitude, and that's fair because if you want a movement, you want it to be where it is, you don't want it to bend so much. So that's a really valid question.

Fire: Are we bending or are we evolving? If you're talking to someone who maybe doesn't agree with you, at least for me—I'm 23, I've been a child longer than I've been an adult, which means I've got a lot to learn, being humble, you may not know everything and it's important to be in a space where you are able to change your ideas. When we say bending, to me, that means being open to hearing your elders. Because at this time, you choose your own elders for real. We're not in the village. You can choose your own elders, so you gotta be wise enough to do that. I think in that process for me, when I choose my elders, I choose people who often times disagree with everything I say, they get on my nerves. But that's important though, you gotta be in spaces with people who disagree with you. Either you're going to change your idea or you're gonna evolve it. It's

like how you change your circles; if you're changing and your evolving, it's like, all these motherfuckers around me gotta go, or they gonna have to evolve. It's that same process. So I would just say, be open, and if that requires you to bend, then maybe that's what we need to do.

Zoey: Specifically, when you enter an institution like a church, they have a specific mission. For example, with LGBT issues, I've been in churches where they are dismissive. And then other churches where it's like, It's not my job to tell them who they are, it's my job to love them. And I believe that's what Christianity is essentially.

Jenné: I think there has to be a way for it to relate to the religion itself, or finding common ground.

Brandon: With horizontal collaboration, I think it's important to have a genuine exchange. You have to have a very intentional collaboration, in that there is a genuine exchange of something. Because if not, then there is always a potential for just the façade of collaboration, which maybe has some type of value to... But I think that in order for you to have an effective collaboration, both parties have to have intentional reasons for collaborating and it has to be a real exchange of something in order to call it successful.

Sarrita: To throw in another question here, we are talking about moving between different spheres and spaces, and I think there could be an argument about artists being uniquely positioned to move between these spaces, and move across different institutions. I wanted to know if anyone agrees with that? I think artists are able to create these collaborations between people who wouldn't collaborate on their own, potentially. You can go into a church or a library and say, I'm an artist I want to do this project, and have a more open audience, potentially, than another occupation.

Brandon: I think this has to do a lot of the with the openness of the definition of "artist" and the transferrable skills that come with that. Artists usually have an intention to their action, so I think artists are objective driven a lot of times, and that benefits a lot of different spaces.

Ciera: I think it's also entertainment. That's an easy way to get through to people. It reminds me of things like The Hunger Games. Something that's about revolution, that then also cuts across classes, even though it's kind of about them (some people watching it) being overthrown. And then they are like, Oh, that was great! but they don't really see it. At the same time, even if you can cross those boundaries, like let's say you can go into a church, or I can



go into trump tower or something, how do you make sure that's actually absorbed by those people, without you just being a caricature or just being something that's filling the background noise?

Jess: When you talk about entertainment, it makes me think of this thing with Hip Hop. You know Hip Hop in North America and globally and how it has permeated everyone and everything. Everybody loves Hip Hop. White people are the biggest consumers of it, in terms of buying it. I think that's awesome, but then you always have this fear of appropriation, it's always around the corner...

Ciera: Well essentially, it's like the same people that enjoy Hip Hop and enjoy Hip Hop dance, can also be the same people, like your taking something and using it for something bad...

Jess: Like Trump supporters dabbing.

Fire: But that's Pop Culture, or Rap Music, that's different from Hip Hop Culture. Globally Hip Hop Culture is revered. For me, I think if you look at it as what it is and what it's supposed to be, and how it exists globally, then it's hard to really function in an anti-Black way. It was born out of the struggle of Black people and if you go abroad that's

who is primarily practicing Hip Hop Culture; it's people within the African Diaspora. I think people like Rap Music, because it's probably entertaining to them or whatever, but that's different from Hip Hop Culture. Who is the person that's signing these people and gives them that money? All the people that you look up to are people that were put in place. I know you can think of at least three artists in your head that you know are dope that are never going to get the acclaim that certain artists get. Cause why would they put those kinds of people on the radio? Capitalism is not going to put your prophets in place for you. You've gotta want it yourself.

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gotta want it yourself.

Brandon: I think art, in it's purest form, is a really genuine expression. Any genuine act can be discerning, something that puts somebody at ease, regardless of what comes after it. Genuine-ness resonates with people always. Art has the ability to penetrate across the board, because genuine-ness pene-

trates with everyone, so like a Soulja Boy character, someone who's doing something really simple and repetitive, can put you at ease. And then a heavier subject can be put in front of you because you've already been disarmed.

