

"Hell, they've got to eat
just like other people!"

Harry Hopkins, of the Works
Progress Administration,
referring to artists during
the Great Depression

"The ultimate, hidden truth of
the world is that it is something
that we make, and could just
as easily make differently."

David Graeber (1961-2020)

REST IN POWER

TAKE WHAT YOU CAN'T GET

November 18 - December 31, 2020

Inspired by the role of artists as imaginers, and agitators, from the 1930s to the present day, *Take What You Can't Get* embraces our current moment of multilayered crisis (economic, racial justice, leadership, health) as an opportunity for artists to actively imagine a more desirable future. The exhibition's title addresses pre-existing artworld expectations of austerity and extreme inequality - that artists and art workers must take what they can get.

The four projects, by three collectives and one artist, respond to the following questions:
What do artists and art workers need now? What does our NYC community need now (and how can artists help)?
What should we demand of our institutions - art or government? What does a more beautiful future look like?

On December 13, The Illuminator's large-scale guerilla projection on the TF Cornerstone building in Long Island City highlighted the urgency of New York City's housing crisis. The art-activist collective's public intervention called on our local government to: "Stop Evictions," "Cancel Rent" and "Keep Public Housing Public." These projections onto a luxury condo building (with rents between \$3-5k/month) asserted "Housing Justice Is Racial Justice," "We Need Low-Income Housing," and "We Need An Eviction Moratorium Now," among others. Video documentation is available on ABC No Rio's Instagram.

Strategic Transparency Collective's *Manifestos for Creative Resistance* are cooperatively generated documents that come out of workshops inviting decentralized groups of new media artists to reevaluate their "relationships with technology, surveillance capitalism, and corporate control." STC held a virtual workshop on December 19-- a selection of text from the manifesto can be found on page 3. Inviting participation with the larger public, the seven workshop prompts can also be found wheatpasted throughout North Brooklyn. QR codes on the wheatpastes direct viewers to the manifestos on the collective's website: <https://strategictransparencycollective.net/manifestos/>.

Francheska Alcántara's audio work (available on ABC No Rio's exhibition site) was made with a Dream Machine alarm clock. Dreaming can be both passive and active, blissful and unsettling. Using the Dream Machine, the artist developed "a sonic escape towards an idealized future informed by memory, instances, struggles, presence and poetry." To truly experience the work, the listener must slow down and find some place quiet. A poem on page 4 accompanies the audio work.

Artcodex's poster *Bread Into Roses* imagines an alternate future where support for artists through the Works Progress Administration not only never ended, but expands to the planet Mars. Building on the labor movement's historic rallying cry for "bread and roses," the art collective imagines a "society that values joy, play and beauty over productivity and the work ethic." Artcodex invites any member of the public to print and hang the poster in a space where it is accessible to the public. To participate, please download the pdf linked on page 5.

Creating art during a time of crisis poses many challenges. I want to thank all of the artists, panelists, and ABC No Rio Visual Arts Collective members who participated. I hope these works resonate, energize, and help others process this moment as much as they have for me.



CURATED by Christina Freeman

ARTWORKS by Artcodex // Francheska Alcántara

Strategic Transparency Collective // The Illuminator

PANEL "Fostering a Healthy Art World Ecosystem" featuring:

Shawn Escarciga // Alicia Grullón // Antonio Serna

DESIGN by Brian George

PUBLICATION by Magali Duzant

The Illuminator



The Illuminator is an art-activist collective composed of visual artists, educators, and technologists based in New York City.

Since 2012, the collective has staged hundreds of projection-interventions in public spaces, transforming the street from a space of passive consumption and transit into a site of engagement, conflict, and dialogue.



On Sunday, December 13, 2020 in Long Island City, NY, the Illuminator projected onto a TF Cornerstone building. The large-scale, guerilla projections call attention to the urgent housing crisis and visualize demands for a more just future.



image credit The Illuminator Collective

2020 has taken a toll on our city and forced many people to leave their homes. The pandemic and its economic fallout should not push New Yorkers out of their homes and neighborhoods.

Housing is a human right: no rent, no evictions, and no debt!

