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see

saw



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who we are and what we do

Our publication shares innovative critical work biannually to foster intellectual discussion among an international network of students. As art historians, we are committed to diversifying the field and developing intersectional critical analyses of the artistic canon. *see/saw* is especially open to considerations of art and artists that have been historically erased and underemphasized.

acknowledgements

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Here we are! The first issue of *see/saw* has suddenly arrived—and it is glorious. I feel like it was only yesterday that our journal was just an anxious, all-lowercase Google document riddled with bullet points. Founding an academic journal during the second semester of my senior year might have been slightly foolish, but diamonds are formed under extreme pressure, right? Thankfully, it all turned out due to the brilliant work of our fellow undergraduates. It's been such a joy to learn about art history from students hailing from universities all across the world.

As you will soon notice, this is an eclectic body of work. *see/saw* spans from antiquity to the present day, considering an assortment of art objects ranging from ancient jewelry to ecological performance art. Despite the diversity in subject matter, we discovered many thematic undercurrents linking these essays together. In particular, environmentalism unexpectedly emerged as a major theme. Our authors prove how relevant the study of art history is by skillfully connecting their analyses to one of the most pressing issues of our time. This issue provides an exciting glimpse into the global, intersectional future of art history. I'm proud to publish each one of these essays, and I cannot thank the artists and authors enough for their contributions.

Thank you to UC Berkeley's wonderful Art History department for their financial and administrative support. I'd especially like to thank Aglaya Glebova and Anneka Lenssen for their continued encouragement and words of wisdom throughout the creation and publication of *see/saw*. It is amazing to me that two people have the energy to a) be kind, b) answer so many emails, and c) be exceptional professors and scholars. And so many thanks to my lovely staff and co-conspirators Viv, Hannah, Connor, Lily, Lindsay, Cassandra, and Sarah. Absolutely could not have done this without you all. A round of Costco chicken bakes is on me, once I find a job. Yikes. Next item on the list, I guess.

Please enjoy the first issue of *see/saw*! I think it is quite good.

Teddi Haynes
Founder & Editor-in-Chief

Environmental Relationality & Representation: The Ecological Imagination of Giovanni Bellini's St. Francis in the Desert

Madeleine Cesaretti,
Columbia University

From warming oceans and rising sea levels to loss of biodiversity and increased frequency of extreme weather events, the current global climate crisis is driven by human activity.¹ These undeniable changes are driven in part by the rapid release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which has increased at an unprecedented rate over the past two centuries.² In the early 2000s, atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen popularized the term 'Anthropocene' to characterize this era as its own geological epoch.³ In its original formation, the Anthropocene was traced to the expansion of industrial capitalism from England to other Western countries around 1800, particularly with the invention of the steam engine in 1784.⁴ The term calls for a reconsideration of geological periodization and, though controversial, has been incredibly generative to work in other fields as well.⁵ For example, it has inspired some historians to call for a reconsideration of how their own study is conducted, seeking deeper understanding as to how climate affects historical narratives.⁶ How has the environment shaped human history? How have humans shaped their environments?

In this context, ecocritical approaches focus greater attention on the representation of the environment while increasingly placing greater agency in it, exploring the ways in which human and nonhuman subjects interact with each other. In this way, ecocriticism is understood as "an effort to reorient and widen the scope of cultural studies by emphasizing the ways in which human creativity—regardless of form (visual, verbal, aural) or time period (ancient, modern, contemporary)—unfolds within a specific environment or set of environments, whether urban, rural, or suburban."⁷ Like historical frameworks, visual and narrative representations of an environment mediate how people understand themselves and the spaces around them. At the same time, the reality of global climate change reforms how terms like 'environment' or the closely related 'ecology' are interpreted and thus how conceptions of space are imagined.⁸ Exploring the approach of art history, this paper builds on the analytical lens of ecocriticism as an effort to understand nonhuman animals and the physical world itself with greater agency and care.

The theoretical and practical reconsiderations of ecocriticism create new opportunities for art historical scholarship. Due to its traditional emphasis on objects, much of art historiography has focused heavily on material discourses: What does this object depict? Who paid for this work? Where was it produced and by whom? This emphasis on representation, provenance, and circulation of material things has allowed art historians to closely explore concepts like imagination, religion, and vision—subjects attuned to "issues of pleasure, desire, fantasy, and excess."⁹ Through the discipline's insight into the relationship between material objects and power, art historians may be well positioned "to explore the affective dimensions of our predicament" in terms of environmental representation and justice.¹⁰ The concerns of ecocritical theory, echoing those of climate change advocates, extend to similar questions of land, property, wealth, and culture. Considering the historiography of landscape painting, the application of ecocritical approaches to art history could be considered in some ways to have already begun.¹¹

Additionally, even before the popularization of the Anthropocene terminology, some scholars had already called for ecocritical reconsiderations of both their own fields and the dominant socioeconomic structure and underlying philosophical traditions that support it, turning towards figures like St. Francis as alternative points of inspiration. Through his 1967 essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," historian Lynn White Jr. is an early and influential figure in this discussion; he positions the environmental crisis as a religious issue and thus one that calls for a religious solution.¹² White links environmental degradation to the linearly progressive ideology of dominant Western science and technology.¹³ He roots these issues in Judeo-Christian theology, which he argues has blessed and incentivized the exploitation of the natural world and nonhuman animals under its call.¹⁴ Against theological arguments that interpret Genesis as God's blessing for Man to exploit all other beings for human gain, White proposes St. Francis as an alternative model to navigating the relationship between

people and their environments, crediting the saint with a Christian interpretation of panpsychism, or the belief that all things are imbued with consciousness.¹⁵ White's text can be understood as an early entry point into the discourse of ecocritical scholarship and introduces St. Francis as a touchstone in contemporary environmental ethics.

While the extent to which St. Francis promoted 'panpsychism' in the way that White perceives is disputable, St. Francis' position in relation to modern ideas of environmentalism and the Catholic Church is undeniable. In 1980, Pope John Paul II named St. Francis of Assisi the patron saint of ecology, in addition to his status as the patron saint of Italy, for "[Francis] considered nature as a marvelous gift from God to humanity," demonstrating an alignment of the Church with a more environmentally responsive theology.¹⁶ However, it is difficult to parse whether the Pope's statement is a call to more reciprocal coexistence between people and the earth inhabited or an approval of its continual ownership by humans. Regardless, St. Francis has remained a major presence in the Church's

public communications to the present. In 2015, Pope Francis began his encyclical with "Laudato si, mi signore" ["Praise be to you, my Lord"], the opening line of St. Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*.¹⁷ In the encyclical, Pope Francis links new technologies to the secularization of



Figure 1. Giovanni Bellini, *St. Francis in the Desert*, c. 1475-80, The Frick Collection, New York.



Figure 2. Hand and hare detail from *St. Francis in the Desert*.

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, quite explicitly periodizing these eras as ones of massive environmental change and degradation.¹⁸ Though he rejects the belief that Christianity itself, or at least alone, is to blame, Pope Francis also brings St. Francis to the center of his writings on the environmental crisis.¹⁹

How St. Francis came to occupy this position in modern environmental discourse is one of the interests of this paper. Particularly, in what visual representations of the saint may the relationship between humans, nonhuman animals, plants, and landscape might be explored is the primary focus. These considerations center on Venetian artist Giovanni Bellini and his 1480 oil painting *San Francesco Nel Deserto* [*St. Francis in the Desert*], alternatively known as *St. Francis in Ecstasy* or simply as *St. Francis* (Fig.1). This paper navigates the complex symbolism of Bellini's painting in relation to the position and development of the Catholic Church and Franciscan order in the late

medieval and early Renaissance periods in Northern Italy. In addition to drawing out what meaning this composition might have held for those who were in possession of it or viewed it, this paper also works to analyze what meaning modern viewers might understand through it in interpreting how humans relate to each other and the world around us. Ultimately, while it may be possible to imagine an environmentalist reading of the painting understood through the ideas of ecocriticism as enumerated earlier, this paper argues that the specific economic and technological conditions

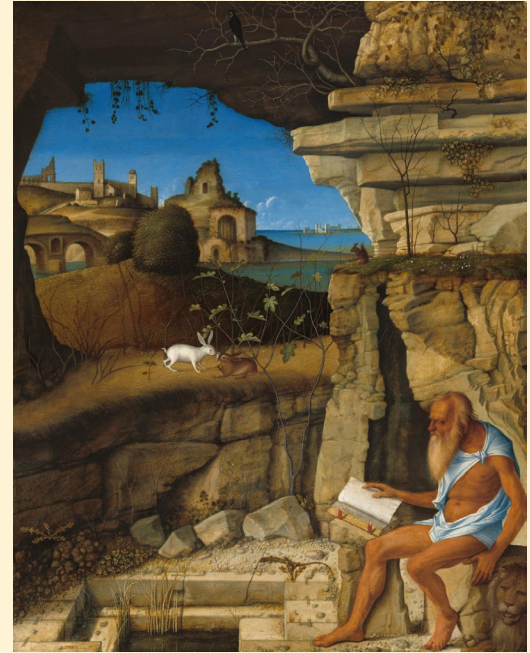
presumed in ecocritical discourses should be differentiated from the context of the Bellini's painting and patronage. Nevertheless, by engaging with this painting, viewers can still gain valuable insights into what it means to imagine, form, and render the landscape, man made structures, and the world's many creatures in relation to each other.

In the center foreground of the painting, St. Francis stands outside the mouth of a rocky cave, his arms outstretched and face turned upwards to the sky. Yellow rays of sun shine down from the clouds towards Francis, washing the scene in warm, golden tones. Though the painting is named for the saint in the foreground, the background takes up a notable portion of the canvas. Many animals are rendered with varying levels of immediate visibility, including an ass, hare, blue heron, and kingfisher. With his right pinky and fourth finger folding in towards his palm, Francis' hand subtly gestures perhaps towards the symbol of the Benediction, echoing the marks of the stigmata and pose of Jesus on the cross (Fig. 2). The mark of the stigmata is also visible on Francis' other hand and was previously on his foot as well, though the mark has faded with time.²⁰



The presence of the stigmata has been at the forefront of past scholarship on this work. In fact, the two main interpretations of Bellini's St. Francis argue that it depicts either the moment when Francis is said to have received the stigmata or when he is in the midst of writing and performing the "Canticle of the Creatures," also referred to as the "Canticle of Brother Sun."²¹ Depictions of Francis' receiving the stigmata and also his writing of the Canticle stem in large part from the writings of Thomas of Celano, who composed the main biography of Francis' life under the direction of Pope Gregory IX.²² Building on Celano's account, St. Bonaventure, in the *Legenda Maior*,

further details the stigmatization, elaborating on its occurrence at Mount La Verna, north of Assisi in central Italy.²³ How to visually represent this miracle came to be a source of innovation for Giotto di Bondone in his work *St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata* (Fig. 3), the scene he composed for the transept of the Church of San Francesco in Pisa between 1295-1300.²⁴ In



Giotto's panel, Francis kneels on a mountain, hands turned up towards a seraph-Christ who descends from above. The marks of the crucifixion are imprinted onto Francis' body via direct lines which link Francis' body with that of Jesus. As Hans Belting wrote in 2010, Giotto shows not the "image of the body, but an embodiment of an image," inviting viewers to understand Francis' body itself as the medium of connection between him and the Heavens.²⁵ Giotto's depiction of the stigmatization influenced many other visual and theological representations of the scene throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁶

Given the influence of Giotto's composition on ensuing representations of the stigmata, the lack of an image of Christ embodied as human or as part of the seraph has been the source of much contention in Bellini's *St. Francis*. This context of past representations of St. Francis, particularly of the stigmatization, crucially helps frame the seemingly predominant discourses on this narrative moment in Bellini's panel. In relation to Giotto's image, Bellini seems to position nature as the medium through which Francis' body takes on the image of Christ, or at least Bellini certainly emphasizes the significance of the sun rays in relation both to St. Francis and to the rest of the plateau. For example, the laurel tree on the far left of the composition bends back in relation to the sun rays, as though to emphasize their power and presence in the scene.

GIOVANNI BELLINI/CESARETTI

Additionally, in his 1963 study of the painting, Millard Meiss argued that Bellini depicts the stigmatization of Francis through tangible sunlight, in place of the seraphic crucifix as used in most other representations of the event.²⁷ Like Giotto's influence on representations of St. Francis, Meiss' work has shaped much of the following scholarship on this panel. The Frick Collection, where the painting currently resides, also supports this general interpretation of Bellini's painting as the stigmatization, though it cites Francis' Canticle of Creatures in relation to the many animals present in the work.²⁸ Others, notably Richard Turner, have posited that Bellini's painting illustrates Francis as he wrote the Canticle of the Sun, also pointing to the innovative representation of animals surrounding Francis.²⁹ Due to the wealth of symbols visible in this work, these different interpretations are able to coexist, and, in invoking well-known moments from Francis' life, generally align in their emphasis on the sunlight, animals, and plants.³⁰ Regardless of whether Bellini intended for this image to depict the very moment of stigmatization or the process of St. Francis writing the Canticle, the removal of the seraphic Christ turns emphasis towards the environment that surrounds St. Francis.

Still, the production of this work as a meditational aide underscores the inclusion of multiple layers of imagery in order to provide greater engagement of the viewer in relation to the image.³¹ This contemplative stimulation is also reflected in Bellini's other panel paintings, such as in his St. Jerome Reading (Fig. 4).³² In a study of this painting, which was presumably produced for a similar mercantile audience as the St. Francis panel, Belting argues that Bellini portrays both figures as ideals of the 'solitary life,' that is, as models for retreat from the urban society to nature.³³ In this way, Belting describes how "the private picture, as an intimate art form of its own, was welcomed as a retreat from the world where the spectator could enjoy nature as represented and nature as dreamed," later on suggesting that the compositions of both St. Jerome and St. Francis demonstrate a rejection of 'civilization' in favor

of 'solitude.'³⁴ Belting bases this interpretation in Petrarch's depiction of St. Francis as a "great lover of solitude," where a separation is viewed between the natural and man-made worlds in the image and where solitude is understood in relation to the withdrawal of a person from this kind of civilization.³⁵ However, close examination of the St. Francis panel may reveal that the perceived separation between the natural and the constructed worlds may not be so stark after all. Indeed, this interpretation is not to reject the premise of the landscape which invites the viewer to endow it with meaning and desire, but rather to understand the image as a depiction holding elements of realism and religion as well as signs of a mutually constructive relationship between human and nonhuman agents.

In this way, the stone cropping which St. Francis stands upon blends signs of human, divine, and natural landscaping. The outcropping that St. Francis stands on is home to a short line of stones, more ordered than those of the rest of the cliffside (Fig. 5). It is unclear whether these stones were found hewn into brick-like shapes or made into those, but regardless, their positioning suggests human stacking. As he steps toward the sun, St. Francis tilts his upper body slightly back, a pose which is visually reflected in the curvature of the mountain behind him. It is as though the stone itself is indented with St. Francis' body. This concave formation could be understood in relation to the story in which Francis is thought to have fought against the devil while on La Verna.³⁶ As Francis struggled, the cliff softened to enclose and protect him. This religious narrative thus suggests that the environment was shaped to fit St. Francis, yet his figure also was shaped to fit the stone in an act of divine protection. The landscaping of this cliffside suggests a mutual formation between human, natural, and divine.

These connections are found also in the real built structures of the Franciscan order. By 1459, a Franciscan monastery had been established on La Verna — a community that continues there today.³⁷ While very little information exists on the materiality of the buildings

Figure 5. St. Francis and stone detail.



Figure 6. Water channel and kingfisher detail



Figure 7. Ass, blue heron, shepherd, and background detail.

Figure 8. Bell, grape vine, tree frame, lectern, skull, book, and cave detail



that make up the complex, given the technologies available at the time of construction, one could possibly infer that at least some of the stones for the structures originate from the mountain itself. Regardless of this material origin, the significance of the mountain to the Franciscan order can relate to broader understandings of the tie between specific geographies and spirituality, such as those in terms of holy groves in Estonia.³⁸ Though different contexts, both of these traditions share a recognition in the importance of specific physical locations, themselves made up of plants and geological formations in relation to humans.³⁹ In the suggestion of both the stigmata scene and the Canticle, Bellini's St. Francis evokes the specificity of La Verna, grounding the panel in this spiritually charged landscape.

Additionally, in Bellini's painting, the stone wall seems to set off a small portion of the cliffside flora, as though it is a garden or plot of sorts for St. Francis to attend to (Fig. 5). The jug sitting near the wall, just behind Francis, suggests that the plants within the elevated bed are regularly tended to. The suggestion of a garden may relate to Thomas of Celano's account of St. Francis' life in *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*.⁴⁰ In this text, Celano asserts that St. Francis managed a garden, a claim that initially seems contrary to his beliefs against private property ownership, especially that of land, the use of fences to keep out animals, and the symbolic separation of monastic life from the rest of society represented in these garden spaces.⁴¹ However, in an analysis of this seeming contradiction, Lisa Kiser proposes that this garden, while anomalous in some respects, actually fits into hagiographical norms of the period in representing St. Francis in relation to the changing economic and physical landscapes of the period.⁴² Bellini's inclusion of a garden thus could also support Kiser's interpretation, positioning St.

Francis, though a hermit, within a larger social fabric where human stewardship of certain plants in this way is accepted.⁴³ Made to evoke meditation, this painting could have pushed viewers of the period to orient themselves to understand their own gardens as just one portion of a greater environment.

The incorporation of animals, such as the hare and kingfisher, with human constructions in the foreground expands this understanding of the environment to include nonhuman agents and further suggests a reciprocal relationship between each of these figures and the space they are understood within. In the bottom left edge of the image, a man made channel extends out from the cliff (Fig. 6).⁴⁴ Water streams down it gently

to flow down below where a small kingfisher bird appears out of the darkness. The bird appears to be drinking from its gentle flow, benefiting from the human construction. Iconographically, the kingfisher has been associated with a wealth of meanings, including as "a symbol of the contemplative man," which returns to the context of creation of work as a meditational aide.⁴⁵ Visible beneath St. Francis' right hand, a hare peaks their head out of the stone of the garden wall, possibly the shelter in which they have made their home (Fig. 2). Though other Bellini compositions depict hares, the one here is enmeshed in the built environment in a way that the hares of other panels, such as those of *St. Jerome Reading*, are not. The position of the hare within the wall and its proximity to the garden demonstrate a possible union between nonhuman animals and the built environment, in that one provides a home for the other. Bellini's image demonstrates two ways in which architecture could benefit humans and also other creatures, and these animals' presence evoke contemplation of this relationship.

In addition to these creatures in the foreground sharing the cliff with St. Francis, an ass and a blue heron inhabit the middle ground, atop a grassy ledge (Fig. 7). St. Francis' open arms align the

viewer's gaze diagonally with the position of the ass on the grassy plain in the midground of the painting and the shepherd and his flock in the background, by the foot near the foothills of the town, drawing a visual line between the line sections. Though swathed partially in shadow, the ass is thought to be cross-marked, with the curve of his spine intersecting the line of his shoulder blades in an outline that resembles the cross.⁴⁶ Norman Hammond has argued that the placement of the ass thus takes the partial place of the seraph crucifix that was traditionally featured in scenes of St. Francis' receiving the stigmata.⁴⁷ At the time, the ass was believed to symbolize the people "whom Christ leads to the holy kingdom," and the ass stands between Francis and the city in the background, as though ready to lead him there.⁴⁸ Nearby the ass is a blue heron, thought to be symbolic of righteousness and a sign of the souls of the elect.⁴⁹ Its symbolic meaning in terms of the afterlife thus seems to compound this interpretation of the ass as well as lends insight into the possible meanings town in the background of the image.

Thought to have loved nonhuman animals, plants, and other people alike and advocated for all beings to acknowledge the Beauty in each other, St. Francis centered joy in worship, "[recognizing] God in all things and [singing] of the harmony of all things in God."⁵⁰ Beyond the religious symbolism of each creature, the incorporation of animals in the painting centers coexistence between St. Francis and other beings. If the mountain top St. Francis stands upon resembles La Verna, the geographical location of the town in the background has been disputed, with theories of its resemblance both to the Heavenly Jerusalem and to the Earthly city of Assisi itself.⁵¹ Anthony Janson has argued that the resemblance to Assisi is only meant to further symbolic associations between San Damiano, where Francis is believed to have found shelter in a cave from his father when he pronounced in his faith, and Heavenly Jerusalem.⁵² In the painting's allusions to canonical moments in St. Francis' life, Janson concludes that the landscape itself conveys religious sentiment.⁵³ In this interpretation, nature itself is understood as proof of faith, just as St. Francis himself is thought to have believed "the love of God, the love of humankind, and the love of nature, are all of a piece."⁵⁴ In the relationship between the town and the mountain, the topography of the painting links divine power, physical space, and connection with other people, evoking the attributed beliefs of St. Francis.

The space between St. Francis on the mountaintop and the town may suggest a separation between the natural world and the constructed one, and yet careful examination of the mountaintop reveals a mutually beneficial relationship between humans and animals. In addition to the garden wall and hare as well as the water channel and kingfisher, St. Francis' hermitage blends the natural world in hand with the man made portions of the shelter.⁵⁵ An extended analysis of

Bellini's St. Francis would do well to further examine the hermitage section of the painting, exploring other representations of these spaces and symbolism of the objects and trees depicted within. Further study could be given also to connections between Humanism and Franciscanism in this period as well as to more of Bellini's other works.