Ciera: I like that word disarmed. Sometimes, you can kind of sneak in revolutionary ideas because people are laid back.

Malcolm: I really agree and believe in what you're saying. The foundation of it is relationship; everything after it thrives off of that. When you bring up entertainment—it's funny how when we talk about art, we don't want to talk about capitalism. But there is always capital, value, and time in every situation... they hang over our heads because everyone is thinking, OK, is this worth my time? What is the value of this for my time? We live in a passive culture that's also extremely needy. We want to take rather than receive. I think those two words get confused a lot especially in art contexts. People go see a show and they say, Oh, I didn't really like that work so much, or oh it was so great, but then why didn't you engage more with the artist at that show? Where is the reciprocity? I think publications are a really interesting area for that relationship to take place. I think we are willing to have relationships with someone who is a stranger to us, when we are doing it in private. And I think a lot of us read more in

private. Maybe it's just easier to have a relationship in private because you don't have to address certain things at front. When you're at home with a book, there's no pressure.

Emeline: Private consumption of print material allows for private emotion, in response to a publication that doesn't pretend to be objective. That's what made us wanted to us to start writing because we saw women being really angry. Reading something that's really raw in a personal space is really impactful, even if you've never met the writer; that relationship transcends space and time.

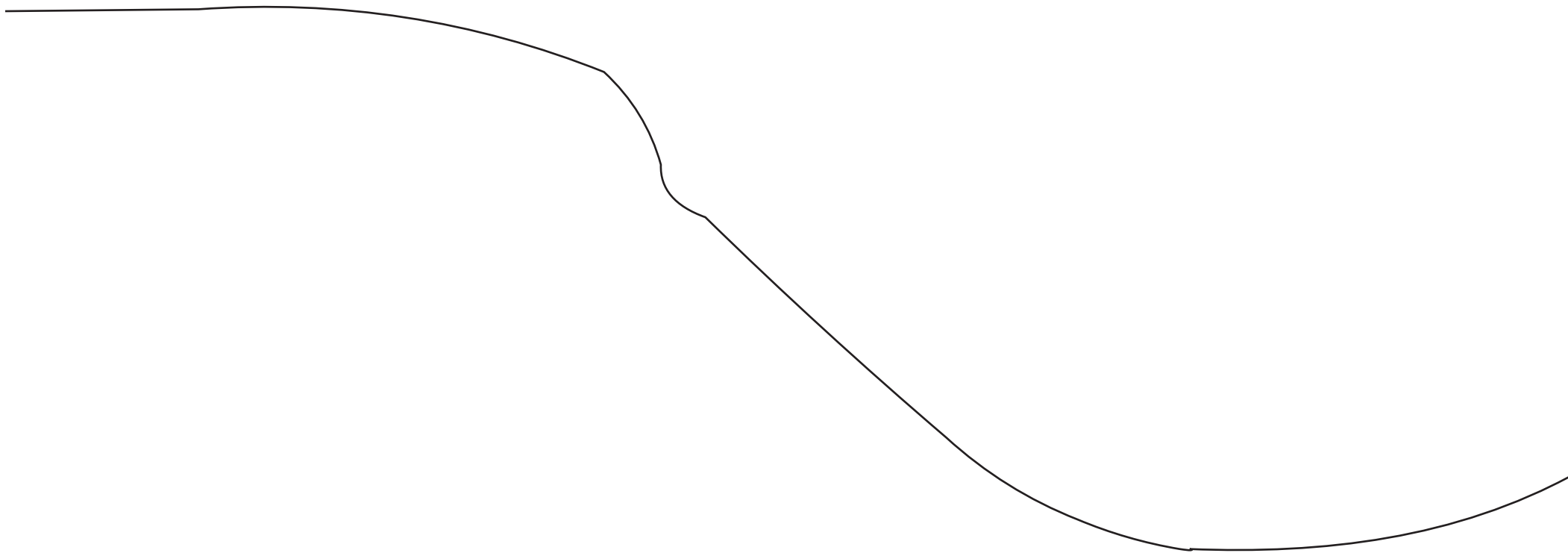
in closing..._____

Thanks for reading *The Making Of*! One of our hopes for this space is that it can continue to be molded and evolved by conversations and events such as this one, that help set the stage for our collective work. We hope you will continue to share your wisdom with us at future conversations and events.

With Love,



Press Press Team



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