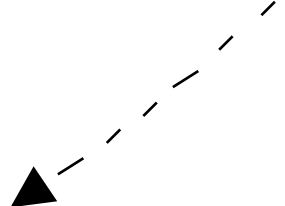
We need to take action now to prevent more homelessness and deaths. Call on your representatives and demand that we :

- House the Homeless
- Keep Public Housing Public
- Cancel Rent
- Stop Evictions
- Forgive Debt
- and Abolish the Tax Lien Sale

Tell your representatives to invest in public housing and the growing Community Trust Land movement, to create permanent affordable housing. Housing Justice for All!

T.W.Y.C.G.

Strategic Transparency Collective

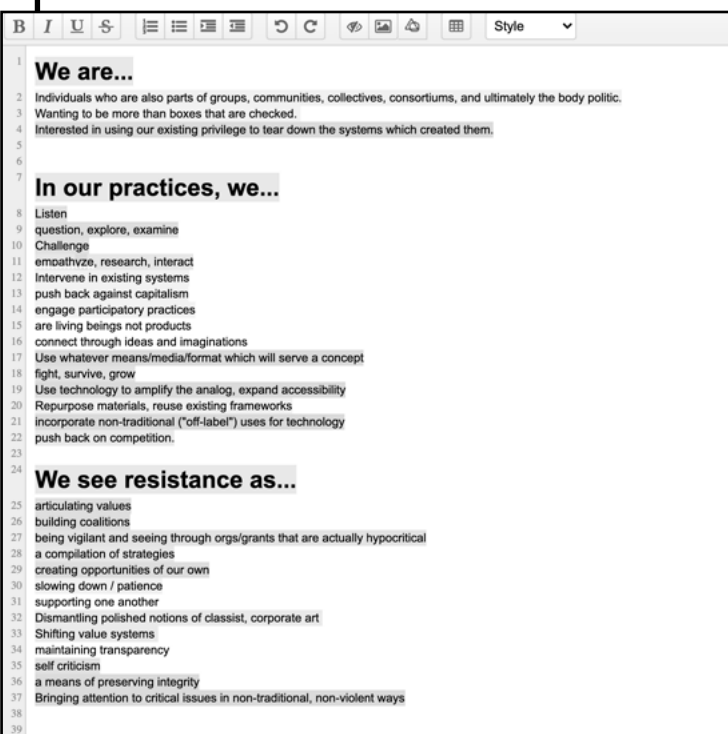


The *Manifestos for Creative Resistance* are a series of collectively written documents authored by members of the Strategic Transparency Collective.



Developed from a continuing series of workshops first held in the summer of 2020, the *Manifestos* represent a growing awareness among new media artists of how our work serves to uphold and reinforce the dominance of surveillance capitalism and Big Tech—along with a pervasive desire to be reflexive about our work's impacts, and to engage as a community while working towards critical practices that break free of those restrictions.

These documents point to both potential shifts in how we might conceptualize our work's purpose, and actionable commitments we can make in service of those shifts.



Creative Resistance Workshop December 19, 2020



Seven guiding prompts that led to the development of the *Manifestos* can be found wheatpasted around North Brooklyn.

Each prompt connects to a website on which selections from the *Manifestos* are viewable, offering a window into how collective members have approached answering these questions in relation to our work. The placement of the prompts out in the world and away from technology invites viewers to consider these questions in the context of their own lives, and offers a connection to core concerns surrounding technology, art, and resistance that, while central to the work of new media artists, extend well beyond this community into myriad and diverse creative practices.



T.W.Y.C.G.

Francheska Alcántara

Sonic Dreaming, 2020

The sonic escape of a dream
Because the future is not guaranteed
Could be busier, louder, darker
Could be more
Or less
The higher one finds herself, the quieter it gets
Is it because it is lonely at the top or because climbing
asphyxiates?

Rising revolt
Moving forward
Hard to concentrate
Coming in waves
Like the act of wind on water
The flows and ebbs

Call here // Get there



Francheska Alcántara's score built with a quasi-obsolete dream machine/alarm clock creates a sonic escape towards an idealized future informed by memory, instances, struggles, presence and poetry.

To experience the piece, please use headphones and find yourself in a quiet place.