Bellini's St. Francis can thus be interpreted as a general call for meditation on the relationships between St. Francis and the environment he is inhabiting, pushing viewers to consider their own relationships in these regards as well as philosophical and religious ideals. While St. Francis is a medieval saint who lived in a period removed from the climate crisis of today and the past two hundred years, his stand not for a rejection of the world for an ideal nature but rather an understanding of the world as a shared environment should be shared more widely, between both Catholic and secular people. While Bellini himself was not a member of the Franciscan order, his painting imagines a world that reflects many Franciscan beliefs in its notable details granted to nonhuman animal and plant subjects.⁵⁶ Bellini's St. Francis presents an embodied understanding of the relationship between person and place, between representation and reflection. The panel enables broader understanding of how the human environment could be understood as more harmonious with nonhuman animals and the world itself.

In the painting, tucked within the leaves of the grape vine that covers St. Francis' hermitage is a bell (Fig. 8). Though inconspicuous within the plant, the object suggests calls to prayer or assembly, for communication and camaraderie with others in the social world.⁵⁷ In this way, the ecological imagination of Bellini in this painting remains grounded in the relationships, both depicted and implied, between St. Francis and those around him, human and nonhuman beings, existing together.

Endnotes

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10. Ibid.
11. Gillen D’Arcy Wood, “Constable, Clouds, Climate Change,” *The Wordsworth Circle* 38, no. 1/2 (2007), 32, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24043954>.
12. Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967), 1203–7, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1720120>; White is joined by many other historians who have drawn connections between some interpretations of Christianity and the need for alternate frameworks regarding the relationship between people and their environments. For example, historian William Cronon, in his notable 1995 essay “The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” also identifies issues with Biblical interpretations that position humans entirely apart from the natural world and above other species.
13. White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” 1203.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid, 1207.
16. “Pope Names St. Francis Patron Saint of Ecology,” *The New York Times*, April 7, 1980, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1980/04/07/111148072.html?pageNumber=3>.
17. Pope Francis, “Laudato Si’ (24 May 2015),” Francis, June 18, 2015, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html#_ftn1.
18. Ibid.
19. Other writers, such as Friar Eric Doyle in “Ecology and the Canticle of Brother Sun,” have also argued that it is not “the essence of Christianity which has brought us to the crisis, but the blind selfishness of Christians, caused by sin, which has prevented them from understanding the full implications of these doctrines and from determining their relationship to nature” (394). To Doyle, it is not Christianity itself that approves of man’s exploitation of the earth and other creatures but rather a perversion of Biblical teachings that have allowed for these impacts.
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32. Hans Belting, "St. Jerome in Venice: Giovanni Bellini and the Dream of Solitary Life," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 17, no. 1 (2014), 7, <https://doi.org/10.1086/676482>.
33. Ibid, 6.
34. Ibid, 5.
35. Ibid, 22.
36. "The Description of the Sacred Mountain of La Verna," National Gallery of Art, 2018, <https://www.nga.gov/features/description-sacred-mountain-la-verna.html>.
37. Andrea della Robbia, "Glazed Terracottas in La Verna Sanctuary," Web Gallery of Art, https://www.wga.hu/html_m/r/robbia/andrea/la_verna/index.html.
38. Tõnno Jonuks, "Holy groves in Estonian religion," *Estonian Journal of Archaeology* 11 (2007), 3–35.
39. In relation to Christopher Tilley's *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (1994), as described by Thomas in "Phenomenology and Material Culture," these examples also point to understandings of the relationship between human and world where the land had meaningful dimensions beyond its quantification as discrete spatial resources. This understanding of land thus more broadly opens the way for understanding the capacity of people to relate to space in ways that Cartesian perspectives tend to cut off.
40. Kiser, "The Garden of St. Francis: Plants, Landscape, and Economy in Thirteenth-Century Italy," 233.
41. Ibid, 236.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Bellini's signature also appears in this area of the painting on a scrap of paper, as though blown against the scrub by chance.
45. Norman Hammond, "Bellini's Birds: Avifauna in the Frick 'St. Francis,'" *The Burlington Magazine* 149, no. 1246 (2007), 38, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20074688>.
46. Hammond, "Bellini's Ass: A Note on the Frick 'St Francis,'" 26.
47. Ibid.
48. Meiss, "GIOVANNI BELLINI'S ST. FRANCIS," 20–21.
49. Ibid, 21.
50. John Navone, "Pre-Renaissance Franciscan and Tuscan Humanism," *New Blackfriars* 75, no. 882 (1994), 276, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43249601>.
51. Anthony F. Janson, "The Meaning of the Landscape in Bellini's 'St. Francis in Ecstasy,'" *Artibus et Historiae* 15, no. 30 (1994), 41–54, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1483472>.
52. Ibid, 52.
53. Ibid.
54. Navone, "Pre-Renaissance Franciscan and Tuscan Humanism," 276.
55. The trees that make up the frame of the hermitage are manipulated to provide a permeable wall between Francis and his lectern (Fig. 8). The lectern is wooden and hewn in with clean edges — noticeably smoothed in the way that the water channel in the cliffside is as well. The skull on the desk alludes to mortality and is positioned as though a meditational aide for St. Francis himself when sitting at the lectern where a slender wooden cross stands on the farthest edge of the painting as well. Simultaneously, a grape vine is tied to the frame of trees, growing up and flourishing over top.
56. Navone, "Pre-Renaissance Franciscan and Tuscan Humanism," 272.
57. Bonnie Young, "A Medieval Bell," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 11, no. 10 (1953), 293–96, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3258293>.



Thursday Dinner

Oil on loose canvas, fabric, embroidery
thread
4x5 feet

Thursday Dinner memorializes a weekly dinner ritual of thirty years, hosted by my recently deceased grandmother. My grandmother would make dinner for a set of male bachelor friends, also roommates living in her home. In my youth, I always glamorized these dinners, but as I got older and lived with my grandmother and these roommates, I began to see these people from a more humanized perspective. The rosie lens which I saw them through dissolved. I now see them as complex, skewed, imperfect, faulty, and emotional individuals, and I found it best to capture their essences via animals. They are all painted and stuffed and superimposed over a painted version of my grandmother's kitchen, with their identities hidden under the guise of animals.

Sophia
Lavrov
University of
California,
Berkeley



You Know Those Are Too Big For Me.
Oil on loose canvas, 4x6 feet

the farm

Rediscovering Bonnie Ora Sherk's 'The Farm'¹

Emily Geary,
Trinity College
Dublin



Figure 1. Bonnie Ora Sherk, Scene from Crossroads Community (The Farm) 1976. Image Courtesy of the Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk. © The Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk 2024.

Fifty years have passed since the conception of Bonnie Ora Sherk's environmental performance sculpture Crossroads Community / The Farm, and while in 1981 Lucy Lippard coined it 'The most ambitious and successful work of ecological art' in North America, today The Farm remains relatively unknown beyond the continent.¹ Yet in the realm of environmental performance art, few works have rivalled the scope and significance of this work which stands as a blueprint for urban co-existence with nature. Lippard's sentiment is echoed by Tanya Zimbaro, curator of the 2024 exhibition 'Bonnie Sherk: Life Frames since 1970' (showcased at the Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture), in which she remarked that 'The Farm was both of and ahead of its time'.² Located in the Mission District of San Francisco, and operating from 1974 to 1980 under Sherk and co-founder Jack Wickert, this large-scale performance served as the crucible through which Sherk believed she obtained her 'PhD at life'.³ However, The Farm was not a formal educational setting. Rather, it was a non-profit alternative art space, organic urban farm, and non-hierarchical community center, integrated with an interdisciplinary and inter-species curriculum.

To comprehend the unconventional nature of The Farm let us set the scene. In the bustling San Francisco of 1974, the James Lick freeway interchange reverberated with the constant hum of traffic. Yet below the congested thoroughfare, an unlikely scene unfolded. Nestled at 1499 Potrero Avenue, a vibrant community farm and cultural center thrived, with the sound of pigs grunting, roosters crowing, and cheerful human chatter drowning out the vehicles above. Welcome to The Farm - 'Your City's Cultural

Karma' (Fig. 1).⁴ Today, the space exists as the tranquil and enclosed Potrero del Sol Community Garden, coupled with a concrete skate park. Through the 1970's however, The Farm presented a different reality, embodying 'a play, a sculpture and a sociological model' wherein life itself was the performance.⁵ Its history reveals a compelling narrative of ecological restoration, community integration, and alternative education programming, led by a pursuit of coexistence between the urban landscape, art, and nature.

The idea of The Farm was born in 1973 when Sherk conceived of a space akin to a community garden - a 'public café environment' - a meeting place where ideas, art, and culture could converge with non-human species.⁶ During her performance as *The Waitress* (1974), Sherk met musician Jack Wickert, an encounter which ultimately led the pair to secure the vacant site of an old dairy, upon which The Farm would later be established. The Farm officially opened its doors in 1974 with the acquisition of a lease of 5.5 acres from the Trust for Public Land (TPL). TPL's mission was, and remains to this day, to 'conserve land for people to enjoy as parks, community gardens, historic sites, rural lands, and other natural places, ensuring liveable communities'.⁷ The Farm aligned with this mission and would go on to provide a community hub and gardens to local residents for over a decade.

Its location played a role in reimagining San Francisco as an ecologically vibrant space. Situated at the heart of four low-income, multicultural neighbourhoods - Mission, Bernal Heights, Potrero Hill, and Bayview-Hunters - The Farm acknowledged the disparities resulting from urban development in this area, exem-

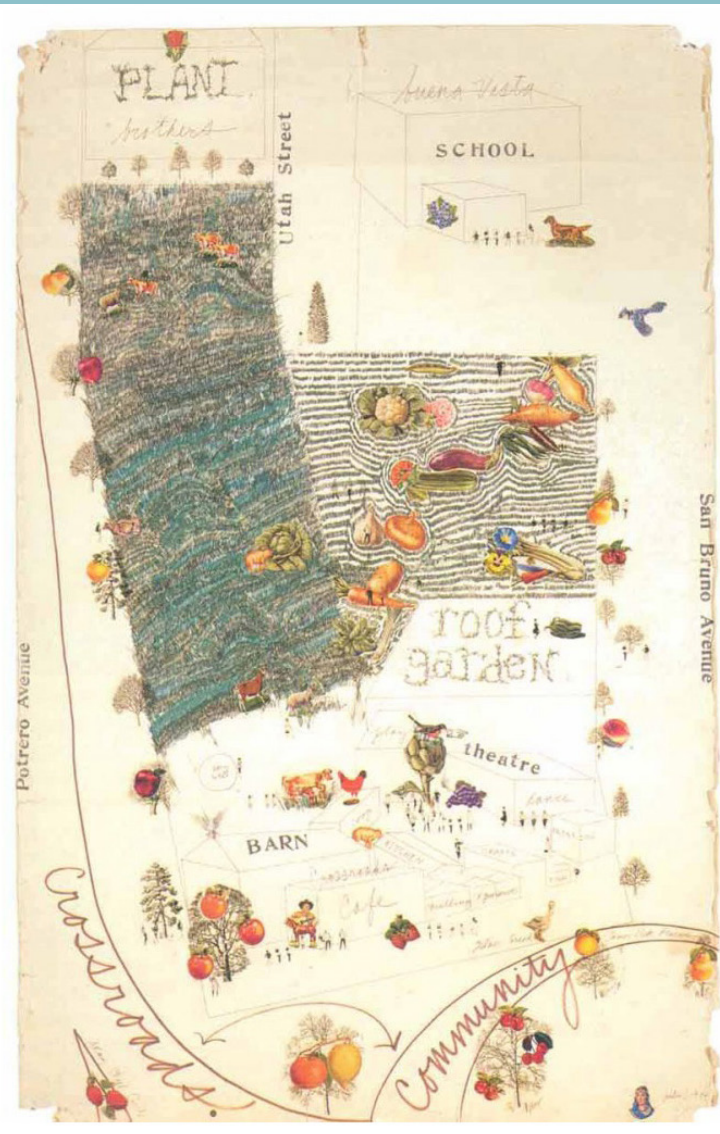


Figure 2. Bonnie Ora Sherk, Plan for Crossroads Community, 1974. Courtesy of the Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk. © The Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk 2024.

the heart of four low-income, multicultural neighbourhoods - Mission, Bernal Heights, Potrero Hill, and Bayview-Hunters - The Farm acknowledged the disparities resulting from urban development in this area, exem-

plified by the presence of a freeway which separated the locals from nature. The location of freeways was often a deliberate choice by city planners, with Jessica Trounstein noting, ‘...freeways are often built with the intent to segregate racial communities’.⁸ A true example of place-based change, The Farm aimed to rectify this boundary created by the road and reconnect local residents through care for the natural world. Spanning across seven acres in its final form, this rehabilitated plot - with support from the community, the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA), and the California Arts Council - aspired to conjure a ‘vital and bucolic environmental and agricultural community education center, replete with agroecology gardens, farm animals, multi-arts programs, and a new city park’.⁹

Sherk, Wickert, and local volunteers converted the barren land and abandoned warehouses into a barn, theatre, kitchen, café, roof garden, printing workshop, and organic gardens, all of which are outlined in Sherk’s hand-drawn plan (Fig. 2). When describing her vision for The Farm’s layout during an interview in 1981, Sherk described it as ‘a triptych (human/plant/animal) within the context of a counter-pointed diptych (farm/freeway: technological/non-mechanized)’, with the composition of The Farm serving as a physical manifestation of different disciplines merging to create a physical and metaphorical crossroads of knowledge and life systems.¹⁰ The obvious division of space in the map, from ‘barn’ to ‘school’ to ‘theatre’ hints at the co-existence of various fields merging to form a unified entity.

The drawing cleverly plays with scale, portraying humorously large fruits and vegetables interrupting the flow of the meticulous garden, with stickers of freely roaming animals such as cows, chickens, and dogs towering over drawings of miniature humans (Fig. 2). This use of scale places a non-hierarchical significance on the non-human participants of the farm, highlighting the integral role they played, and offering an alternative perspective to the human-centric view of the natural world.¹¹

The map conveys trees laden with fruit,



Figure 4. Bonnie Ora Sherk, Scene from *Crossroads Community (The Farm)*, 1976. Image Courtesy of the Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk. © The Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk 2024.

vegetables protruding from the soil, and animals wandering about the space, envisioning the future of The Farm as a harmonious environment where animals could roam freely, plants could thrive and be harvested, and humans could co-exist with nature. Furthermore, the visual juxtaposition of the freeway and The Farm highlights their proximity. Despite the close distance, The Farm served as a sanctuary within the urban landscape, understood as a healing force by local residents (Fig. 3). As a multi-community project, it cultivated a collective ethos among individuals of different ages, races, backgrounds, species, and disciplines. It welcomed several circus troupes and artistic residencies, as well as regularly hosted various cultural events and celebrations.¹² Each contribution added to the vibrant community fabric of The Farm. In addition, its longevity as a community project contributed to fostering a positive rapport with local and otherwise fragmented neighbourhoods, as long-lasting relationships could be established - in particular with children. In lectures, Sherk would recall how children of The Farm would return even outside of their designated learning hours, with one member remembering the site as ‘A phantom grandparent to restless children’.¹³

As The Farm reimagined a new way of living, it also proposed a new way of learning through the incorporation of nature as a teaching resource. The Farm’s pedagogy was funded by various grants, receiving its first grant from the NEA in 1974-79 through the Expansion Arts Program, which focused on teaching classes in the arts to people of all ages.¹⁴ The NEA would go on to provide four more grants to The Farm under Architecture and Environmental Arts (1977-78): City Spirit (a



Figure 3. Bonnie Ora Sherk, Close up of Plan for *Crossroads Community*, 1974. Image Courtesy of the Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk. © The Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk 2024.

THE FARM/GEARY

grant for cities, towns and neighborhoods to strengthen and showcase their own cultural heritage and creativity)¹⁵ (1978), Visual Arts – Alternative Spaces (1979), and Liveable Cities (1979).¹⁶ In 1976, The Farm received a further grant of \$20,000 from CalArts, providing a salary for all teaching staff as part of an ‘Alternatives in Education’ pilot project, one of five within the state.¹⁷ Prior to this, all staff were considered professional volunteers, underscoring the community’s belief in The Farm as a beneficial learning environment, with staff willing to start unpaid.

Public funding played a vital role in The Farm as an educational project, contributing significantly to its recognition as a reputable learning environment. During its existence, over 75 schools visited The Farm, participating in its interdisciplinary curriculum which covered Kindergarten to Grade 12. The Buena Vista school, a K-8 community school which was located perpendicular to the site, engaged in a full time educational curriculum with The Farm. Sherk and her team welcomed these students daily, with classes attended by the children at least once per week. The curriculum, both theoretical and experimental, was centered in the gardens and at ‘The Raw Egg Animal Theatre’ (TREAT) (Fig. 4). Connections between life, art, and the environment could be made at this indoor-outdoor theatre through the classes it offered - whilst also functioning as a habitat for several of The Farm’s resident animals, which included pigs, chickens, rabbits, cows, ducks, goats, and lambs.¹⁸ Serving as a microcosm of The Farm, TREAT offered a concentrated view of The Farm’s lessons and systems on a smaller scale through the framed ecosystem it offered, making it the perfect learning opportunity for children. As part of its education, children observed



Figure 5. Bonnie Ora Sherk, Scene from *The Raw Egg Animal Theatre*, c.1974-1980. Image Courtesy of the Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk. © The Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk 2024.



Figure 6. Bonnie Ora Sherk, Scene from *The Raw Egg Animal Theatre*, c.1974-1980. Image Courtesy of the Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk. © The Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk 2024.

and learned from the ‘performing’ animals and interspecies interactions (Fig. 5), as well as worked on a myriad of art, reading, and writing projects (Fig. 6).¹⁹ Students also participated in gardening activities at The Farm’s organic gardens, exploring the basics of growing plants, organic farming, animal husbandry and methodologies to counteract pollution (Fig. 7).²⁰

At its core, The Farm captured Sherk’s vision of integrating art with nature and blending it with other disciplines, with its full name Crossroads Community symbolizing the intersection of knowledge and ideas at the site. A job listing posted by Sherk in 1980 called for future employees from a variety of backgrounds, reinforcing the idea of a well-rounded education through the intersection of disciplines. The Farm’s listing sought professionals such as biologists and artists to teach students of all age groups in the fields of the visual and performing arts and crafts, gardening, animal behaviour, health, and nutrition. A plethora of posters for events, classes, and workshops that were held on site have been made available through archives and exhibitions in San Francisco, giving an insight into the diverse array of activities available to The Farm’s community. To name a few examples, The Farm hosted a six-week workshop dedicated to the Bromeliad family, as well as an Organic Gardening series (Fig. 8), with classes discussing soils, complimentary planting, and pest control, each class costing a suggested donation of \$1.50. In December 1979, classes and workshops across a diverse range of disciplines took place, all centered around the theme of nature. Robert Kourik, an associate of the Farallones Institute, conducted lectures on ‘edible landscaping for your home’, focusing on creating self-sustaining and functional domestic landscapes.

The Alternative Energy Collective, a non-profit educational and scientific organization, hosted workshops on producing green sustainable energy at home, through greenhouse construction. Fred Marshall led a three-part workshop exploring the interconnectedness between the earth and the human body.

During this, participants engaged in activities such as drawing and sculpting rhythmic natural forms, explored the history of human relationships to the natural world through indigenous American cultures, and examined the forms, rhythms, qualities, and principles of the human being in comparison with those found in nature, referring to work by the likes of Goethe, Shakespeare, and Rachel Carson. Additionally, the poster for the events of December 1979 featured

an advertisement for the Farallones Institute tree sale, as well as a call for gardeners interested in starting their own garden or looking to assist at The Farm (Fig. 9). The classes and workshops available were accessible and affordable, with each session only requesting a recommended donation, ensuring that everyone had the opportunity to participate. The wide array of activities available represented the diverse nature of The Farm, as it guaranteed that there was something to cater for every interest.



Figure 7. Bonnie Ora Sherk, *Crossroads Community (The Farm)*, c.1974-1980. Image Courtesy of the Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk. © The Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk 2024.

The Farm was also committed to spreading awareness about social, economic, and political matters concerning food and land, through Earthworks, a center for study of food and land on site. It focused on fostering cooperative initiatives to organize the production and distribution of food. Serving also as a library, Earthworks welcomed individuals seeking guidance on food and gardening-related issues. The Farm's

commitment to sustainable agriculture extended further, with plans in place for testing and research with the University of California State Air Pollution Board. This collaboration aimed to assess the impact of The Farm's immediate environment on both indigenous and cultivated plant life by testing the food grown on site. Internships and research also took place at The Farm, with the SF Examiner reporting on the 'graduation' of a crew of nine California Conservation Corps (CCC) workers who had spent six weeks researching The Farm. The CCC surveyed the land, took soil samples, and located the source of a creek beneath TREAT, with plans underway for the development of a well.²¹ This would mean that The Farm could harness power and resources from the water that flowed beneath, with potential to adapt sustainable energy techniques and feedback loops, as seen in the The Farallones Institute's *The Integral Urban House* (1974) and Nancy Jack and John Todd's 'New Alchemy Institute' (1969), situated in Cape Cod Massachusetts. Like The Farm, both aforementioned projects adopted a ho-



Figure 8. Bonnie Ora Sherk, *Crossroads Community (The Farm)*, c.1974-1980. Image Courtesy of the Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk. © The Estate of Bonnie Ora Sherk 2024.

listic approach to sustainable system development. This was achieved by employing village technology through upskilling the community, producing materials locally, retrofitting existing buildings to function as ecosystems, and through the creation of site-based sustainable energy.

Ultimately, The Farm was a performance. Sherk saw it as a stage upon which she was 'creating the performance of being', embodying various roles such as administrator, politician, strategist, fundraiser, teacher, cook, designer, and gardener.²² In a sense, everyone who participated was also a performer, subsequently allowing for a fluidity of role-playing and thus enabling participants to move between various responsibilities.

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Whether acting as a planner, negotiator, or teacher, Sherk leveraged her diverse qualifications in art, landscape architecture and teaching to embody each role effectively. Additionally, The Farm's role as an art piece afforded Sherk the artistic freedom to develop the site without the constraints and regulations that are typically imposed upon traditional planning professionals. Under the framework of art, Sherk was able to integrate nature and education within the community, achieving her aim of expanding the concept of art 'to include, and even be, life'.²³ John Bela, a former member of The Farm commented on the unique position of Sherk as an artist stating, "Her early impulse to intervene in the public realm was so dynamic, and she saw that the scope of an artist needs to expand".²⁴

As we reflect on The Farm fifty years on, there remains a wealth of lessons to be learned from Bonnie Ora Sherk's approach to modern urban living. In his essay 'Towards Reinventing Nature' William Cronon proposed, 'We need an environmental ethic that will tell us as much about using nature as not using nature'.²⁵ Sherk achieved this with The Farm, as the piece saw value in using nature within the city rather than outsourcing it to the countryside, demonstrated by the successful integration of plants, animals, and nature within this urban context. It stood as a pioneering performance, blending elements of education, community engagement, and interspecies interaction within a compact ecosystem, all underscored by a forward-thinking approach to sustainability. The Farm's success lay in its commitment to coexistence of the urban and nature, separating Sherk from her back-to-the-land contemporaries who abandoned cities in the hope for a more responsible, self-sustaining life in the countryside. Instead, it resisted nostalgia, rejecting the idea of looking back to the good old days. Sherk embraced the urban landscape around her, integrating it with nature and testing approaches to urban living.

It's important to note that The Farm was not alone in its mission to reform contemporary urban life. In 1974, across the bay in downtown Berkeley, The Farallones Institute emerged with a vision to help 'create more human places for living, learning, working, and playing'.²⁶ In a similar vein to The Farm, they were experimenting with self-sufficient living, and alternative approaches to education. Similarly, Cape Cod's New Alchemy Institute in Massachusetts was also exploring the creation of sustainable systems and feedback loops acting, however, on a larger domestic scale to Sherk.

Nestled against a freeway – a symbol of urban development – The Farm created 'what might be the city of the future',²⁷ all the while operating on a local, neighbourhood scale. Through returning to a community-orientated way of living against the backdrop of nature, Sherk embodied a forward-thinking approach to life, highlighting the importance of upskilling locals and educating children for the benefit of the environment and community formation. The Farm was a radical perfor-

mance, and while fifty years have passed since its conception, it feels especially relevant today in light of the current climate crisis, coupled with calls for fifteen-minute cities and green infrastructures. Although Sherk stepped down from The Farm in 1980 to pursue other avenues, with the site officially closing in 1984, her journey of ecological and community restoration continued. She embarked on her non-profit organization, A Living Library (A.L.L.), which to this day provides systemic frameworks, methodologies, and strategies for creating place-based, ecological change in communities and schools – locally and globally.²⁸ Until her passing in 2021, Sherk remained dedicated to evolving her vision, with her role as an artist, educator, and advocate for urban co-existence continuing after The Farm. Presently, A.L.L. stands as testament to her legacy, preserving the spirit of The Farm and providing place-based ecological transformation in communities and schools across San Francisco and New York.

GARDENING at THE FARM
CROSSROADS COMMUNITY CENTER
826 4250
1497 POTTERS PLAZA
IN DECEMBER:

EDIBLE LANDSCAPING FOR YOUR HOME
LECTURE AND SLIDES BY ROBERT KOUBIK, ASSOCIATE OF THE FARALLONES INSTITUTE. PRESENTATIONAL FOOD PLANTS, FRUITS, AND NUTS INTEGRATED INTO THE LANDSCAPE PROVIDE WHOLESCOME HARVESTS FOR YEARS TO COME, WITH LESS SEASONAL CARE THAN VEGETABLES. DESIGNING THE EDIBLE LANDSCAPE TO INCLUDE A DIVERSITY OF PLANTS— FOLIAGE, BLOSSOM, ROOT, CONTROLLED SOIL IMPROVEMENT, FRAGRANCE) TO ESTABLISH A SELF-SUSTAINING AND USEFUL LANDSCAPE.

DECEMBER 7 SUGGESTED DONATION \$2.00
ATTACHED SOLAR GREENHOUSE WORKSHOP
TAUGHT BY THE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY COLLECTIVE, A NON-PROFIT EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZATION WHOSE MAIN PURPOSE IS TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT IN CLEAN ECOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVES FOR OUR ENERGY FUTURE. THE WORKSHOP, DURING WHICH WE WILL ACTUALLY CONSTRUCT A GREENHOUSE, COVERS BASIC SOLAR GREENHOUSE THEORY, DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS INCLUDING ORIENTATION, GLAZING, THERMAL MASS, INSULATION, MATERIAL SELECTION, AND MORE.

DECEMBER 8 9 SUGGESTED DONATION \$20.00
ADVANCE REGISTRATION APPRECIATED
THE EARTH AND THE HUMAN BEING
WITH FRED MARSHALL—5 YEAR STUDENT OF ALAN CHADWICK AND GARDEN RE-TEACHER AT BUNHESFIELD WALDOOP SCHOOL.
PART II—12:30—COMPARING PEOPLE, RAINYING, QUALITIES, AND PRINCIPLES WITHIN THE HUMAN BEING WITH THOSE OF NATURE. A LOOK AT THE WORK OF GORTHE, SHAKESPEARE, RACHEL CARSON, BLACK ELK, TEWA, PUEBLO, AND OTHERS.
PART III—2:30-4:30—DRAWING AND SCULPTING SYNTHETIC NATURAL FORMS USING BEEHIVE & BEEHIVE DRAWING MATERIALS PROVIDED.
PART III—4:30-6:00—A HISTORY OF OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE EARTH BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE. LOOKING AT ARCHAIC INDIAN, COLONIAL AGRICULTURE, AND CURRENT ATTEMPTS AT A RESPONSIBLE RELATIONSHIP TO THE EARTH.
ALSO AT 7:00, 5:00 PRESENTATION OF THE COVILLO GARDEN PROJECT. A CHAPTER IN THE MOVEMENT INITIATED IN CALIFORNIA BY ALAN CHADWICK. \$3.00

DECEMBER 15 SUGGESTED DONATION \$20.00
ADVANCE REGISTRATION APPRECIATED
FARALLONES INSTITUTE—TREE CROPS ORDER
SPECIAL FRUIT TREES, GENETIC DWARFS, BHM DWARFS, COASTAL ZONE VARIETIES AND OTHERS— ESPECIALLY FOR THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL CLIMATE, AT 10-15% BELOW RETAIL PRICE, WITH THE PROCEEDS GOING TO HELP INITIATE NEW PROGRAMS IN HORTICULTURE AT THE FARALLONES RURAL CENTER. MAIL ORDER ONLY. BY DECEMBER 15, 1979, THE FARM WILL BE A DISTRIBUTION POINT ONLY. FOR AN ORDER FORM, STOP BY THE FARM OR WRITE TO: TREE CROPS ORDER, 1520 COLEMAN VALLEY RD, OCCIDENTAL, CA 95467.

GARDENERS
HAVE YOU GOT A GARDEN? WANT TO START ONE? OR HELP WITH OURS (OURS)? LIST US KNOW ABOUT YOU. STOP BY, WRITE, OR CALL. WE'RE HERE TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY, AND WOULD LIKE TO CHECK OUT WHAT YOU'RE DOING.

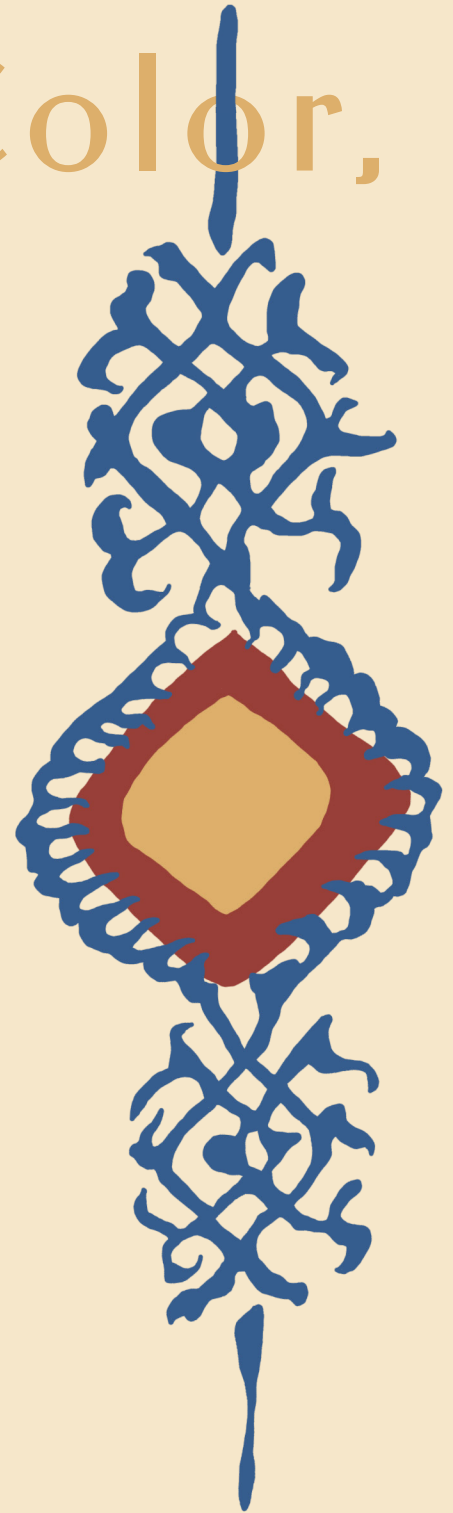
ARTWORK: DONATED
STENCIL: BOBIE 1979

Endnotes

1. This is an excerpt from my final year History of Art Dissertation at Trinity College Dublin titled ‘Bonnie Ora Sherk’s The Farm: Cultivating Lessons in Place-Based Education.’
2. Jana Blankenship, “The Farm by the Freeway,” *West of the Centre, Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965-1977*, ed. Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 44.
3. Tanya Zimbaro, *Bonnie Sherk: Life Frames since 1970* (San Francisco: Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture, 2024).
4. Bonnie Sherk, interview by Nick Kaye, siteworks.exeter.ar.uk, February 6, 2015.
5. Bonnie Sherk, “Q & A: Bonnie Ora Sherk and the Performance of Being,” bampfa.org, June 22, 2012.
6. Blankenship, “The Farm by the Freeway,” 44.
7. Burnham, “Between the Diaspora and the Crinoline,” 58.
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12. Bonnie Ora Sherk, interview by Nick Kaye, siteworks.exeter.ar.uk, February 6, 2015.
13. Blankenship, “The Farm by the Freeway,” 44.
14. Bonnie Sherk, “An Alternative to Alternative Art Spaces,” poster made for Venice Biennale, alivinglibrary.org, 2017.
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19. Ibid.
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22. Dexter Waugh, “A ‘Graduation’ Party: New Milestone for The Farm,” *S.F. Examiner*, November 7, 1988, Artist Files Collection, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library.
23. Sherk, “Q & A: Bonnie Ora Sherk and the Performance of Being.”
24. Bonnie Sherk, Center for Critical Inquiry Position Paper, 1st International Symposium, San Francisco Art Institute, 1977.
25. John King, “The godmother of parklets? S.F. artist showed how to bring a troubled city back to life,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 22, 2024.
26. William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 21.
27. Sim Van der Ryn, *Farallones Scrapbook: Making Places, Changes, Spaces, in Schools, at Home and within Ourselves* (Point Reyes: Farallones Designs, 1969), 1.
28. Gilliam, “A Battle of Open Space out on Potrero,” 41.
29. Sherk, “Q & A: Bonnie Ora Sherk and the Performance of Being.”

A Touch of Color,
A Splash of
Paint:
Seeing the
Materiality of
the “Kalpasutra”

Jihyun Paik, *Amherst College*



The Kalpasutra, a religious historical text believed to have been first written in the fifth century CE, details the biographies of twenty-four Tirthankaras, figures who are believed to be saviors in Jainism.¹ Though it is only one chapter of a larger canonical work, the *Kalpasutra* is revered as a singular, sacred text within the Jain religion and its practices. As such, the *Kalpasutra* has been a focus of study by scholars of religion who understand its significance as a text that provides insight into the philosophical and ethical foundations of the Jain faith. Yet at the same time the *Kalpasutra* can also be understood as a material object and has been studied as such within art historical contexts. This is because the *Kalpasutra* has historically taken the form of illustrated manuscripts—more specifically, palm leaf (and later paper) manuscripts called *pothi*—containing both written text and paintings, which give pictorial representation to the Tirthankaras and their biographies. Thus, as much as the *Kalpasutra* possesses significance in Jain religious thought for its content as a religious and spiritual text, so too does it hold as much valence in art historical literature for its materiality as illustrated manuscripts.

This essay is aligned with the latter approach, applying an art historical perspective to “read” the visual content of the *Kalpasutra*—that is, to understand the *Kalpasutra* primarily as a material and visual object and to acknowledge the materiality of the illustrated manuscript medium as a crucial factor for understanding the significance of the text in religious and art historical contexts. Though this study is informed by art historical methodologies that focus on the materiality and visibility of the object in both its physical and virtual forms, its discussion of the *Kalpasutra* is equally informed by its religious and philosophical content and the belief systems of the Jain religion at large. In bringing together the findings of both art historical studies and religious studies of Jainism to consider the *Kalpasutra*’s significance, this essay seeks to explore, more broadly, the

intersection between the materiality, visibility, and practices surrounding a work of art, all while considering the role that the digital plays in our experience of material objects.

Since the time of its first written recording circa the fifth century CE, the *Kalpasutra* has been extensively reproduced and circulated in manuscript form, resulting in different iterations of the text. Despite the sheer number of reproductions, however, there are certain visual elements that are consistent across different copies, from archetypal scenes depicting the life of Mahavira (the twenty-fourth and the most influential Tirthankara) to the structure of the folios. Of primary interest to this essay, however, is color—golden yellow, blue, red, white, and black—which are consistently found in any given iteration of the *Kalpasutra*, as they belong to the standardized Jain color system.² Among these, however, the color red is perhaps most visually striking, not only for its vibrancy on the page but also for its repeated emergence across different visual elements of the manuscript structure, including the paintings, their borders, parts of the inscribed text, and the markings where the string was threaded through the palm leaves to bind them together. That this color has such a prevalent visual presence on the pages of the manuscript

Figure 1. Shakra, King of the Gods, Reveres the Embryo of Mahavira, illustration from a dispersed manuscript of the Kalpasutra of Bhadrabahu, c. late 15th-early 16th century, Gujarat, India, opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper, 4 5/16 x 10 1/4 in, Smith College Museum of Art, Massachusetts.



across virtually every manuscript reproduction of the *Kalpasutra* signals the importance of the color to the text and to the broader religious beliefs and practices of which the text is part. To this end, this essay will focus on the color red as it has been used in both the text and the paintings

TOUCH OF COLOR/PAIK

Figure 2. Two Scenes from a *Kalpasutra*. c. 1490, Gujarat, India, gouache and gold on buff paper, 4 3/8 in x 10 1/4 in, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Massachusetts.



of the *Kalpasutra* to contemplate its meaning within the content of the text, the Jain belief system, and the tradition of the illustrated manuscript in medieval India. Its materiality that might allow for a deeper understanding of how the color red functioned visually and symbolically to allow its readers and devotees to form a closer relationship with the text of the *Kalpasutra* and the broader belief system of the Jain religion.

This essay focuses on two *Kalpasutra* folios from the Five Colleges Museum Consortium in Western Massachusetts: one from Smith College Museum of Art (fig. 1), which depicts Shakra, the king of the gods, revering the embryo of Mahavira, and another from Mount Holyoke College Art Museum (fig. 2), which depicts the event of Mahavira's embryo being transferred from Devanada to Trishala. It is clear, from the stylistic elements on each page, that these two folios originate from different *pothis*; whereas, for example, the Smith folio uses one painted frame to depict numerous different scenes and figures, the Mt. Holyoke folio depicts fewer figures while dedicating more space to painted images. Yet there are also clear similarities across the two, specifically in the use of the color red, which emerges in both folios in the paintings and the borders around them, in the sets of three decorative motifs across the page, and in punctuation marks throughout the written text. In many other iterations of the *Kalpasutra*, red is used in the same elements mentioned above, which suggests a level of uniformity in the use of the color as well as in the understanding of its significance within the artistic tradition.

In her book *Garland of Visions: Color, Tantra, and a Material History of Indian Painting*, Jinah Kim engages with the materiality of colors and pigments as they are found in painted works from medieval India. Citing findings from X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analysis conducted by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Kim notes that the pigment most used for the color red was vermilion, which is found in

various illustrated manuscripts from medieval India, across different sects and cultures, including a copy of the Jain *Kalpasutra*.³ The persistence of this particular pigment in Indic illustrated manuscripts regardless of the context suggests that vermilion carried a broader cultural significance that was shared among artists and devotees across India. Both the Smith and Mount Holyoke folios are traced back to the same region and time period—late fifteenth century in western India (Gujarat)—as the *Kalpasutra* in the MFA's XRF analysis.⁴ Given this connection, it is likely that the Smith and Mount Holyoke folios, too, use vermilion as the material agent for their red color.

What was, then, the significance of the pigment vermilion in medieval Indian imagination? To understand the meaning of vermilion and its red color within the broader context of Indian culture, we might look to ancient alchemical beliefs, which inform Indic religious traditions including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. What is especially pertinent, as David Gordon White finds, is that Jain alchemical lore is prevalent in Gujarat, which is where most *Kalpasutra* manuscripts, including the Smith and Mt. Holyoke folios, originate.⁵ Ancient alchemical thought may have informed the way that the painters and scribes of the *Kalpasutra* manuscripts understood and used color.

Vermilion, which is composed of synthetically prepared red mercuric sulfide, shares the same chemical properties as the mineral cinnabar.⁶ Cinnabar, according to David Gordon White, has been

understood in ancient alchemical beliefs as being “composed of mercurial semen and sulfurous uterine blood—a mineral hierophany of the sexual union of Siva and the Goddess, a union that, according to Hindu tradition, creates and sustains the universe.”⁷ If we understand cinnabar as functioning as a tangible, material manifestation of the sacred, then we might consider the use of this pigment on painted manuscripts of the *Kalpasutra* as invoking and thereby imbuing the physical text with this sacred meaning and significance. The red color of the pigment cinnabar derives much of its cultural meaning and significance from alchemical beliefs and practices. White continues his discussion of cinnabar/vermilion, noting that the redness of cinnabar is identified with the same color of blood, which is understood as possessing forces of life and energy in Indian culture.⁸ Thus as both a color and the pigment, red carries much religious and cultural significance. The appearance of this color red in the material form of cinnabar/vermilion throughout every folio of the *Kalpasutra* imbues sanctity to the text, first, by allowing the object to be recognized as being alive and active. Furthermore, in its association with blood, the pigment provides a deeper, corporeal means of connection between the human body of the reader and the sacred content of the text.

In considering the painted images of Jain manuscripts, John Guy observes that pictorial depictions of religious figures are “essentially talismanic rather than narrative in purpose... intended to provide an auspicious or protective presence.”⁹ Guy’s analysis suggests that the painted images of the manuscripts function in a way that is distinct from the function of the inscribed text. Even as they give pictorial representation to the biographies of the Tirthankaras, their primary function within the text is to evince a distinct kind of spiritual and sacred presence.

Jain religious practices regarding the *Kalpasutra* may corroborate this argument. Within the Jain tradition, the *Kalpasutra* is a central part of the annual *pariyushana*, an eight-day festival held during India’s monsoon season. During this festival, the *Kalpasutra* is recited by members of the congregation, an act which prioritizes the words and meanings of the text over other elements such as the illustrations.¹⁰ The *Kalpasutra* manuscripts to which the Smith and Mt. Holyoke folios once belonged to a central focus of such practices. Guy’s observations and Jain practices reveal that the inscribed text and the painted images on the folios of manuscripts exist side by side in the visual dimension, but function quite separately in practice.

Red adds to the page of the manuscript not only color but also a sense of materiality and the associated alchemical meanings. The appearance of this red in the paintings is what imbues them with a material significance and adds symbolic complexity to the content of the images. In a similar vein, then, we might consider the appearance of

the color red and the pigment vermilion throughout the inscribed text as giving material weight—that is, the visual presence of the color allows for a recognition of its material origins and meaning. It is perhaps with this insight that we might understand Kim’s argument that the text “can meaningfully operate in a material rather than a discursive domain.”¹¹ But what does the materiality of the *Kalpasutra*’s folios look like in practice? And how is the material significance of the text activated, across a variety of contexts and by different users, from devotees to museum visitors?