<http://www.abcnorio.org/galleries/media/take/francheska.mp3>



Bread Into Roses is a poster reimagining the Arts programs of the Works Progress Administration within a speculative future. Space and the planet Mars are the setting, with material support provided by a fictive Galactic Federal Arts Project to the (also fictive) Mars Artist Initiative. The featured project is a collaborative envisioning of a literal “body” of artistic production, blossoming forth with roses of beauty. The title is an adaptation of the famous rallying cry *Bread and Roses*, used by both suffragettes and the labor movement in the early 20th century. While this phrase is commonly held to mean a fight for both fair wages and dignified conditions, we revised this slogan to imagine life outside of the dictates of pragmatism. We see fiscal support as fertilizer for a radically different society that values joy, play and beauty over productivity and the work ethic.

By constructing this fantastical narrative, we imagine an alternative past in which the far-reaching economic support of the New Deal was not dismantled by McCarthyist fears and neo-liberal policies. We also cast a light into a future where these progressive programs have grown even larger, integrally reshaping the values of our society.

In using Mars as our location, we give a nod to a whimsical and creative government program not often associated with the fine arts - the space program. If the seemingly irrational urge to send humans to Mars is something worth funding, then surely our daily creativity and whim should be as well.

Since this exhibition is happening outside of a fixed gallery context, we invite any member of the public to post our poster in a space where it is accessible to the public. To participate, click on the image above to download a pdf of the *Bread Into Roses* poster, print it out and put it up. Feel free to #breadintoroses and @artcodexstudio and show us how it looks.

Fostering a Healthy Art World Ecosystem

On Thursday, December 3, 2020 a panel discussion was held on Zoom between Alicia Grullón, Antonio Serna, Shawn Escarciga, and curator Christina Freeman.

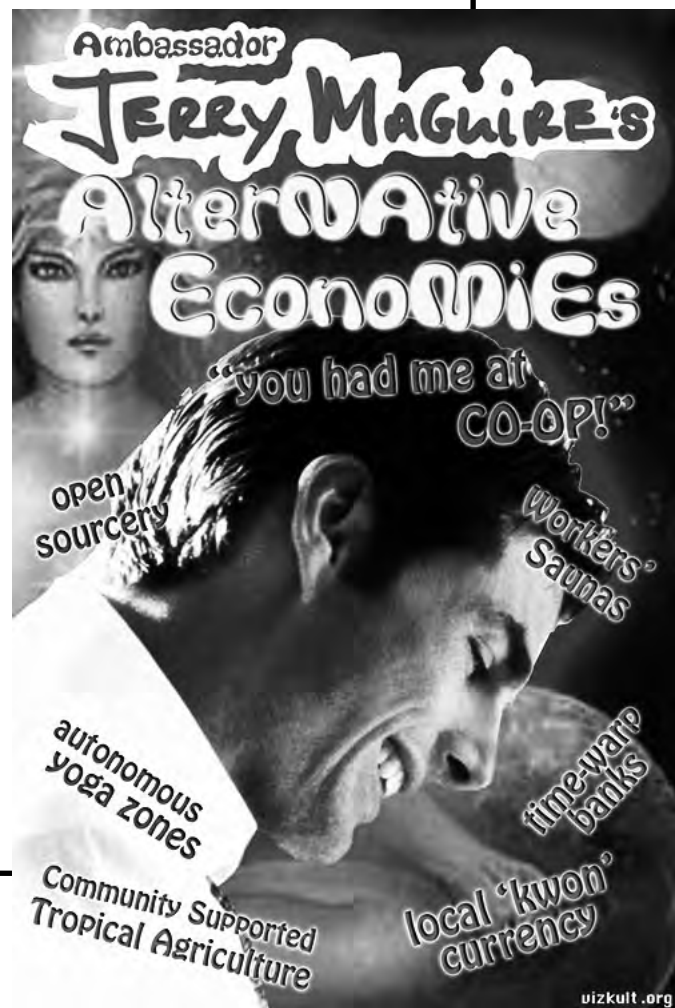
The panel is available to watch here on the Internet Archive

What do artists and art workers need now?



Shawn Escarciga

What should we demand of our institutions - art or government?



Antonio Serna

Jerry Maguire's Alternative Economies" digital vinyl print 30"x40"

What does our NYC community need now (and how can artists help)?



Alicia Grullón

What does a more beautiful future look like?