To answer these questions, we might return again to the festival of *pariyushana*, where the text of the *Kalpasutra* is most visible to Jain devotees. On the last day of *pariyushana*, the *Kalpasutra* is not only recited, but its folios are then circulated amongst the members of the congregation, who are provided with the opportunity to momentarily hold the text, “as if to symbolically read and thus absorb its holy message.”¹² This process of *darshana*, or holy viewing, not only allows for the *Kalpasutra* manuscript to be considered and venerated as a portable, material object, but also closely aligns the practice of reading the text with the act of touching, handling, and (be)holding the material text. Within the context of these shared viewing practices, which are already very physical in nature, is where we might situate the material qualities of the color red. The portability and intimacy enabled by the medium of the manuscript allowed for the circulation of “color-coded visual knowledge,” which includes the aforementioned alchemical meanings of red and cinnabar, but also, the transmission of “sensorial experiences, not just visually but also in tactile and perhaps even aromatic terms,” as Jinah Kim explores.¹³ Thus portability, when it comes to manuscripts like the *Kalpasutra*, might be considered as functioning not only on the level of the manuscript itself, as a singular object, but also on the level of the text, where the written word, with the inclusion of the “life force” of the color red, comes alive and bears material sanctity for the devotee to palpably behold and experience.¹⁴ The prevalence of red across the various elements of the Smith and Mt. Holyoke folios—the punctuation lines throughout the inscribed text, within the painted scenes, and in the borders outlining the paintings—visually, haptically, and materially connects, the image to the text, the object to its practice, and the text to the people.

Yet there is one remaining element on the surface of the folios that has not yet been discussed—the set of three geometric motifs across the center of the page. Seen in the Smith folio as three decorated pointed ellipses and in the Mt. Holyoke folio as three simple red dots, these motifs serve as visual markers of where the string hole would have been threaded to bind the folios with each other and with the *pothi* manuscript as a whole.¹⁵ Thus, while they have a visual, perhaps a pictorial presence on the page, the significance of these motifs as visual and vestigial indications of the construction of the *pothi* manuscript

are distinct from the discursive significance of the text and image. In thinking about the materiality of the *Kalpasutra* manuscript and of the color red, however, it is impossible not to contemplate why both the Smith and Mt. Holyoke folios, as well as many other iterations of the *Kalpasutra*, contain red in these geometric markings.

To understand the significance of red in the vestigial motifs of these two stylistically different folios, it is worth turning our attention to the traditional construction of the palm leaf manuscripts within the Jain tradition. In her study of the book arts in India, Sylvia Houghteling finds that Jain paper manuscripts, while following the tradition of the long, horizontal format of the pothi palm leaf manuscript tradition, were not connected by strings threaded through the folios but rather “held in a bundle between paper and wooden covers,” then “wrapped in string and deposited into a fabric or wooden case.”¹⁶ Despite this, she adds, the folios still maintained the “vestigial memory of the hole for string,” repurposing it as “a site of inventive ornamentation.”¹⁷ Yet there is more to these vestigial markings than just ornamentation or decoration, as suggested by their visual presence next to the sacred text and images, as well as their relatively large dimensions on the surface of the folio. These details suggest that for makers and readers of the *Kalpasutra* manuscripts, there was a heightened awareness of the construction of the manuscripts. The material conditions by which the text was traditionally held together and presented was relevant to the act of reading the text.

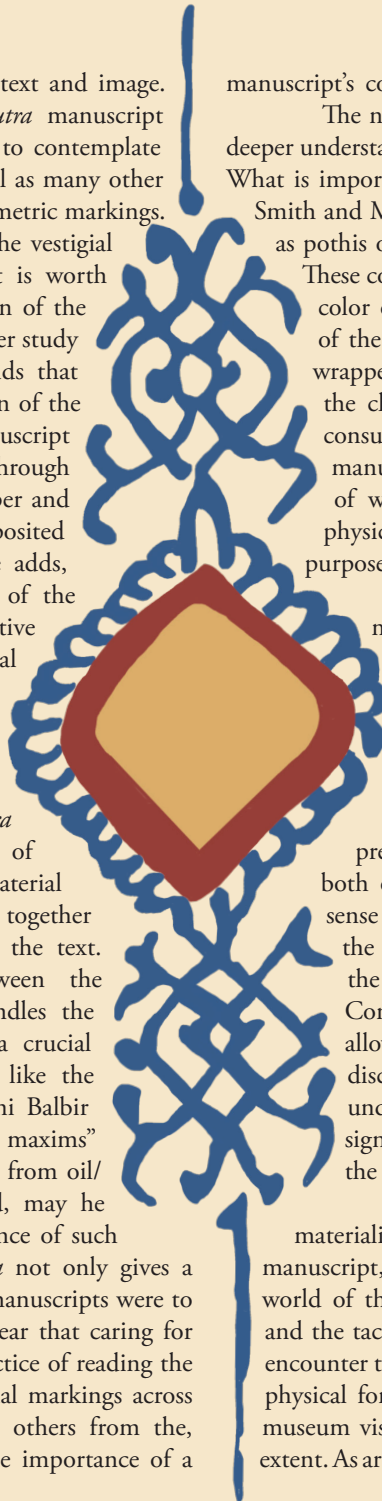
Indeed, the physical interactions between the manuscripts and their readers—that a reader handles the material object with care and veneration—were a crucial part of the act of reading religious manuscripts like the *Kalpasutra*. In her study of Jain sacred texts, Nalini Balbir notes that manuscripts commonly contained “scribal maxims” such as this one: “May he [the reader] protect (me) from oil/ from water, may he protect me from the ground, may he protect me from being loosely bound.”¹⁸ The presence of such instructions within sacred texts like the *Kalpasutra* not only gives a sense of just how substantial the materiality of the manuscripts were to devotees and readers but also makes it markedly clear that caring for the material conditions was a crucial part of the practice of reading the text. Given this information, then, the three vestigial markings across the Smith and Mt. Holyoke folios, among many others from the, can be better understood as visual reminders of the importance of a

manuscript’s construction and, moreover, its materiality as an object.

The notable use of red in these vestigial markings allows for a deeper understanding of their significance in the folios of the *Kalpasutra*. What is important to note in regards to vestigial markings is that the Smith and Mt. Holyoke folios were not bound with threaded string, as pothis originally were, but rather held between covering cloths. These covering cloths reveal a deeper connection between the red color of the vestigial markings and the material construction of the manuscript. Manuscripts in South Asia are commonly wrapped in fabrics dyed in red. The reason for this is because the chemical qualities of the red dyes repelled insects from consuming and deteriorating the covering cloths and the manuscript folios.¹⁹ The color red, here taking the form of wrapping cloth and providing protection—in a literal, physical sense—for the sacred text, thus serves a critical purpose both within and outside the pages of the manuscript.

While the whereabouts of the wrapping cloth for the manuscripts to which the Smith and Mt. Holyoke folios belonged, or whether those manuscripts even had a wrapping cloth to begin with, is unknown, the broader material tradition of Jain manuscripts suggests that the red in the vestigial markings perform a referential function. They heighten the reader’s awareness of the materiality of the manuscript along with the need to preserve, just as a wrapping cloth would have done. Red, both on the folios and the covering cloths, brings a greater sense of visual and material cohesion to the construction of the manuscripts, as well as between the visual act of reading the text and the tactile act of handling the manuscript. Considering red as both a visual color and a material pigment allows us to understand how the *Kalpasutra* functions discursively, materially, and symbolically. And this deeper understanding of this historical object works to reinforce the significance of the color red in illuminating and augmenting the various meanings contained in the sacred text.

Yet for as much emphasis that this essay places on the materiality of the *Kalpasutra* and its medium of the illustrated manuscript, this materiality seems, at first, to be absent here in the world of the digital. The physicality of the illustrated manuscript and the tactile experience of holding the object disappear when we encounter the text as digital images. Even seeing these objects in their physical form comes with a certain level of virtuality, for modern museum visitors cannot touch and access the materiality to its full extent. As art historians and media scholars have argued, the emergence



of the digital and the following trend towards digitizing artworks are continuously reshaping our understanding of materiality. Here, very briefly, I want to consider how shifting definitions of materiality can help us think more expansively about the significance of the *Kalpasutra* and other illustrated manuscripts as they exist in the digital world and, moreover, how such expanded understandings of the text can help us more deeply consider the value of the object and the digital in relation to each other.

Fiona Cameron, writing about the digitization of material objects, acknowledges that much of the original object's distinctiveness derives from its physicality precisely as a material object.²⁰ However, she suggests that the object's "ascribed social meanings... [their] message-bearing abilities and the persuasiveness of its origin through associated stories are important ingredients in invoking its awe". There is a distinction between the directly perceptible physical presence of an object and the more complex, often impalpable set of meanings that come from the histories of practice and tradition that have accumulated around it. If we approach the *Kalpasutra* folios with the logic that Cameron proposes, we might find ourselves drawn again to color, whose material history and application in the folios serve to index a number of meanings. In this way, the color red possesses "message-bearing abilities" that allow the reader to recognize the sacred alchemical meanings of vermilion and its relationship to the content of the *Kalpasutra*.

And, to further add, its appearance in the vestigial motifs and its function in bringing the reader's attention to the material construction of the illustrated manuscript increases the sense of connection between the visuality of the folio and the materiality of the "real" object.

This analysis of the *Kalpasutra* emphasizes the precarity of the distinction between that which is "real" and that which is not. At first, we might be compelled to think about digital reproductions of a material object as lacking the aura of its original—whether that aura is defined in terms of physical presence, tactility, or even perishability.²¹ Yet we may still find traces of materiality's "realness" in the digital. Analysis of the *Kalpasutra* reveals that color transmits the particular histories, practices, and meanings that give significance to the original

object and also invokes the materiality of those very histories, practices, and meanings. Herein lies what scholar Michael Ann Holly calls the "as if" presences" of digital images, which, in pointing to an object and a world of meanings beyond itself, "enrich our perceptions, fill our consciousnesses, [and] add to our experiences 'as if' something substantive has transpired."²² In other words, the digital, in its function in mediating and shaping our experiences of objects, their meanings, and the world, are just as real as our bodies that interact with the screens before us.

The *Kalpasutra* manuscript is a sacred and historically significant text within the context of Jainism that reveals the depth of meaning that objects can convey through their materiality alone. Yet by studying objects through digital platforms and tools, we can gain another²³ perspective into the intricate relationship between visuality, materiality, hapticity, practice, and meaning. In a sense, the entanglement of these different modes of engagement is symptomatic of our current digital age, in which the boundary between the virtual and the physical is increasingly blurred. Any binaristic understanding of these two concepts is being challenged. But even as the digital becomes more prevalent in art historical studies, the material world—from the physicality of objects to our sensory experiences thereof—will persist alongside its presumed counterpart.

Endnotes

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Portrait of Alexandra Stepanova Khan: Ethnic Koreans in Far East Soviet Sakhalin

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Figure 1. Anonymous,
*Portrait of Aleksandra
Stepanova Khan*, 1959-
1980, oil on canvas,
Sakhalin Regional
Museum.

“Her house is on the mountain. From here you can clearly see the sea, which seems from a height as huge as the sky, and the shore, whitish with foam. There, right below, we usually put a large seine for pink salmon, says Alexandra Stepanovna Khan. The whole sea here is ours. Squinting her narrow, slyly glistening eyes, she takes a long look around her domain, where just yesterday the sea was crossed by the ropes of seines, boats hurriedly scurried about and catches sparkled with silver. We look at the panorama of the city for a long time. The houses here are large-block, exactly the same as everywhere else on southern Sakhalin. But I understand Alexandra Stepanovna, I understand her Sakhalin soul, her joy and pride.”

—Arnold Ignavetich Pushkar, “Woman at the Sea”

In parallel to the central Asia republics formed during the Soviet era, the far east land of Sakhalin, reclaimed from Japan after 1946, posts an even more peculiarly peripheral history intertwined with geopolitical conflicts. This island had been one of the biggest penal colonies of the Russian Empire, holding exiles banished from the empire. In addition to the deported Slavs, other inhabitants of the region include Japanese, Ainus, Oroks, Nivkhs, Koreans and Chinese, constituting an ethnic multiplicity. Compared to the indigenous Ainu and Japanese inhabitants, immigrants and foreigners from South and North Korea arrived late in Tsarist Russia, have a shorter history, and are of a less significant population. Although the sparse number is insufficient to form a republic or any recognized institutions, the local Korean community was politically proactive and consistently pursued freedom in exercising their Korean identity. This liberty was sharply revoked in 1937. The outbreak of the Second World War and several internal terrorist attacks contributed to severe nationwide xenophobia, and many Koreans were arrested, repressed, and forced to migrate to Kazakhstan.¹

A witness who lived through this fraught history is Alexandra Stepanova Khan (1906-1988), born in the Primorsky Region of Soviet Far East. Arnold Ignatevich Pushkar recounted an interview with Khan in his 1972 biographical interview compilation *Heroes of the Sakhalin Land*. From this account, we know that Alexandra Stepanova (or Shura) Khan grew up in a farmer’s family. Her great-grandfather, driven by hunger, came from Korea to Primorye (now Primorsky Krai) in the mid 19th century and settled near the Yanchikha River with a small Korean immigrant community. Khan worked as a kindergarten teacher, librarian, State Insurance inspector, and nurse. At the age of twenty she became a member of the Congress of Soviets and participated in the Far East regional party. Khan was not exempted from the 1937 mass deportation; her family was forced to relocate to Kazakh SSR, and it was not until 1947 when she finally managed to return to the Far East and take a job in Sakhalin as the foreman of the Sakhalin Oblast fishing brigade. Khan’s

brigade was among the most productive and successful in surpassing the expected catch. While others relied on seasonal workers or hired the first people they came across, she assembled a permanent team of old work comrades and took great effort in taking care of them. She made suggestions to improve the fishing net design and strategies about the catch location according to the coastal fish accumulation patterns. Under her leadership the brigade was able to over-fulfill the plan in multiple consecutive years, even doubling or tripling the goal quota. In 1957, Khan became the first ethnic Korean recipient of the Order of Lenin Award for outstanding socialist labor.² Her commemorial portrait, the artist of which is unknown, showcases a typical socialist realist portrait that captures both the generalizable spirit of the party and the awareness of regional-specific characteristics. Although the message is universal and straightforward, the painting takes a rather subtle and unique approach to convey it: socialism and region-specificity are combined not through the explicit display of discrete symbols, but through a multivalent allegory that seamlessly weaves color, facture, subject and background to collectively reflect socialist content and regional form, visually fusing the two principles inseparable from each other.

Like other socialist realism propaganda that centerstages the people within a disproportionately expansive background, this painting also positions Khan at an enlarged zoom-in half-length cropping, while the background fishing boat is scalewise in disjunction with the visually proximal yet spatially distant foreground. The scourging cloud presses down the horizon, creating a sense of immense depth and vastness of the sea. There is no land in sight, isolating Khan and her fisher boats in the midst of seawaves. Unlike mountains which often involve tantalizing diagonal perspectives and dramatic curvatures, the seascape appears more tranquil and still in a macroscopic overview due to the predominant use of horizontal shapes. The background is divided into three rectangular stripes, the gray-blue cloud, the soft golden glow of dim sunlight, and the teal churning waves. Yet the painting is not devoid of dynamic movement and tension; the undulating waves and the repetitive curves suggest that the labor sea is as active as that in land, if not more challenging and risky.³ The exposed brushstrokes are a key contributor to this dynamism. They boldly announce their presence, deviating from high socialist realism’s smooth, invisible blending, making facture not only evident but prominent. Khan’s wrinkled face and combed hair are rendered by dense, tight strokes, whereas the stiff jacket is shaped by a few long wide strokes of gray on black; a well-blended blue gradient defines the operator room, in contrast to the intermixed white, black and turquoise ripples. The prevalent facture asserts a strong presence of the artist’ hand, yet at the same time the identity of the author is hidden—in fact, many similar laborer portraits in the Soviet Era are unsigned. These portraits highlight

their subjects but erase the creator. We can surmise that the anonymous painter was adequately qualified in their technical skill but not revered enough to make a name in the circle. The absence of attribution is an evidence of the transformation of the art industry: the production of painting assimilated into other mass streamlined state-overseeing production, as it became increasingly standardized and formulaic it also valued less on individual authorship. On the one hand, the streamlined process of government-issued commission de-eliticizes artmaking and makes the individual artist invisible; on the other hand, the objective of these portraits is to make the common people visible, and by identifying individuals, represent an inclusive panorama of the USSR people.

Bearing in mind that this portrait functions as an example that shows the party's recognition of its excellent members, it is intriguing to analyze how visual elements in the painting pay tribute to the party. Although there is no explicit inclusion of party symbols, flags, or signs, the application of red narrates an inferred presence of the socialist party. Two major blocks of red stand out in the bluish atmosphere. The brick-hued turtleneck worn by Khan, positioned in intimacy with the heroine, rests fittingly over her muscular, sturdy torso. If the soft, luscious crimson robe that caresses Virgin Mary throws a seductive lure, then the brick-hued fabric worn by Khan is devoid of this erotic gaze of the female body and instead contours her underlying strength and labor.⁴ Her voluminous breasts, contoured like mountains, are presented with a candid generosity and warmth devoid of sexual voyeurism. The artist successfully erases the fragility and susceptibility of the female body through carefully manipulating the intimate proximity between the body and the cloth and achieves a party-appropriate grandeur effect. The other red object is the buoy, included only partially besides Khan in the proximal background. If texture is present in the fabric, then meaning can be derived from the shape of the buoy. Its circularity may be metaphoric of the Soviet spheres of influence. If we further the analogy by supplementing the functional aspect, then the buoy, a life-saving device that saves people from emergent situations and provides security and guarantee back-up help even in everyday fishery industry, is just like the party's care for its people across all careers and geography. By positioning both items of the party color in close proximity to Khan, the artist visually emphasizes on the significance of socialist party played in its model citizen's life. While the fabric is literally embodied in direct contact in her personal space, the equipment in her daily working environment is another formal reminder of the party's overarching, far-reaching presence even in its peripheral regions.

As we elucidate the party consciousness through color palette, we shall return our focus to the landscape one more time, and reexamine the depiction of seascape as a mnemonic device under a regional context. I have stated that the sea is to fishermen as the mountain is to miners, or

the field is to farmers, but the far east sea to the ethnically diverse Sakhalin people has more layers of meaning than a simple mere workspace. Hisashi Yakou has written extensively on the Sakhalin Shikotan art group that was active from mid 1960s to 1980s, observing that these seascape paintings of Russia's far east periphery serve as an transethnic and transcultural embodiment of homeland nostalgia. "For the 'exotics' of the Far East, mostly Russians, pictorializing these boundary regions, including the nature, climate, scenery, human's daily life, and even the history, would mean assimilating this land into their own. It would be an act of naturalizing themselves into this foreign soil... These landscape paintings evoke a strong feeling of nostalgia for the country... But arousing this feeling in the audience, the works of the Shikotan Group could serve to integrate the disputed territory into the Soviet Union."⁵ Although Yakou's analysis focuses on the local Shikotan artists who employ severe style, dating them after Khan's portrait, it is still appropriate to apply his analysis on the meaning of topological depiction to the portrait's background waves. The seascape functions as a multivalent embodiment of nostalgia for the people represented in the painting, the people making the painting, and the people seeing the painting. For Khan and her fellow Koreans, the sea not only is their operation field but is also an ambiguous space lying between South Korea and Russia, between ancestral heritage and present belongingness. For the painter, applying a conventional visual and technical model to depict the unfamiliar peripheral ocean is a strategy to visually familiarize this exotic land. For the audience, this unspecified depiction of sea can represent any waterbody that rings to them, and for the government, the patron, this ubiquitous rendering achieves to integrate and stabilize Sakhalin into Soviet Territory.

This portrait offers a heroic depiction of a female Korean individual as well as a demonstration of the success of the Socialist party. Alexandra Stepanova Khan's life gives us an exceptionally triumphant glimpse of ethnic Korean community's adaptation to the Soviet Socialist scheme and reciprocally, their reception by the party. To pictorialize her achievement through iconography is to perpetuate and monumentalize both the individual and the party behind. The intimate relation between Khan and red fabric demonstrates the individual's attachment and loyalty to the party; the adjacent lifebuoy symbolically infers the government's far-reaching influence; the seascape evokes transnational nostalgia and de-exoticizes the periphery. In other words, the synthesis of all these visual aspects integrates the disputed territory of Sakhalin into the broader national structure and preserves the collective memory of its displaced multiethnic population.

Endnotes

1. Haruki Wada, “Koreans in the Soviet Far East, 1917-1937,” Dae-Sook Suh, ed., *Koreans in the Soviet Union* (Center for Korean Studies and the Soviet Union in the Pacific-Asian Region Program of the University of Hawaii, 1987), 25-59.
2. For biographical information of Khan, see A. Pushkar, “Woman in the Sea,” *Heroes of the Sakhalin Land* (Far East Publishing, 1972), 157-162. Пушкарь, А. “Женщина в море,” *Герои земли Сахалинской, Дальневосточное книжное издательство: Сахалинское отделение*, (1972).
3. Sea labor and fishing have been the central industry in the Russian Far East during the Soviet Era. Sakhalin was a major supplier of seafood harvest to the entirety of the USSR. See Tony Allison, “The Crisis of the Region’s Fishing Industry: Sources, Prospects, and the Role of Foreign Interests,” Judith Thornton, Charles E. Ziegler, ed., *Russia’s Far East: a Region at Risk* (National Bureau of Asian Research in association with University of Washington Press, 2002).
4. This seemingly anachronistic comparison refers to Todd Olson’s discussion of the relation of red drapery and body’s corporeality in the oil painting *Death of the Virgin* by Caravaggio. Todd Olson, “Corruption,” *Caravaggio’s Pitiful Relics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 139–193.
5. Hisashi Yakou, “Pictorializing the Southern Kuril Islands: The Shikotan Group and the Artists of the Russian Far East,” *Beyond the Empire: Images of Russia in the Eurasian Cultural Context, Slavic Eurasian Studies*, no. 17 (2008), 71-91.