Participant Bios

ABC No Rio is a collectively-run center for art and activism. We are known internationally as a venue for oppositional culture. ABC No Rio was founded in 1980 by artists committed to political and social engagement and we retain these values to the present. We seek to facilitate cross-pollination between artists and activists. ABC No Rio is a place where people share resources and ideas to impact society, culture, and community. We believe that art and activism should be for everyone, not just the professionals, experts, and cognoscenti. Our dream is a cadres of actively aware artists and artfully aware activists.

Artcodex is presently composed of Vandana Jain, Mike Estabrook, and Glen Einbinder. Over the years we have collaborated with dozens of others, and consider our roles as simultaneously participants, instigators and organizers. Though each project is different, we often like to create spontaneous communities of artists and non-artists to explore contemporary issues. Most recently, we have been working with ABC No Rio to organize a series of exhibitions centered on cooperation and non-competition, with *The Game Show* taking place in May-June of 2018. Another recent project dealt with issues surrounding genetic modification of food, monocrops and community (Mutant Corn). In 2008, we co-organized *No Assumption*, a show about healthcare, debt and the housing crash, that took place in a foreclosed home. Artcodex has worked in collaboration with many artist partners in the US and abroad, including Future Prospects, Manila, The Philippines; Art of This, Minneapolis, MN; Quartair, The Hague, Netherlands, and the Dacha Project, Ithaca, NY. We have been in residence at Elsewhere, Greensboro, NC; Bose Pacia, Brooklyn, NY, Holes in the Wall Collective, New Jerusalem, PA and the Montello Residency in Montello, NV.

Francheska Alcántara is an Afro-Caribbean-Latinx-queer-woman raised-by-their-grandmother and hailing from The Bronx. Francheska explores slippages in-between memories, fragmentations and longing. Their aim is to explore the specific social meaning within the realm of domestic and public life of artifacts and interactions such as: hand-washing their underwear with cuaba soap while taking a shower, setting up buckets to catch rainwater to wash their hair, and peeling plátanos with the knife that has the right sharpness to follow the platano's curve without cutting their hand. Francheska wants to use these subjective experiences to expand our capacity for pleasure, love and intra-connection. Francheska graduated with a MFA in Sculpture + Extended Media from Virginia Commonwealth University, a BFA in Painting from Hunter College, and a BA in Art History from Old Dominion University. Alcántara has shared their work at the Brooklyn Museum, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, the Queens Museum, La Mama Theater, Grace Exhibition Space, and BronxArtSpace.

The Illuminator is an art-activist collective composed of visual artists, educators, and technologists based in New York City. Since 2012, the collective has staged hundreds of projection-interventions in public spaces, transforming the street from a space of passive consumption and transit into a site of engagement, conflict, and dialogue.

The Strategic Transparency Collective We are a decentralized network of new media artists rethinking our relationships with technology, surveillance capitalism, and corporate control. Our aim is to develop frameworks for tech-based creative resistance that do not serve to re-affirm the dominance of Big Tech and its profit-driven imperatives. We advocate a robustly self-reflexive approach to working with technology and data, and encourage artists to align their goals with each other and operate as a community—rather than reinforcing the neoliberal tropes of individual artistic excellence and the myth of the singular genius.

Alicia Grullón uses performance and self-portrait (re)composing popular histories as a critique on the politics of presence- an argument for the inclusion of marginalized communities in political and social spheres. Grullón has participated in exhibitions including *The 8th Floor*; Bronx Museum of the Arts; BRIC House for Arts and Media; El Museo del Barrio; and Columbia University. She has received grants from the Puffin Foundation; Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of New York; and Franklin Furnace Archives. Grullón has participated in residencies at the Hemispheric Institute for Politics and Performance at New York University; Center for Book Arts; and Bronx Museum of Arts AIM program. Her work has been reviewed in *Hyperallergic*, *ArtNet News*, *New York Times* and *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*. Grullón is a recipient of the 2019 Colene Brown Art Prize and 2020-2022 Walentas Fellowship at Moore College of Art and Design.

Antonio Serna is a Mexican-American artist, activist, and educator living in New York. His current artistic visual research project, *Documents of Resistance: Artists of Color Protest (1960-2016)*, is an extension of his real life anti-racist politics, pedagogy, and activism. This project and others have recently been included in *Making and Being: Embodiment, Collaboration, & Circulation in the Visual Arts*, 2020; *Art As Social Action: An Introduction to the Principles and Practices of Teaching Social Practice Art*, 2018; and *Reflecting on Reconstructing Practice: Toward an Anti-racist Art & Design Field*, 2018. He is currently co-organizer of Museum Workers' Happy Hour/BIPOC Workers Working group, a by-and-for worker empowerment and solidarity group.