Viela Hu

Columbia University

Viela is a Chinese-Canadian art student. She is enraptured by the complex interplay of cultures, femininity, and the inconstancy of life that carved her identity. She seeks to explore this ever-changing world and document her swiftly shifting perspective through art, capturing fleeting thoughts into immobile mediums. Through creating, she reflects on the relationship between herself, others around her, and the world. Art circumvents language and is Viela's way of thinking and voicing out her inner reflections to the world. It is an eternal, materialized record of her existence, emotions, and consciousness, a gateway to her inner world.

ME LIFE IN THE WILD

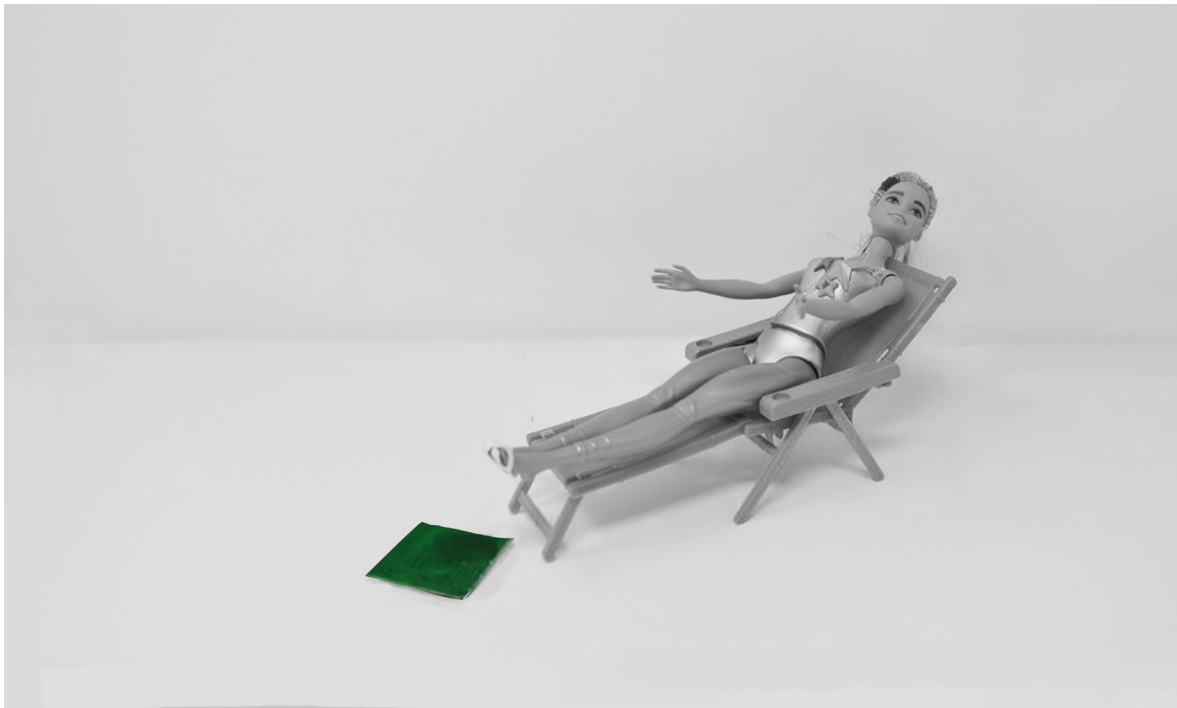
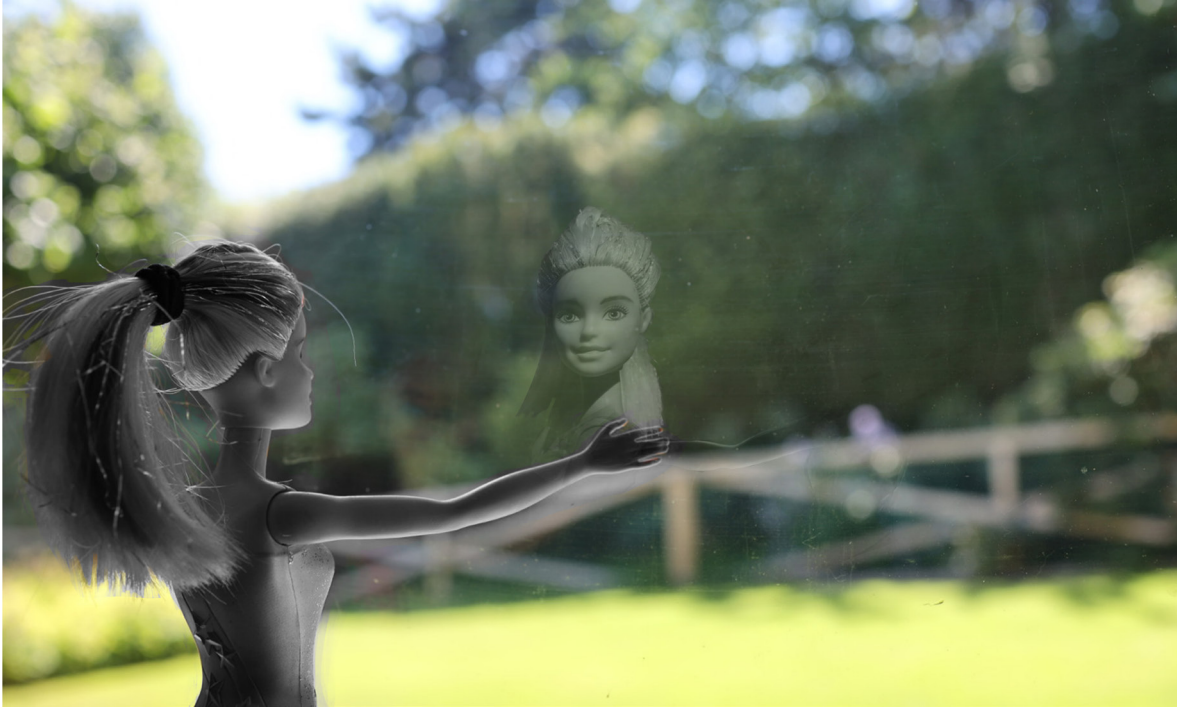
2022 various sizes

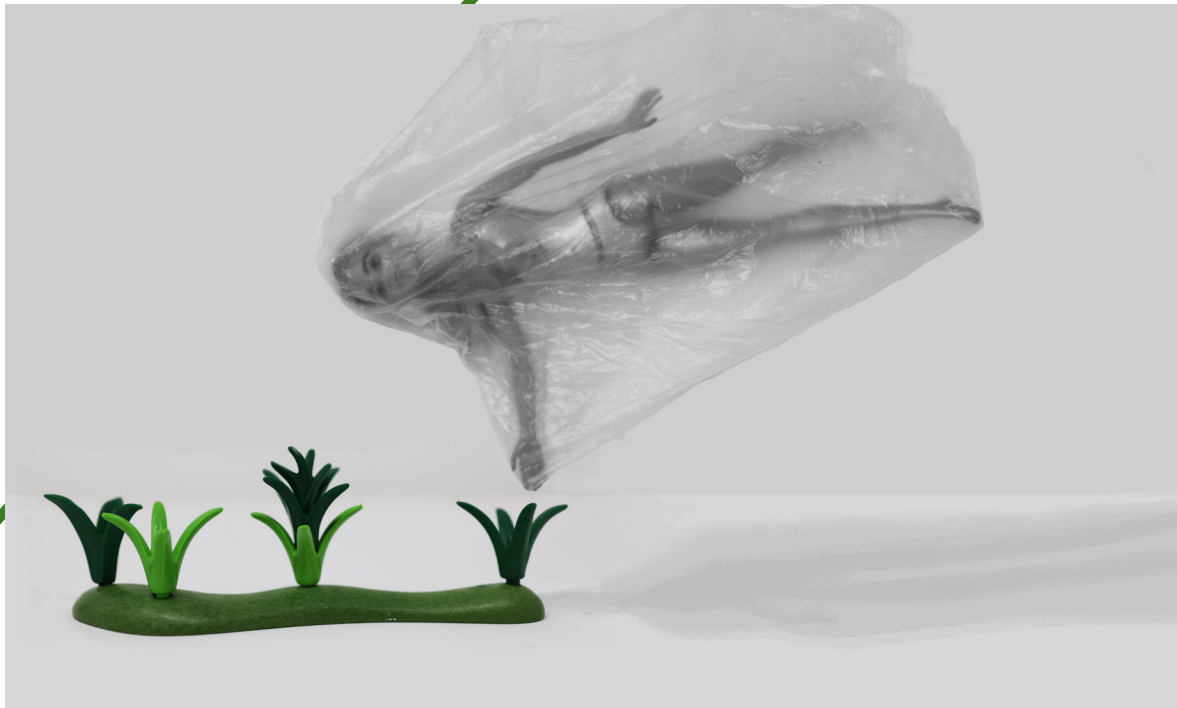
photography

Camping trips prompted my questioning of human's relationship with nature in the contemporary world: is the ardent affection for lands real, when we take any means to avoid contact with nature that may contaminate us with dirt and bug bites? Researching artists like Mathilde Roussel, Karla Black, and Joris Kuipers, I used a Barbie doll as a symbol not only for myself but also a personification of industrialization and urbanization. I created photomontages of surreal moments when my revulsion and alienation for nature overwhelms my imagined affection for it, like when I ride a "Bug-Off!" spray as I fly across a grassland. With these photos, I held an "exhibition", invited Barbie dolls to see it, and captured moments of the dolls reflecting about their detachment from nature. Combining the two parts, *ME LIFE IN THE WILD*, the title referencing the TV series *Barbie Life in the Dreamhouse*, is a satirical critique of humans' antagonization of nature.



see/saw





see/saw



VIELA HU





Mariana
Hernandez
Resto
University of
California,
Berkeley

Papá de la estrellita December 2022
Oil on panel (9in x 12in)



Pollito pio May 2023
Oil on panel (16in x 20in)



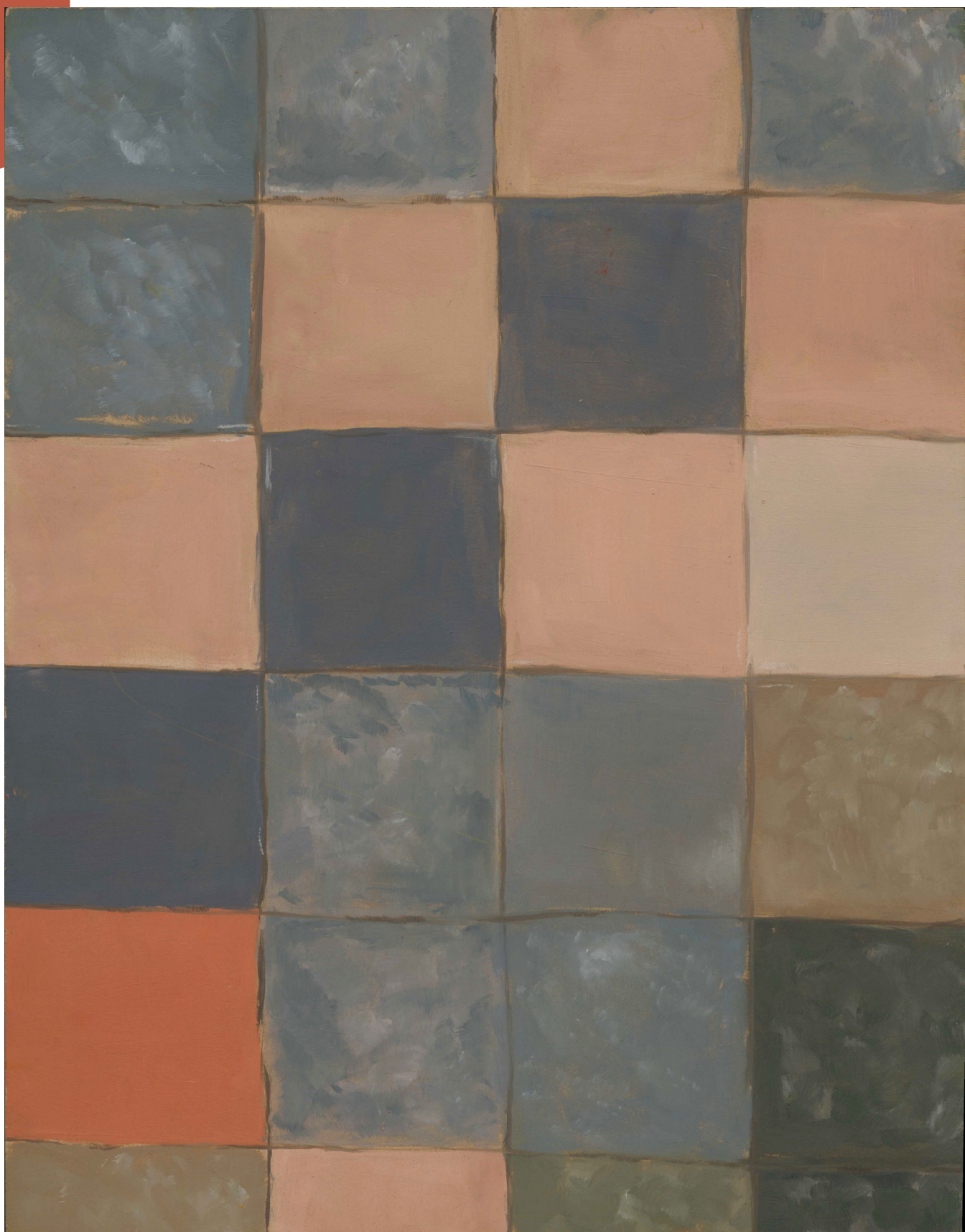
This current mini-series of oil paintings is a deeply personal collection, drawing from my own memories and experiences of growing up in Puerto Rico, a modern colony. My art aims to be a celebration of the perseverance of the Puerto Rican spirit, mainly focusing on hopeful themes such as those of parental love, happiness and the nostalgic childhood moments most everyone can relate to. Through my work, I wish to evoke a sense of shared struggle and communal childhood, inviting viewers to connect with that universal feeling of being loved that transcends geographical boundaries. Quite often it is the reason many of us leave the island or put up with staying. As I explore my memories through each piece, I strive to create artwork that resonates with anyone who holds dear the value of family and the inert beauty of simple moments together in a Latin American country.



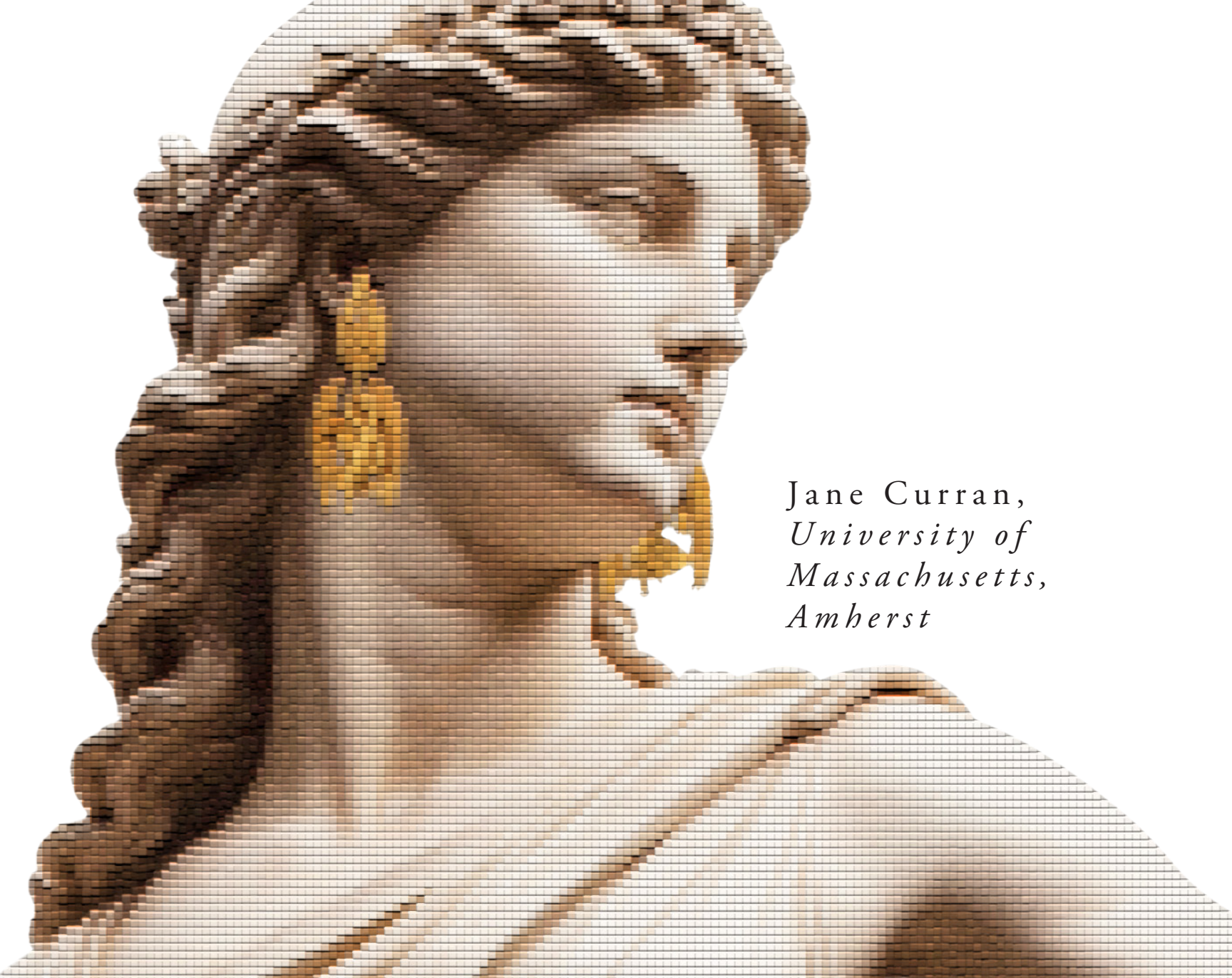
Reflecting as an adult, I realize that those moments shared with loved ones, though now painful in memory, have propelled me to where I stand today. These experiences underline the profound strength of love and its pivotal role in the resilience of Puerto Rican culture. Despite centuries of violent colonization and natural tragedy, it is this diet of love and culture that has sustained us for so long and will carry us towards a more just tomorrow. Reinforcing my belief in our ability to overcome tragedy with affection towards one another.

Top:
Tres estrellitas
March 2023
Oil on panel
(14in x 11in)

Bottom:
Papá de los Yankees
March 2023
Oil on panel
(12in x 12in)



Las losas de las Américas
March 2023
Oil on panel
(14 in x 11in)



Jane Curran,
*University of
Massachusetts,
Amherst*

A Cultural, Mythological, and Pederastic Analysis of the Ganymede Earrings

Golden Ganymede hangs clutched in the talons of Zeus' eagle. Powerful wings dwarf his youthful and lithe figure while fabric flutters around the boy, binding them together and exposing Ganymede's nude body. This violent yet tender scene hangs as a pendant from a honeysuckle palmette, the whole structure constructed out of solid gold. The earrings, weighty in both material and subject matter, would have pulled at the lobes of the wearer.¹

The Ganymede earrings (Fig 1), a pair of gold pendants attached using jump rings to a palmette hook (h. 2 3/8 in.), were made c. 330 - 300 B.C. in Greece and depict the scene of Ganymede's abduction in 22 karat gold.² These earrings are part of a collection of pieces found in Thessaloniki, Greece within the 'jewel box' of a female aristocrat (Fig 2).³ Located inside a Macedonian 'jewel box' exemplifies the practice of burying people with jewelry, as was common in Macedonia during Hellenistic times.⁴

Jewelry can reflect the cultural attitudes and happenings at the time of its creation, and these earrings are no exception. Macedonian King Philip II, the Great's father at the time of production, was a student of Greek culture and sought to promote Greek practices within his court.⁵ During Philip's youth, he witnessed the institution of pederasty. This practice consisted of the social and sexual mentorship of a young boy, known as the *eromenos* or 'the loved one', and an adult citizen male, known as the *erast* or 'the one who inspires.'⁶ The first recorded instances of pederasty occurred with the Dorians who had a tradition of youths 'attaching' themselves to older warriors who would then provide military instruction.⁷ The relationship was an initiatory ritual for both young men and women, though most examples discussed in scholarship occur between boys and men.⁸

As the practice spread, stories about the gods were reinterpreted

to include pederastic relationships which gave the growing custom a divine legitimacy.⁹ This was an attempt to bolster what Macedonians considered an improvement on the earlier social induction practices. Historian Sarah Pomeroy notes that the religion of ancient Greece was non-dogmatic and flexible; the retelling of myths to include pederastic relationships was not radical.¹⁰ The relationship between Zeus and Ganymede and the surrounding myth is an apt example of pederasty as, "the 'older' figure by virtue of his divinity, triggers his beloved's symbolic transformation."¹¹ Plato wrote about this in his *Phaedrus* manuscript; calling the *erast* and *eromenos* mirrors of one another who enable each other to grow as individuals.¹²

A plethora of scholarship exists on both Hellenistic jewelry and the institution of pederasty, but rarely do the two intersect. Literature on Hellenistic jewelry tends to cover a wide array of pieces, focusing broadly on an array of examples rather than creating a depth of description and analysis.¹³ Some scholars delve into the culture of jewelry during the Hellenistic period but often without a wide array of contextualized examples.¹⁴ Coverage of pederasty in literature also has a cultural focus and discusses the material gifting aspects of the relationships but does not give any concrete non-mythological examples.¹⁵ The connections between the surrounded jewelry during the Hellenistic period and the institution of pederasty discussed in this paper suggest how the exhibit a rare reflection of the of the time in the form of jewelry.

Some of the earliest depictions of the Ganymede myths exist in pottery. There are many red-figure *kylix* and shallow vessels used as wine cups, that depict scenes of Zeus and Ganymede. Their Ganymede's role as Zeus' cup-bearer in Olympus as if serves the cup's user, Zeus. One example, a naked Ganymede to the Eucharides made c. 490 - 480 B.C., shows a naked Ganymede Zeus, clothed and sitting (Fig 3). Another vessel, attributed to the

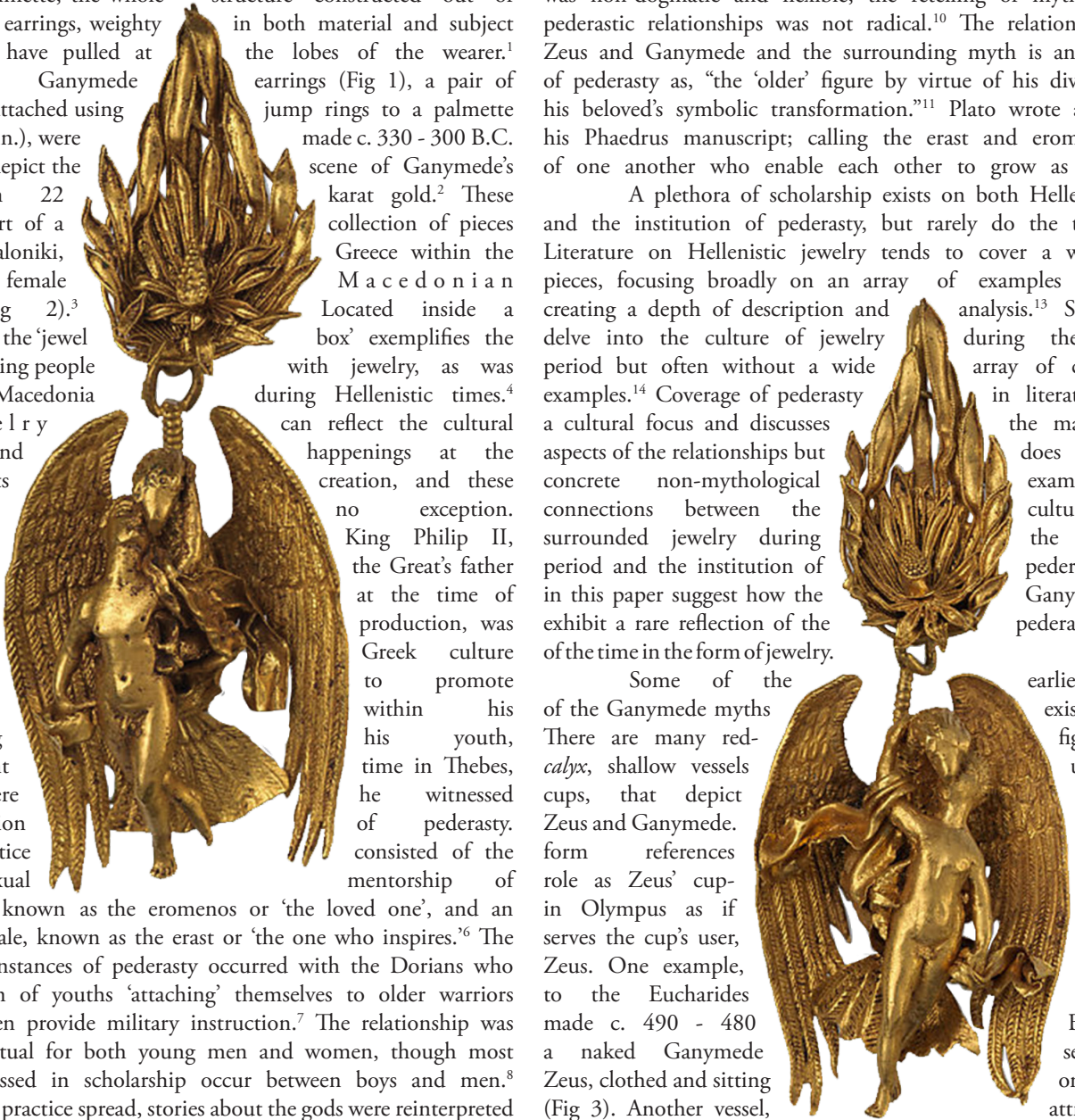


Figure 1. Artist Unknown, "Ganymede Jewelry," Met Museum, c. 330 - 300 B.C.

Penthesilea Painter and made c. 475 - 465 B.C., depicts a nude Zeus pulling Ganymede onto his lap (Fig 4). In both scenes, Ganymede lacks clothing and autonomy, putting Zeus' power over Ganymede on display.¹⁶

The visual composition of the Ganymede earrings takes substantial inspiration from a bronze by Leochares in the early fourth

century B.C. of the same subject, which exists now only in a Roman marble copy held in the Vatican (Fig 5).¹⁷ Ganymede, still in the nude as is now the default, reaches upward as the eagle grabs him. Scholars know that Hellenistic sculptors and goldsmiths worked in proximity to each other after bronze jeweler's models were found at sculpture workshops at sites such as Galjüb.¹⁸ Given this, the goldsmith responsible for the Ganymede earrings could have seen Leochares' sculpture, especially since it was a bronze.

The original bronze is considered one of the first to show Zeus as an eagle rather than showing Zeus' eagle; a distinction which adds nuance to the discussion of the pederastic relationship between Zeus and Ganymede.¹⁹ Zeus' identity, either as the eagle's owner or as the eagle himself, matters greatly when interpreting the myth. Greek philosophers reserved the concept of *erôs* for humans because animals were not thought to have the required degree of rationality.²⁰ Therefore, if the concept of Zeus as the eagle were true, the bird would carry Zeus' 'human' emotions, going against the idea of *erôs*. Few myths feature gods acting in a rational manner concerning their desires.

The myth of Ganymede first appeared in the Homeric Hymns from the eighth century B.C.²¹ In hymn five, entitled "To Aphrodite", the passage says, "Verily wise Zeus carried off golden-haired Ganymedes because of his beauty, to be amongst the Deathless Ones and pour drink for the gods in the house of Zeus."²² Ganymede is a shepherd on the side of Mount Ida, at the foot of which sits the city of Dardanus, when Zeus' eagle swoops down to kidnap him.²³ The earrings depict the eagle holding Ganymede in its talons while in flight up towards Mount Olympus.

Given its origins in oral tradition, many accounts of the myth exist, but most versions have Zeus' sexual desire for Ganymede as the impetus behind the abduction rather than simple aesthetic appreciation.²⁴ This 'erotic desire', known as *erôs* in Greek thought, references *Erôs*, the Greek god of sexual desire. Like many members of the Greek Pantheon, *Erôs* meddled in mortal affairs. The ancient Greeks saw love as an external force that had the power to alter a person's beliefs and subject them to great emotional risk.²⁵ Compelled to kidnap Ganymede after seeing him on Mount Ida, Zeus' rash decision is a primary example of *erôs* and love's power over all beings, not just humans. *Erôs* and Ganymede cross paths frequently up on Olympus. In Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* Aphrodite searches for *Erôs* and finds him in Zeus' fruit orchard playing a dice game using golden knucklebones with Ganymede.²⁶

Erôs began appearing in jewelry as his own figure in the fourth century, the same period as the creation of Ganymede earrings. Small, ornate sculptures of *Erôs* were used as jewelry charms as well



Figure 2. Artist Unknown, "Ganymede Jewelry," Met Museum, c. 330 - 300 B.C.

GANYMEDE EARRINGS/CURRAN

as within cult practices.²⁷ A pair of earrings depicting Erôs playing the kithara, found on page 267 of Jackson's *Hellenistic Gold Erôs Jewellery: Technique, Style, and Chronology*, is one such example of figures of Erôs represented in earring pendants. This depiction of Erôs is strikingly similar to the positioning of Ganymede; the nudity and dainty downward pointed feet indicate a graceful flight.²⁸

Another example is "Pair of gold earrings with disc and Eros" (Fig. 6) from c.300 B.C., features statuettes of Erôs in a standing, or rather floating, naked with fabric trailing behind them, the same as Ganymede.²⁹ Their disks in opposite hands exhibit the same 'mirroring' seen with Ganymede and Zeus in the Ganymede earrings. The mirroring in the Ganymede earrings results in Zeus curling in towards the wearer's face, kissing them alongside Ganymede; or, if worn opposite, the wearer places themselves next to Zeus and exposes Ganymede's body to the outside world. The role the wearer takes on, whether Zeus or Ganymede, depends on how the earrings are worn. They either show off the boy's nude body or have Zeus' eagle curved towards their face, sheltering them like Ganymede.

These earrings were likely given as a gift to the woman who wore them. When looking at these earrings, one should consider the power dynamics of this interaction. What type of relationship existed between the giver and the receiver? The giving of gifts was integral to the institution of pederasty; young men could expect their erast to lavish them with gifts of affection. In the myth, when Zeus sees Ganymede's father mourning his son he gifts him "high-stepping" horses and the knowledge that Ganymede

would never age.³⁰ Zeus, allowed to keep Ganymede in exchange for the horses, consequently asserted that Ganymede was the property of his father, used as a disposable asset within a patriarchal society.³¹ These earrings, with their depiction of a pederastic couple and the common practice of giving gifts of jewelry, have a double meaning and hint at the type of relationship between the wearer and giver.

Other earrings contemporary to the Ganymede earrings help form a picture of the stylistic conventions of pendant earrings in the Hellenistic period, starting with another palmette earring with a siren playing a kithara (Fig. 7) from 330-300 B.C., thought to come from the same workshop at the Ganymede earrings.³² The earring shares a very similar palmette motif to the Ganymede earrings and to the "Nike Driving a Chariot" earrings (Fig. 8). The back of the palmette too shares the snake-head-shaped hook soldered on, just like the Ganymede earrings.³³ This snake-head-shaped hook is more clearly seen in the Nike earrings from Northern Greece c. 350 - 325 B.C.³⁴ The figures of Nike have wings similar to the Ganymede earrings and the Siren earrings, though they more closely resemble Zeus' wings rather than those of the siren. Both Nike and the eagle's wings are made from sheets of gold, decorated with chased lines, and soldered onto the solid central figure.³⁵

Wings play an important role within the myth of Ganymede as the means of flight, which the pendant form of the earrings lends itself well to. When wearing the earrings, the pendant can move freely around in the air. Zeus' eagle, and by extension Zeus himself, can move freely, whilst Ganymede remains static in both the eagle's talons and the solid gold, bringing the myth to life through form. Zeus plays an important

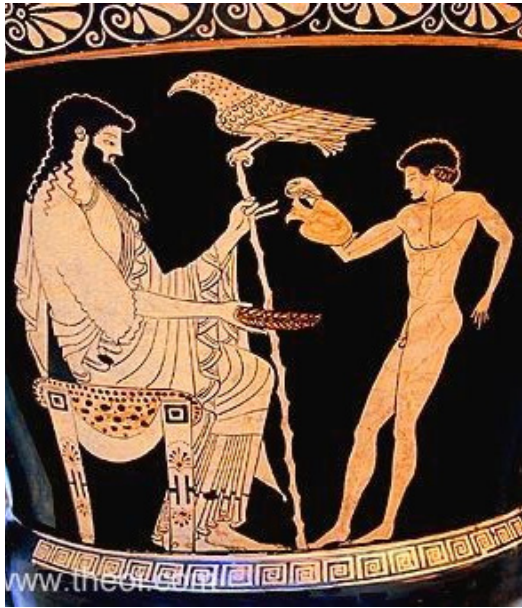


Figure 3. Eucharides painter, "O24.6 ZEUS & GANYMEDES," c. 490 - 480 BCE, Theoi Project.



Figure 4. Penthesilea Painter, "O24.5 ZEUS & GANYMEDES," c. 475 - 465 BCE, Theoi Project.

role both in the earrings and in Macedonian culture as the most important God in the Macedonian pantheon.³⁶ This importance is emphasized by Macedonian rulers who claimed to be descended from Macedon, a descendant of Heracles son of Zeus.³⁷ Zeus allegedly transformed himself into a snake to seduce and have relations with Alexander the Great's mother, Olympias, which resulted in his birth.³⁸ Alexander and Ganymede were both influenced by Zeus' *erôs* and involved in pederasty. Ganymede through his relationship with Zeus and Alexander through his exposure to his father's relationships with his *eronomoi*.³⁹ Alexander himself had a non-traditional pederastic relationship with Hephaestion which was well known throughout Macedonia and beyond.⁴⁰ In light of this, the Ganymede earrings take on a political identity, representing the king and his *eromenos*.

Jewelry functions as an aesthetic choice and a means of cultural communication of information such as where the wearer is from, their profession, marital status, socioeconomic status, and more. Hundreds of excavated pieces of jewelry from this period tell the rich history of the Greek and Macedonian empires. Despite the hordes of jewelry that historians have uncovered and studied, the Ganymede earrings remain the only earrings that depict a pederastic couple. As Gisela Richter, curator of Greek Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1925-48) wrote: "The art of the Greek goldsmiths may be said to have attained the highest stage of development in the fourth century B.C."⁴¹ The shift of wealth at this time and the increased trade from Alexander the Great's conquests meant that Greek and Macedonian goldsmiths had access to a greater amount of material and an increasing demand for their work. For this reason, it is therefore fascinating that no other pieces of jewelry depicting this scene from the Ganymede myth, or pederastic images as a whole, have been unearthed. The subject matter is far too specific to have been a common motif.

The noblewoman who wore these pendant earrings likely saw pederastic relationships happening in society around her; the institution was commonplace amongst the elite able to afford

the lavish gifts necessitated by the relationship. In society at large, gifting jewelry to loved ones was standard. The size and material of the earrings certainly place them in the category of 'lavish' in terms of gifts.

Given all of this, one can draw a line between the earrings' subject matter and their role in the society that created them. The female



Figure 5. Leochares, "Eagle and Ganymede," c.350-25 BCE, University of California, San Diego.

GANYMEDE EARRINGS/CURRAN



Figure 6. Artist unknown, "Pair of gold earrings with a disk and Eros," c. 300 BCE, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

pederastic relationship has perplexed scholars as few records of the practice have survived. Most Greek historians who recorded the customs and institutions of the culture were male and did not engage with the feminine side of the culture widely. Knowledge of women is learned through their possessions and what men have written about them. In a pederastic relationship there is no man to record, and what women did record was often disregarded and not maintained. These earrings were given to and buried with a noblewoman, showing a specific pederastic relationship, and are a valuable insight into what the female pederastic practice looked like and how they engaged with the institution at large.

Figure 7. Artist unknown, "Gold earring," c. mid-4th century BCE, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Endnotes

1. The earrings weigh 15.6 and 16.1 grams respectively. “Ganymede Jewelry,” Met Museum.
2. “Ganymede Jewelry,” Met Museum.
3. Erica Dewitt, interview by Jane Curran, October 7, 2022. Erica Dewitt is a Masters student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst department of Architecture and Design and a jeweler; Higgins, Reynold A Higgins. “Macedonian Royal Jewelry,” *Studies in the History of Art*, vol. 10, Symposium Series I: Macedonia and Greece in Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Times (1982), 140-151.
4. Reynold A. Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewellery* (London: Methuen and Co, 1961), 157; The death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC marks the start and the death of Cleopatra VII in 30 BC marks the end of the Hellenistic period. Sarah B Pomeroy et al., “Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History,” 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 470.
5. Jack Worthington, *By the Spear*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 68-69.
6. Ljiljak Branka, “Pederasty in Ancient Greece,” *International Journal of Economics and Law* 5 (2015), 72.
7. Catherine S. Donnay, “Pederasty in Ancient Greece: A View of a Now Forbidden Institution,” PhD diss., Eastern Washington University (2018), 9.
8. Julia Barclay, “What We Do in the Shadows: Illuminating the Female Pederastic Tradition,” PhD. diss., University of Waterloo (2020), 15; Pomeroy, “*Ancient Greece : A Political, Social, and Cultural History*,” 171-72.
9. Donnay, “Pederasty in Ancient Greece: A View of a Now Forbidden Institution,” 13.
10. Pomeroy, “*Ancient Greece : A Political, Social, and Cultural History*,” 510.
11. Barclay, “What We Do in the Shadows: Illuminating the Female Pederastic Tradition,” 14.
12. Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, Project Gutenberg, 2013.
13. Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewellery*; Higgins, “Macedonian Royal Jewelry”; Colette Hemingway and Seán Hemingway, “Hellenistic Jewelry,” *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007); Dyfri Williams and Jack Ogden, *Greek Gold:*

Jewelry of the Classical World (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994).

14. Emilia Sánchez González, “The Gift of Jewelry Was an Ancient Love Language,” Getty Museum, Jun 30, 2022; Haley Contestabile, “Hellenistic Jewelry & the Commoditization of Elite Greek Women,” 2013.

15. Branka, “Pederasty in Ancient Greece”; Donnay, “Pederasty in Ancient Greece: A View of a Now Forbidden Institution”; Fang, “Ganymede the Cup Bearer: Variations and Receptions of the Ganymede Myth.”

16. The exposure of Ganymede’s genitalia is interesting given that, “the –medes portion of Ganymede’s name can be seen as deriving from mêdea, or genitalia, rather than from medea, which is thoughts”.

This double meaning

has additional weight given the pederastic relationship between Zeus and Ganymede. Within these types of relationships there

was a great deal of public exposure, physically inside the gymnasium setting and metaphorically through the youth’s association with the older man. Yuanyuan Fang, “Ganymede the Cup Bearer: Variations and Receptions of the Ganymede Myth,” *Berkeley Undergraduate Journal of Classics* 7, no. 1 (2018): 4-5.

17. “Ganymede Jewelry,” Met Museum.

18. Herbert Hoffmann and Patricia A. Davidson, *Greek Gold : Jewelry from the age of Alexander* (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1965), 80.

19. Whether the eagle is definitively Zeus is unknown as there is no literature from the time of the sculpture, or about the original bronze, that makes a claim either way that I could find. What is known is that the idea of Zeus being the eagle emerges in Virgil’s Aeneid from 30-19 B.C. and that this idea was upheld in Ovid’s Metamorphoses published around the year 8 AD. The Homeric Hymn that the myth comes to us from makes no mention of Zeus transforming into an eagle, only that an eagle was present. However, Zeus is known to transform into animals in other myths such as his transformation into a bull and a swan in the myths of Europa and Leda respectively. Fang, “Ganymede the Cup Bearer: Variations and Receptions of the Ganymede Myth,” 6.



Figure 8. Artist Unknown, “Earring with Nike driving a two-horse chariot,” c. 350 - 325 BCE, Museum of Fine Arts (Boston).

GANYMEDE EARRINGS/CURRAN

20. *Erôs in Ancient Greece*, ed. Ed Sanders, Chiara Thumiger, Christopher Carey, Nick Lowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9-10.
21. Fang, "Ganymede the Cup Bearer: Variations and Receptions of the Ganymede Myth," 4.
22. Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (London: William Heinemann, 1914), lines 202-205. The myth is also mentioned in Homer's epic the Iliad. See Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. A.T. Murray (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1924).
23. Ganymede is the third son of Tros, the Trojan king who was a descendant of Dardanus, the founder of the city of Dardanus. Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, line 207; It is also discussed how Dardanus identified himself as a descendant of Zeus; thus, uncomfortably linking Zeus and Ganymede as relatives as well as lovers. Fang, "Ganymede the Cup Bearer: Variations and Receptions of the Ganymede Myth," 5.
24. Fang, "Ganymede the Cup Bearer: Variations and Receptions of the Ganymede Myth," 7.
25. Contestabile, "Hellenistic Jewelry & the Commoditization of Elite Greek Women," 4.
26. Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica*, trans. E.V. Rieu, Project Gutenberg, 2020.
27. Ibid.; Higgins writes: "Of purely Greek motives, figures of Erôs are among the most popular, as is all Hellenistic art." Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewellery*, 155.
28. Monica M. Jackson, *Hellenistic Gold Erôs Jewellery: Technique, Style, and Chronology* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2006), 139.
29. The earrings are also featured in Williams' *Greek Gold: Jewelry of the Classical World* and were noted as being found in a tomb in Rhodonai, Crete in 1902; Williams, *Greek Gold: Jewelry of the Classical World*, 66-67.
30. Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, 421.
31. Fang, "Ganymede the Cup Bearer: Variations and Receptions of the Ganymede Myth," 8.
32. Williams, *Greek Gold: Jewelry of the Classical World*, 66.
33. Soldering is "the process of joining pieces of metal by the insertion of solder (molten metal) having a melting point lower than that of the metals to be joined." See Harold Newman, *An illustrated dictionary of jewelry: 2,530 entries, including definitions of jewels, gemstones, materials, processes, and styles, and entries on principal designers and makers from antiquity to the present day* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), 284; Williams, *Greek Gold: Jewelry of the Classical World*, 66.
34. These earrings are also features in Hoffmann's *Greek Gold: Jewelry from the age of Alexander*, 76-77.
35. Chasing is the technique used to move metal into a design using a chasing tool and hammer. No metal is removed in this process. Newman, *An illustrated dictionary of jewelry*, 65
36. Worthington, *By the Spear*, 15.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid, 44.
39. Philip II had two *eromenos* of his own, both named Pausanias. Mikayla Kitchen, "Interpreting Alexander III of Macedon's "Sexuality" in the Ancient Greco-Macedonian World," *Western Illinois Historical Review* 11 (Spring 2020), 7.
40. Ibid, 7-10.
41. Gisela M. A. Richter, "Handbook of the Classical Collection" (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1917), 151.