Shawn Escarciga (he/they) is a multidisciplinary artist, arts administrator, and organizer exploring the intersection of performance, design, and activism. Shawn's work examines labor, class, and queerness, while speculating on what non-oppressive, anti-capitalistic structures of art-making/valuing might look like. Shawn uses objects and technologies that are readily accessible and low-fi to make work about access, monotony, and struggle. Shawn thinks a lot about classism, queer visibility, mutual aid, the internet, intimacy amongst faggots, and what it would be like to live in a country that supports non-commercial artists and the working class.

Christina Freeman is an interdisciplinary artist and curator based in New York City. Her practice employs pause and interruption as a method for contemplative looking. Intervening in systems often taken for granted, she approaches culture as something we actively shape together. By creating breaks in routine temporal systems, she investigates social justice themes such as visibility and censorship, data privacy, cultural value systems, and structural power. Community-building through transformative conversation motivates all of her work, regardless of whether she is performing, curating, or teaching. Freeman's *UltraViolet Archive* has been supported by Creative Time (2019), Queens Museum (2018-2019), Culture Push (2018-2019), National Coalition Against Censorship (2018-2019), and Danish Arts Foundation (2018).

Magali Duzant is an artist and writer based in NYC. In her collaborative and participatory approach to artist books, print ephemera, and public commissions, she couples research-based practices with a poetic and humorous knack for capturing our intimate, shared, experiences. Her work has been exhibited internationally at the Queens Museum, NY; UQO Gallery, Canada; Kunstgewerbemuseum in Dresden, and the 2018 Mardin Biennial in Turkey amongst others. She has published three books, *I Looked & Looked*, *Light Blue Desire*, and *The Moon And Stars Can Be Yours*.

T.W.Y.C.G.

Resources & References

Americans for the Arts Economic Impact Survey : <https://tinyurl.com/thzvt4u>

American Indian Artists Inc. : <http://amerinda.org/main/>

Art + Museum Transparency : <https://www.artandmuseumtransparency.org/>

Art Workers Coalition Archives : <https://primaryinformation.org/files/FOH.pdf>

Art Workers Coalition and MoMA : <https://tinyurl.com/y8nj77g8>

Artist Studio Affordability Project : <http://www.artiststudioaffordabilityproject.org/>

Culture Workers Education Center : <https://www.cultureworkers.org/>

Decolonize This Place : <https://decolonizethisplace.org/>

Feminist Data Manifesto - No : <https://www.manifestno.com/>

Feminist Principles Of The Internet : <https://feministinternet.org/en/principles>

Manifestos : A Manifesto : <https://tinyurl.com/y5bf1n7u>

Museum Hue : <https://www.museumhue.com/>

Mutual Aid NYC : <https://mutualaid.nyc/resources-groups/>

New York Public Library Digital Collections : <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/>

NYC Community Land Initiative : <https://nyccli.org/>

NYC Museum Workers Happy Hour : <https://www.facebook.com/NYCMuseumWorkersHH/>

NYCHA Blueprint for Change : <https://tinyurl.com/BlueprintB>

NYFA Emergency Grants : <https://tinyurl.com/yatgmu67>

People's Cultural Plan : <https://www.peoplesculturalplan.org/>

Right to Counsel NYC Coalition : <https://tinyurl.com/housingjusticeNYS>

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture : <https://www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg>

The Art & Society Census : <https://hyperallergic.com/609959/art-society-census-bpl-presents/>

Unionizing in the Art World : <https://tinyurl.com/y83vjpr7>

Who Represents Me ? NYC : <https://www.mygovnyc.org/>



Images of the works in the show and panel were provided by the artists; all artists' names are linked to their websites in the interactive PDF version of this publication. Documentation of projects credited to Christina Freeman unless otherwise noted. Images on the first page and alongside the Resources & References are selections from the New York Public Library's Digital Collections. All NYPL images are linked to their direct sources and run the gamut from Lewis Hines' images of laborers across the US to photographs made for the Works Progress Administration and the Federal Art Project, documenting community art centers in Harlem and Queens.

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