Sophia Lavrov

University of California, Berkeley



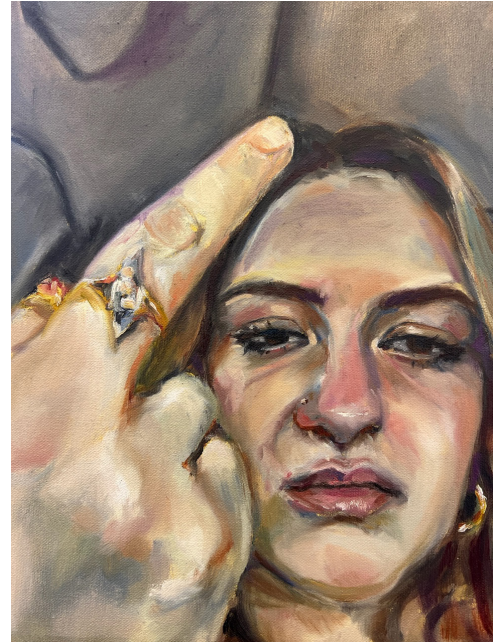
Take a Look at Yourself, Sophia Lavrov
Oil on canvas 3x4 feet

Emotional Transience

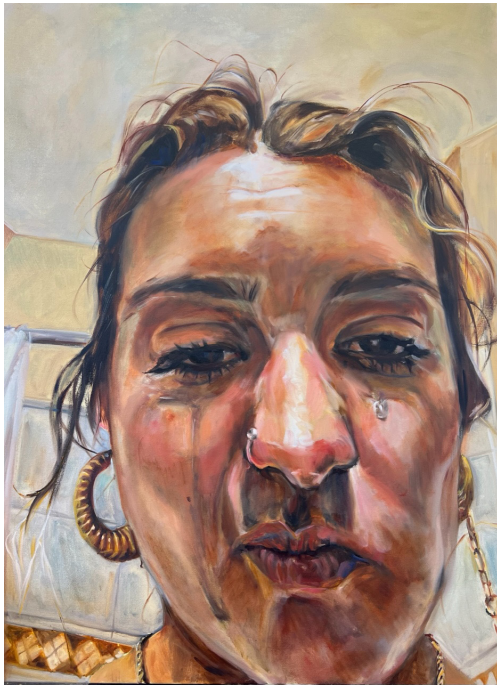
Through this series, I have captured moments where I experienced very intense, emotional moments. So far, it has been an intriguing documentation process, focusing on the transience and impermanence of emotional reactions, especially in myself. By capturing these moments in my work, I memorialize fragments of my varied reactions, and in turn, come to know the sensitive and vulnerable facets of myself. Many of these works capture emotional responses I had at times where I did feel very sad. It's not because I wanted to project that or brew over my sadness. I depicted myself from a genuine given moment where I sincerely felt the loss of someone or something important in my life. I'm reminded, however, that these feelings are impermanent moments, even by way of memorializing them through paint. These selfie paintings, no matter their circumstantial context, always return to me, my emotional capacity. That's why they are self-portraits. Through them, I provide commentary on an adolescent girl facing growing pains and emotions, which are unpredictable and sometimes annoying. Yet, there's solace knowing they don't last, and that I can remind myself of my tendency to be sensitive and vulnerable.



All in Divine Timing
Oil on canvas 3x4 feet



Disillusioned But Moving On (2023)
Oil on canvas 11x14 cm



Unwanted Resurgence
Oil on canvas 3x4 feet



You Drive Me Crazy (2024)
Oil on canvas 3x4 feet

From Big Brother to Warhol: The Evolution of American Interpretations of Chinese Propaganda

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The propaganda poster of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is one of the most unique and controversial cultural forms of the 20th century.¹ A central facet of the large-scale system of communist ideological indoctrination that began during the Chinese Civil War, this print medium was ubiquitous across the nation from the 1950s to the 1970s.² Not only were posters distributed on the street, but they were also reproduced in magazines and on stamps, blown up to larger scales to plaster on walls, and sold in stores as home decorations. The propaganda imagery was practically inescapable.³ This rampant dissemination was not limited to domestic borders. In fact, propaganda departments made a concerted effort to export Maoist imagery and Maoist thought to countries all over the world.⁴

As to be expected from Cold War era, anti-communist America, the existence and impact of Chinese propaganda was initially met with fear and apprehension. In May of 1952, Newsweek printed an article on "Chinese Red Propaganda: The Many Faces of Mao" where they compared glorifying illustrations of Chairman Mao to "the terrifying posters in George Orwell's novel '1984,'" ending the passage with the incisive quote "Big Brother is Watching YOU" to emphasize the resemblance.⁵ Similarly, in March of 1957, The New York Times ran a piece on "Propaganda in Peiping" where they prioritized reproducing posters that were specifically lambasting England, France, and America for imperialism, provoking antagonism towards China among Western audiences.⁶ This thinly veiled fear-mongering was an ongoing trend in coverage of Chinese posters from American news agencies throughout the 1950s until the mid-1960s. Benedicto David in 1958 for *The Austin American* and John Hughes in 1965 for *The Christian Science Monitor* both attribute widespread, entrenched anti-American sentiment to the state-sponsored poster campaign.⁷

However, despite this seemingly adversarial relationship, in the 1970s, American pop artists like Andy Warhol appropriated Chinese Maoist imagery en masse and spoofed the large-scale propaganda program. Works like Warhol's Mao series appear to even make fun of the Chairman by presenting him in garish makeup — an audacious act for a fear-inducing enemy of the state.⁸ The gap between the 1950s extremely negative reception of Chinese posters and the 1970s bold reimagination of the form can be attributed to the radical changes in Western conception invoked by the tumultuous first three years of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1969). To be specific, during this "manic phase," Chinese propaganda posters were subsumed under the *dazibao*, or big character poster, phenomenon and, therefore, treated as unreliable historical documents that were symptoms of a nascent civil war rather than legitimate threats to American safety. This effective depoliticization of the medium allowed Cultural Revolution

iconography to proliferate across the United States, eventually resulting in the close relationship between Pop Art and Maoist propaganda.

As background, beginning in 1966 and lasting until the death of Mao in 1976, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was a time of all-encompassing cultural and political unrest in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Mao, who had stepped down as the Chairman after the failure of the Great Leap Forward, attempted to regain political influence by launching a large-scale, grassroots campaign to purge the more economically and politically conservative members of the PRC, new Chairman Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, from the party.⁹ From 1966 to 1969, incensed and emboldened youths wreaked havoc across China in the name of Mao. These Red Guards would shame and destroy anything, or anyone, perceived to be emblematic of the "four olds": old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits. With extreme factionalism between groups, even Mao struggled to rein in the Red Guards' reign of terror.¹⁰

Contributing to the spirit of confusion and conflict was the replacement of an official structure of communication with the chaos of *dazibao*. In 1966, an employee condemned Peking University's administration for being anti-Mao by pasting sheets of hand-written criticism on a public wall. After Mao voiced his support for this act, *dazibao* exploded across the nation, ranging from open shaming to general news to galvanizing slogans. Mao attempted to use this system of community reporting to his advantage, establishing a chain of information from Maoist leadership through Red Guard newspapers to wall posters.¹¹ However, Mao could not control all the posters that were put up; any person with the adequate resources could paste sheets of handwritten reports on accessible walls. Therefore, even anti-Maoists could publicize their responses to Red Guard propaganda, leading to the juxtaposition of incompatible reports.

This new form of guerrilla journalism, full of errors and contradictions, not only fascinated Western audiences from a historical standpoint, but also became newspapers' only source of consistent information about the rapidly deteriorating situation in China.¹² The reception of *dazibao* is important when considering Chinese propaganda posters as, during this period, American audiences essentially grouped the two mediums together. Despite the advent of *dazibao*, propaganda posters continued to be plastered across facades, with images serving as visual breaks in the endless panels of text. Photos by Agence France-Presse reporter Jean Vincent illustrate this phenomenon, depicting walls in downtown Beijing in 1966 and 1967 completely covered in characters and illustrations alike (Figs. 1 and 2). Other propaganda posters from 1969 – 1971 portray the same sight, with some walls sporting equal parts visual elements and text (Figs. 3, 4, and 5). The Art Creations Group's board, for example, features a massive image of a strong, proletariat worker



Top

Figure 1. Jean Vincent, “Chinese youths walk past revolutionary posters during the ‘Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,’” Agence France-Presse, Getty Images, February 1967.

Bottom

Figure 2. Jean Vincent, “Chinese people reading *dazibao*s in Beijing in January 1967 during the ‘Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,’” Agence France-Presse, Artsy, 1967.



squeezing a miniscule aristocrat between his fingers (Fig. 4). Rendered in red paint on red paper, the poster is lent the same importance as the large announcement running across the top of the panel. In a 1967 *New York Times* article titled “Peking Posters Studied for Clues to China Puzzle,” the newspaper reproduces a poster of “two Red Guards crushing Lu Ting-yi” while the entire article addresses the ascendancy of the “big character posters,” treating the two forms of propaganda dissemination as indistinguishable (Fig. 6).¹³ This indiscriminate relationship between image and *dazibao* coupled with an unprecedented lack of articles about representational propaganda from 1966-1969 implies that the category of *dazibao* subsumed image-based posters. Thus, this analysis will now refer to these materials interchangeably.

In the American press, *dazibao* were treated as unreliable yet necessary narrators, with many articles perpetually issuing disclaimers amidst the reporting. For example, Marilyn Berger’s 1967 “China Posters Tell All But What’s Going On” for *Newsday* calls *dazibao* “significant if not confusing” and makes sure to explicitly credit the Japanese reporters on the ground for discerning the reliable posters from the false ones.¹⁴ In *The Washington Post’s* “China’s Posters are Trademark, Main News Source of Upheaval,” the article echoes concerns about the quality of wall posters as it is an unregulated medium. Yet, the piece ultimately asserts that, despite their “various and eccentric forms,” *dazibao* remain “the most significant

information on the Cultural Revolution to reach the world.”¹⁵ The fallibility of *dazibao* was so salient in the public consciousness that Matt Weinstock even penned a satirical passage for *The Los Angeles Times*, declaring that the Chinese were “clever people” because “they just print the headlines.”¹⁶ Weinstock continues, stating “it would appear that a nation that has exploded a nuclear device should have a better means of



Left

Figure 3. Beijing workers-peasants-soldiers ceramics factory, “Earnestly study, deeply criticize revisionism,” Chinese Posters Foundation, June 1971.

Right

Figure 4. Art Creation Group of Workers Constructing the No. 4 Blast Furnace at WuGang, “Vigorously promote revolution and production, struggle for a great leap forward in the steel industry,” Chinese Posters Foundation, December 1970.



communication.”¹⁷ Implicit in this joke is the idea that *dazibao* represent the folly of China. Not only were these wall posters unverified and difficult to parse, but to make matters worse, they were also the only source of information for both American journalists and the Chinese public. The aforementioned 1967 piece by *The New York Times* even specifically criticizes the Chinese press, stating that *dazibao*, although deeply unreliable, have “provided more information about turbulent events in China during the last few months than the official press.”¹⁸ These news articles reveal how American audiences saw *dazibao* less as threatening, than ridiculous and amusing. Considering that *dazibao* also comprised propaganda posters, this is a marked shift from previous understandings of the medium. Chinese print propaganda was not sowing the seeds of international anti-American hate like it was in the 1950s; instead, it was evidence of a disorganized society on the decline.¹⁹

The reassessment of propaganda could be considered a symptom of a larger change in sentiment towards China at the time. In the 1950s and early 1960s, due to the Korean war, widespread anti-communist panic, and the Chinese foray into nuclear weapons, the U.S. was hostile towards the PRC, believing it to be a “threat to its neighbors and the world.”²⁰ Policy-wise, the U.S. maintained a total embargo on trade, emphasized strong ties with Taiwan, exerted pressure on allies to avoid Beijing, and prevented PRC membership in the United

Nations.²¹ However, with the controversy surrounding the justification of the Vietnam War, the American people’s perspective towards Asia was shifting, becoming increasingly doubtful of the legitimacy of Western intervention.²² China, embroiled in the tumult of the Cultural Revolution, was particularly of note, with American audiences lowering the perceived threat of the struggling nation.²³ U.S. analysts even believed Mao to be a “senile old man with an irrational and self-destructive predilection for continuous upheaval,” a detriment domestically and a castration internationally.²⁴ Although the U.S. did not completely reverse its exclusionary policies, President Johnson did publicly voice interest in forging a collaborative relationship between the two nations.²⁵ From both a governmental and grassroots perspective, a more relaxed stance on the PRC proliferated across America during the mid-1960s.

After the onset of the Cultural Revolution, the American reevaluation of PRC posters from a threatening symbol to one of curiosity and ridicule was a byproduct of the *dazibao* phenomenon as well as a general growing sympathy towards China. With its newfound status and connotations, the dissemination of the propaganda poster was less stigmatized, which opened the door for pop artists to experiment with its iconography. Andrew O’Keeffe outlines this artistic relationship in his master’s thesis “From Propaganda to Pop Culture: How Maoist Propaganda Transformed into a Global Art Commodity,” detailing how

organized worldwide distribution centers and the inclusive messaging of Maoist posters transformed Chinese imagery into “familiar symbolism opportune for exploitation as pop culture art.”²⁶ However, ubiquitous presence does not entirely explain pop appropriation. In fact, rather than just increasing the acceptability of circulation, the depoliticization of the Chinese poster during the Cultural Revolution played a central theoretical role in the proliferation of Maoist imagery among pop artists. As explained by art historian Victoria Scott, the reproducibility and rejection of high art at the core of PRC propaganda appealed to pop artists as a source of inspiration; however, they were generally uninterested in the pro-communist political messaging.²⁷ By focusing on the “aesthetic despotism” of propaganda – its ability to control, capture, and direct the thinking of the audience – pop artists ironically utilized the form of the Chinese poster as a vehicle for neoliberalist art. Scott asserts that, instead of critiquing apolitical, bourgeois art, Western appropriation of Maoist aesthetics actually “magnify, exaggerate and affirm the vacuous commodities, entertainments and hierarchies that characterize society.”²⁸ This complete contradiction of the original purpose of PRC propaganda would not have been possible without the conversion of the poster medium from ideological weapon to historical artifact.

It is important to note that the Chinese audiences of Maoist posters were not mindless, manipulated masses who were naively drawn in by bombastic slogans, a narrative that the American press often perpetuated. As Barbara Mittler explains in “Popular Propaganda? Art and Culture in Revolutionary China,” propaganda art was depoliticized in China itself. Essentially understood as political advertising that could be analyzed subjectively, the messaging of a particular piece did not necessarily factor into the audience’s reception.²⁹ Chinese artists, like American ones, would even manipulate and parody propaganda posters, which raises the question whether there exists an innate ambiguity to the form that provokes reimagination and commentary.³⁰ Exploring this question could be a fruitful route for future research.

The Chinese propaganda poster has a nuanced and tumultuous history in America. Initially inciting panic before being historicized and effectively declared by the start of the Cultural Revolution, the medium has been subject to widespread academic inquiry and fascination, even leading to the rise of neoliberal pop art in the late 20th century.³¹ With the rise of tensions between China and the U.S in recent years as well as growing museum collections of Chinese propaganda, it will be interesting to see how the controversial form of the poster is reconceptualized.



Figure 5. Xiang, Yangwen and the Political Department of the Zhejiang Provincial Military Command of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, “Grasp revolution, increase production, relentlessly strike at imperialism, revisionism and reactionaries!” *Chinese Posters Foundation*, January 1969.



Agence France-Presse, from Pictorial
STATEMENT OF OPINION: One of the posters pasted on walls of Peking shows two Red Guards crushing Lu Ting-yi, former propaganda chief, with a hammer and a pen.

Figure 6. Agence France-Presse, “Two Red Guards crushing Lu Ting-yi,” *The New York Times*, January 13, 1967.

Endnotes

1. There are various and often conflicting definitions for the propaganda poster. According to Stefan Landsberger, a pre-eminent scholar in the field, poster art has been delineated under a litany of terms in China including but not limited to nianhua, youhua, shuifenhua, mubanhua, zhongguo hua, and xuanchuan hua. For the purposes of this essay, I understand a propaganda poster as abiding by two stipulations. Content-wise, works must be made in line with Mao's utilitarian perspective on art outlined in his talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art in 1942: essentially, pieces that are intended to serve and glorify the proletariat. To qualify as a poster, the images must be representational and distributed via mass print media and/or plastered on walls, but they do not necessarily have to pass through official state-sanctioned channels, especially considering how problematized this system was during the Cultural Revolution.
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3. Stefan Landsberger, "The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Propaganda Poster," *Chinese Propaganda Posters*, ed. by Benedikt Taschen, Angelika Taschen, Kathrin Murr (Cologne: Taschen, 2003), 16.
4. Andrew O'Keeffe, "From Propaganda to Pop Culture: How Maoist Propaganda Transformed into a Global Art Commodity" (Master's Thesis, Harvard University, March 2019), 5.
5. "Chinese Red Propaganda: The Many Faces of Mao," *Newsweek*, May 19, 1952.
6. "Propaganda in Peiping," *New York Times*, March 31, 1957.
7. Benedicto S. David, "A Peek Behind the Bamboo," *The Austin American*, October 5, 1958; John Hughes, "Chinese view of U.S. contrasted," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 4, 1965.
8. "Mao," Art Institute of Chicago, accessed Thursday May 11, 2023, <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/47149/mao>.
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10. Amy Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China: from Cultural Revolution to commie kitsch* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2014), 54.
11. Barry Broman, "Tatzepao: Medium of Conflict in China's 'Cultural Revolution,'" *Journalism Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (March 1969), 104.
12. Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China*, 60.
13. "Peking Posters Studied for Clues to China Puzzle," *New York Times*, January 13, 1967, 2.
14. Marilyn Berger, "China Posters Tell All But What's Going On: Newsday Closeup," *Newsday*, February 2, 1967.
15. "China's Posters Are Trademark, Main News Source of Upheaval," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 9, 1967.
16. Matt Weinstock, "Clever People – They Just Print the Headlines...!" *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 1967.
17. Ibid.
18. "Peking Posters Studied for Clues to China Puzzle."
19. "Chinese Red Propaganda: The Many Faces of Mao."
20. Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 178.
21. Michael Lumbers, "'Staying Out of This Chinese Muddle': The Johnson Administration's Response to the Cultural Revolution," *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 2 (April 2007), 262.
22. Mackerras, *Western Images of China*, 200.
23. Lumbers, "'Staying Out of This Chinese Muddle,'" 260.
24. Ibid, 280.
25. Ibid, 265.
26. O'Keeffe, "From Propaganda to Pop Culture," 67-68.
27. Victoria H.F. Scott, "Reproducibility, propaganda and the Chinese origins of neoliberal aesthetics," *Art, Global Maoism and the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, ed. by Jacopo Galimberti, Noemi de Haro Garcia, and Victoria H.F. Scott (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 337.
28. Ibid, 336.
29. Barbara Mittler, "Popular Propaganda? Art and Culture in Revolutionary China," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 152, no. 4 (December 2008), 471, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40541604>.
30. Mittler, "Popular Propaganda?," 471.
31. Stefan Landsberger, "Creating China Visually: Collecting Chinese Propaganda Posters," *Harvard International Review*, September 22, 2019, <https://hir.harvard.edu/creating-china-visually/>.

Larissa Sansour: Empowering Memory and Foodways for Resistance

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Larissa Sansour is a Palestinian artist who works in film, photography, sculpture, and installation art. Her art reflects Palestinian resistance to Israeli settler-colonialism, exemplified through two case studies from 2006 and 2019. As such, the art analyzed addresses the situation in Palestine at those dates. Both historically and currently, foodways are a locus of resistance in Palestine. Foodways refers to activities that deal with all aspects of food, including its materials, cooking, culture, history, and traditions. They are inextricably connected to the land, which makes them particularly political for Palestine. When Sansour's oeuvre is seen through the lens of food as a type of resistance, two particular mediums – documentary and science fiction – stand out as representative of Sansour's evolving methods. Through non-fiction depictions of shared meals, Sansour connects foodways to a collective cultural memory of the land, ingredients, and recipes. Communal memory is essential to the construction of a cultural identity, which is key to Palestinian resistance. Sansour shifts from non-fiction in her earlier career to science fiction to escape certain limitations, but carried throughout is a focus on the power of foodways to resist and transform the future. She uses the shifted temporality of science fiction to depict a uniquely Palestinian relationship to memory. Throughout both pieces, depictions of food in the diasporic Palestinian visual lexicon are used to represent and conjure the memory of a Palestinian homeland.

This paper will focus on two case studies to illustrate Sansour's resistance through foodways. The first is *Soup Over Bethlehem* (2009), a short film which depicts a Palestinian family sharing dinner on a rooftop with a view of Bethlehem. The meal they share is called *Mloukchieh*, a cultural dish of Palestine. As they enjoy their meal together, conversation drifts from the difficulty of procuring ingredients for *Mloukchieh* to the politics of using passports while traveling. The second is *In Vitro* (2019), a (longer) short film which shows two scientists discussing memory and the future in an underground orchard created from heirloom seeds collected right before a devastating ecodisaster. In both case studies, food and memory are central vectors for Sansour's intentions to critique and investigate the future of Palestine.

Sansour is rarely separated from her Palestinian identity because it is so fundamental to her art-making process, especially for *In Vitro* and *Soup Over Bethlehem*. Therefore, a brief context of the extremely complex situation in Palestine is necessary. This context covers the situation as is relevant to Sansour's artworks from 2009 and 2019.

After World War I, the League of Nations stipulated that Palestine would become an independent state. In actuality, the British colonial rulers turned Palestine over to the Zionist settler colonial movement. No independent Palestine state was formed; instead, Zionists destroyed all urban centers that Palestine had built before 1948 and

displaced about half a million Palestinians.¹ The day after Israel celebrates its independence, Palestine observes the Nakba, or catastrophe. The destruction and displacement during Nakba damaged not only urban centers, but also rural areas responsible for producing food and ingredients. For example, the massive destruction of olive tree orchards increased the price of olive oil and thus decreased its previously central role in Palestinian cuisine.² Without protection from the international community, oppressed by the state, and neglected by Arab leadership, Palestinian resistance was forced to be “peaceful.” In order to meet under the radar and without catching suspicion, Palestinians would meet for picnics. The picnic captured the image of a “peaceful people gathering around food, drinks, and chat.”³ Two picnics – one in the 1960s and one in the early 1970s – were used as meeting events to get through customs formalities and avoid suspicions of violent uprising.⁴

Food continues to be central to Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation and colonization. An extensive network of laws create an environment in which farming is hardly a sustainable profession, and as Israeli settlements continue to encroach on Palestinian land, arable land and natural resources are taken from Palestinians.⁵ In the West Bank, a community supported agriculture group called *Sharaka* practices what might be called *Guerilla Gardening*.⁶ They rediscover local Palestinian foods and make them available to local consumers, and in doing so assert their opposition to the occupation. Palestinian land is disappearing, making a local food movement in Palestine political in a way it might not be elsewhere. *Sharaka* strives for food sovereignty despite the absence of political sovereignty. Meneley writes that *Sharaka* exhibits “a certain nostalgia for a life that is in danger of being lost forever.”⁷ Another organization additionally works to rediscover local food that has been lost to the theft of lands: the Palestine Heirloom Seed Library is a “dynamic living seed library working to re-find and re-share and regrow beloved seeds of the ancient and storied Palestinian landscape and culture.”⁸ The organization is spearheaded by Vivien Sansour, Larissa Sansour's sister. Heirloom seeds connect one to the land as well as the (often lost) history of the land.

Many prominent Western news outlets, such as the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, have covered the topic of Israeli appropriation of Palestinian food.⁹ Palestinians have taken different actions in the face of this debate: community organizing, media, visual arts, and cookbooks. One author of “The Palestinian Table”, published in 2017, writes that the recipes she shares are “a Palestinian chronicle – a tale of identity.”¹⁰ Sansour has similarly shed light on the significance of foodways in the postcolonial world through her creative art, particularly in her work *Soup Over Bethlehem*.

Soup Over Bethlehem is a nine minute short film by Larissa



Figure 1. Larissa Sansour, *Soup Over Bethlehem*, 2006, video, 0:35.



Figure 2. Larissa Sansour, *Soup Over Bethlehem*, 2006, video, 7:57.



Figure 3. Larissa Sansour, *Soup Over Bethlehem*, 2006, video, 4:33.

Sansour from 2009. It shows Sansour's Palestinian family at a dinner table on a rooftop overlooking the West Bank city of Bethlehem. As Sansour describes the film in her own words, "what starts as a culinary discussion about the national dish 'Mloukchieh' soon evolves into a personal and engaging conversation about politics - thereby emphasizing the symbiosis of food and politics so indicative of the Palestinian experience."¹¹ This analysis and connection between food and politics is one that Sansour makes in other nonfiction film projects of hers such as *Falafel Road* (2010), *Trespass the Salt* (2011), and *Feast of the Inhabitants* (2012).

Sansour's choice to use Mloukchieh was not incidental. The key ingredient to this dish is a leafy vegetable whose natural and traditional area of cultivation is in Jericho. This location was cut off from Bethlehem, where *Soup Over Bethlehem* takes place, after the 1993 Oslo Accords and later Israel's construction of the Separation Wall.¹² In *Soup Over Bethlehem*, Maxim exclaims that "trying to buy dry Mloukchieh in Ramallah is like trying to buy drugs."¹³ He recounts his odyssey of trying to get dry Mloukchieh leaves which leads him into humorous situations. What might be the simple act of a family member telling a funny story becomes a method of resistance in the face of Israel's occupation. Israel determines what products and in what quantities the Palestinian Authority can import or export, as well as where Palestinians can travel.¹⁴ The importance of the Mloukchieh is signaled by Sansour's selective color choice. The mloukchieh's green color is accompanied by the yellow of lemons served with the dish. The green and yellow against the black and white background emphasizes the importance of the dish to the event, to the resistance, and to the people participating and viewing.

A thread throughout the video is sourcing ingredients. One member of the family asks, "why don't we grow Mloukchieh in our garden?"¹⁵ The response is that it would require a greenhouse to grow in the climate of Bethlehem. Later, while discussing the Separation Wall, another member says, "I think we should grow Mloukchieh next to the wall."¹⁶ The response is that it is illegal to do so. Both times, however, the script drifted towards growing the ingredients themselves. When faced with legal problems and geographical barriers, they proposed taking it into their own hands and growing locally. This echoes back to the Sharaka group in Palestine, which is doing just that. One member of Sharaka spoke of their "determination and will to complete our journey to protect our mother land, not through empty slogans, but through farming and production, and to hold dear the land that provides us life and food and dignity."¹⁷ Both *Soup Over Bethlehem* and *Sharaka* demonstrate the symbiosis between food and politics that is essential to the Palestinian experience and identity.

Food's predominant connection to the domestic sphere does not undermine its political influence. If anything, it highlights how food "cannot escape the political, for in the play of flavours and spices

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and odours are the threads of colonial enterprises, national histories, independence movements, family legacies and personal narratives.”¹⁸ Sansour makes intentional visual choices to evoke the comfort of the domestic sphere, with a family meal centered on a cultural dish. No one is at the head of the table and the camera shifts to and from various perspectives. This perpetual shifting of perspective does not privilege any one person in particular or their role in the space. The focus is on the enjoyment of food rather than the people. While this is emphasized by the colors, it is also echoed in the sounds of plates and silverware clinking in the background and the low camera, positioned as if it were on the table. All these qualities serve to create a warm, familial atmosphere.

These visual artistic decisions are a stark contrast to the cultural context behind their conversation: the Separation Wall, the restrictions on ingredients, the tightening legal limitations, loss of land, and more. As scholar and critic Livia Alexander put it, Sansour is “mixing up our palate with doses of pleasure and pain” by intertwining the pleasure of food and comfort of home with the harsh reality of settler colonialism.¹⁹

In an analysis of the Palestinian diaspora’s lexicon, Layla AlAmmar notes the particular use of the lemon, olive, and fig tree as “metonymic fragments of the homeland from sites of Palestinian dispersion.”²⁰ In *Soup Over Bethlehem*, the lemon – and its accompanying Mloukieh – achieve the status referred to here as “metonymic fragments.” This means that they are representative of the homeland that they have lost. Food and its ingredients are mementos from the shared memory of Palestinians. The highlighted lemon and Mloukieh are vehicles of memory for this family to simultaneously reaffirm their Palestinian identity and exercise resistance against the encroaching settler colonial forces.

Soup Over Bethlehem simultaneously addresses deep-seated

issues of Palestinian access to food (as recipes or as ingredients) while also creating a comforting familial atmosphere. The choice of Mloukieh and lemons is intentional due to their ability to reinvigorate memory of Palestinian identity. It is emblematic of her early career, both in that she uses a documentary style and that it uses food and memory to dive into political issues. As Sansour progressed as an artist, she began to use and explore the realm of science fiction.

In interviews, Sansour is often put in the position, either intentionally on her part or coercively by other forces, of defending or justifying her shift into science fiction. She says that the “allure of sci-fi is to be able to talk about the present without being dictated by the current political jargon.”²¹ Already utilizing memory as a theme of resistance, Sansour is able to capitalize on the concept when she moves into science fiction. As she says, “Sci-fi also lends itself well to the Palestinian situation in terms of modes of temporality.”²² Sansour uses the creative temporal freedom of the science fiction genre to add more to the dialogue. A key example of her shift into science fiction is *In Vitro*.

In Vitro is a twenty-five-minute 2-channel Arabic-language sci-fi film filmed in black and white from 2019. It is one of the three aspects of Sansour’s exhibition titled “heirloom” at the 58th Venice Biennale for Denmark. The film was supported by the aforementioned Palestine Heirloom Seed Library. Sansour incorporates the message and mission of this organization into the film. In an underground orchard converted from an abandoned nuclear reactor in Bethlehem, decades after an otherworldly ecodisaster, two scientists, Dunia and Alia, discuss memory and the future. Using heirloom seeds collected before the apocalypse, Dunia and Alia are preparing to replant the soil above.

The split screen positions the viewer in two locations at once and



Figure 4. Larissa Sansour, *In Vitro*, 2019, video, 7:55.

occasionally in two times at once. There is no simple sequence of events. A scene of a young girl running her hand along a stone wall above ground with an olive orchard in the background is preceded by historical archive footage of Palestinian markets. Archival footage of a nun is followed by a nun wearing a gas mask. A Computer Generated Image (CGI) of DNA is set opposite a young girl in Fig. 4. While the film begins with a CGI representation of a devastating eco-disaster, the ensuing story shows the time before, during, and after the event. The mixture of mediums – from old film cameras, to modern video cameras, to cutting-edge computer generated imagery – allows, as scholar and critic AlAmmar puts it, for the “creation of spatial imaginaries that interrogate the notion of a ... temporal linear progression. It allows for the dramatization of the ephemeral homeland Palestinians have had to create in and from their memories.”²³

In the face of imposed geographical borders, legal restrictions on imports and exports, and plain violence, Sansour maneuvers around the imposed temporal linearity.

Sansour highlights how memory is used to solidify senses of identity that are crucial to the resistance of Israel’s colonization. This theme operates throughout *Soup Over Bethlehem* and *In Vitro*. *In Vitro* shows that “Nostalgic memories ... can sustain resistance.”²⁴ Alia “was raised on nostalgia. The past spoon-fed to me.”²⁵ The endurance of any group is only assured by shared memories, hence Dunia’s decision to implant Alia with memories.²⁶

Similarly to how *Soup Over Bethlehem* used the lemons and Mloukieh as metonymic fragments for their homeland and identity as

Palestinians, food from the Palestinian diasporic lexicon also appears in *In Vitro*. Olive and fig trees appear in the massive underground orchard that sustains Dunia and Alia, in many of the nostalgic memory scenes, and in the historic archival footage. The food and its sources are a constant throughout all the temporalities that Sansour constructs. Perhaps Sansour is indicating that Palestine’s resistance is due in part to their strong connection to their cultural foodways. Foodways are not just for survival – they also “[figure] prominently in any and all attempts to find or build a home.”²⁷

Essential to Dunia’s underground survival space were the heirloom seeds collected from above ground. Not only are they just seeds, but heirloom seeds that are connected to the history and memory of the Palestinian people. The particular use of heirloom seeds further echoes Sansour’s connection between food and memory: they contain a memory of their own and allow the cultivator direct access to the past through the foodways and land one’s ancestors used.

Figure six shows an olive tree burning, mirrored across the negative of the same shot. The land rises to meet



Figure 5. Larissa Sansour, *In Vitro*, 2019, video, 3:11.



Figure 6. Larissa Sansour, *In Vitro*, 2019, video, 20:41.

in the middle of the 2-channel composition. The connection between land and food is evident in this moment, but also at the picnic scene in the olive orchard (15:34), when the young girl is gifted seeds (13:18), and when she runs her hand along the wall at the olive orchard (19:25). All of these moments, including that of Fig. 6, establish the food connection in *In Vitro*. Setting aside the massive CGI underground orchard, all the scenes with a food connection served as memories or cultural memories (through archival footage). Alia tells Dunia “I dream of the olive

harvests” to which Dunia replies “Me too.”²⁸ After Alia calls this dream a memory, Dunia replies she is “no longer sure what they are.”²⁹ Dunia is referencing the fact that these memories of their culture – particularly its foodways, as shown – have gained such power and importance that they have surpassed what many consider memories. In this way, *In Vitro* depicts how powerful collective memories of foodways are. In particular for Palestine, because as Fig. 6 powerfully illustrates, Palestinian access to food is under constant threat from Israeli forceful expansion.

As Sansour shifted from documentary style to science fiction, the two-channel video and mixture of types of footage in *In Vitro* allowed her to transcend this temporal barrier when Palestine is confronted with many other barriers. While this temporal manipulation is a new development since *Soup Over Bethlehem*, Sansour carries through the themes of memory and the use of a Palestinian visual lexicon. The construction of the Palestinian identity depends on communal memory, as the character of Alia demonstrates. Sansour used the olive and fig trees to activate this collective Palestinian memory.

Foodways and memory can build upon each other to produce strong identity formations that function as stable foundations for resistance. Here this connection, evident in both *Soup Over Bethlehem* and *In Vitro* (among many other works), is strongly informed by Palestinian realities. Organizations on the ground in Palestine today and historically are using these same connections. They are writing

Palestinian recipe books to preserve and promote the recipes in the wider cultural memory and they are seeking local and historical seeds to promote local growing. Western postcolonial scholarship lacks the memory and food dimensions, perhaps because as Sansour shows in *Soup Over Bethlehem*, an ostensibly mundane family dinner becomes political in Palestine due to land dispossession and Israeli colonization. To Sansour, a discussion of Palestinian resistance requires both foodways and memory. Postcolonial scholarship, which seeks to resist hegemonic cultural forces in a similar way to Sansour, would benefit from the addition of food and memory studies into its conceptual framework.

Gurminder K. Bhambra, a postcolonial scholar, writes that “by bearing witness to different pasts one is not a passive observer but is able to turn from interrogating the past to initiating new dialogues about that past and thus bringing into being new histories and from those new histories, new presents and new futures.”³⁰ This is a fundamental aspect of postcolonial studies – to reframe the exclusionary histories and in the process create new ones. Introducing the dimension of foodways, as Sansour does, to this picture produces a strong parallel image. This creates not only intellectual memories but sensual ones. Foodways let one not only bear witness to the past, but to recover its seeds, cook its recipes, and eat its food.

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Alice Austen & The Pretzel Vendor

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Figure 1. Alice Austen, *Pretzel Vendor and Emigrant, South Ferry*, photographic print, 1896.

Prolific photographer Alice Austen produced thousands of photographs documenting a changing New York City from the second-floor closet darkroom of her home over the span of fifty years. Her work encapsulated the essence of New York's immigrant populations through street photography style, in which she strived to chronicle the unadulterated lives of those who moved to the unfamiliar and often unforgiving land of the United States. New York, an overpopulated and bustling city, was a particularly difficult area for unskilled immigrants to thrive in. The working class status of most immigrants, along with their ethnicity and gender, dictated the jobs they could acquire. Austen used her photographic skills to capture the gendered experiences of working immigrants through subject selection and photographic composition, and in her image *Pretzel Vendor and Emigrant, South Ferry* (1896), Austen further explores the unconventional role of unmarried immigrant women.

Between 1880 and 1920, over one million immigrants arrived and settled in New York City, a vast majority of whom were Jewish people from Eastern Europe.² Austen snapped this still in South Ferry, which is located in Manhattan on the Lower East Side, a neighborhood which was at that point "...the most thriving center of Jewish immigrant culture."³ Based on this knowledge and the title of the piece, it can be inferred that the two subjects are likely Jewish.

Immigrants were generally offered bad jobs that Americans did not want, which, in an industrial, developing city such as New York, commonly had to do with factories and construction.⁴ Factories offered wage positions operating machines to unskilled laborers for appallingly cheap pay since technology had replaced skilled workers. The male immigrant on the left of the photograph, presumably purchasing pretzels from the immigrant woman, exemplifies telltale signs of being a factory worker. His hands and face appear to be smudged with soot, dust, or dirt: all by-products of factory work and squalid working conditions. In line with the knowledge that factory laborers were paid dreadfully low salaries, his boots, coat, and hat look slightly soiled and worn, hinting that he cannot afford to purchase new apparel even after his current clothing was sullied by factory work. He also carries a tobacco pipe, which suggests that he could not afford to purchase cartons of cigarettes and instead had to invest in a contraption with which he could achieve multiple smokes.

What Austen makes glaringly apparent in *Pretzel Vendor*, however, is not just the heritage and occupation of the immigrants, but that women were not accounted for in the city workforce and instead had to rely on their own initiative for generating any sum of money. Wage work was not available for immigrant Jewish married women of the 1890s because rigid gender roles reinforced expectations that they remain in the home as wives and mothers.⁵ Their work—though it was not recognized as such—was that of arduously caring for the home, children, and blue-collar

husband when he returned from paid work. The 1905 census recorded that just 1 percent of immigrant Russian Jewish households in New York City had wives that worked outside of the home.⁶ Of those working, many of them were employed in family businesses in support of their husbands and families.⁷ The woman in *Pretzel Vendor*, however, is evidently working on the street as a self-employed vendor, selling pretzels, which indicates that she either never married or is widowed. Upon further speculation, the woman is wearing a headscarf, which, according to the conventions of Judaism, must be worn at all times after marriage, even if the woman is widowed. Ergo, it can be deduced that the woman is likely a widow.

Austen, a lesbian and early feminist, had the tendency to provocatively push conservative boundaries and empower women in her photographic work. Her work reflected a fluid concept of gender, which is ever-so-slightly apparent in *Pretzel Vendor's* subject matter. She photographed a woman who was attempting to be self-sufficient by taking on what was thought to have been the man's role of earning funds.⁸ While the woman is not cross-dressing and altering her appearance to present as a man, as Austen did for her own self-portrait with two of her female friends, *Julia Martin and Julia Bredt and myself dressed as men. Thursday October 15th, 1891*, she is still embracing a sense of masculinity that was taboo for essentially all women at the time.⁹ Moreover, it's likely that the reason the pretzel vendor isn't capitulating to the prevalent gender roles of the period is simply that she doesn't have enough income to do so.

Pretzel Vendor additionally creates a new sense of strength and respect around female immigrants because it is a piece of art depicting a woman that does not prioritize maternity or male-gaze-centered sexuality. During the 1890s, portrayals of women were routinely split between pure, virginal maidens and femme fatales.¹⁰ Women were valued for their ability to produce life, and most symbolism/imagery associated with them was in reference to fertility.¹¹ Art in avant-garde circles was male-dominated and gave little indication of the widespread changes occurring in the position and status of women, but Austen's did.¹²

Alice Austen did not depict the woman as a maternal figure, but rather as rough-hewn and older, living a solitary life in which she fends for herself. The pretzel vendor is sustaining her own life, not giving her body and lifeblood over to a child, motherhood, or fertility. Female immigrants may not have had a welcoming place in the labor market, but they were taking strides to create a workforce of their own, a concept made obvious through the woman's independent business. She is also heavily dressed, an aspect of the piece and the woman's experience that directly resists the imagery that is commonly associated with motherhood and fecundity. Austen rejects the notion of stagnant maternity and fertility, instead breaking free of the unchanging constructs of womanhood, constructs that denied women political rights or individuality while worshiping her generative powers.¹³

Another important aspect of the photograph is the relationship between the two immigrants. The female pretzel vendor is laughing, head thrown back, captured mid-sentence. The male immigrant is standing upright and staring in the vicinity of the camera lens, out towards the viewer, ignoring the pretzel vendor's remarks. This dynamic could be Austen trying to communicate a still prominent lack of equity and respect between men and women, even when they are both working-class. He seems to be rebuffing any advances towards friendship (or selling a product) that the woman is making and is instead more focused on possibly catching the attention of Austen herself. He has clearly noticed her and has more interest in the younger thirty-year-old Austen than the woman of his same age.

On the other hand, Alice Austen could have been taking these photographs with the same plain intent as journalist and photographer Jacob Riis: to shed light on the horrible and difficult life lived by immigrants in tenement New York.¹⁴ Her camera endeavored to capture the candid: *Pretzel Vendor* showcases the concrete, industrial buildings, and the slovenly sidewalk that these individuals were forced to work and walk upon every day. The pretzels that the immigrant woman is selling are exposed in woven baskets, vulnerable to the weather and pests. All she can manage to do is separate the pastries with thin sheets of newspaper, no pushcart or other protective equipment for the food in sight. The spiked gate, as well, is representative of the foreboding industrial area that they're in, almost as if they are trapped, unable to escape unless they are willing to risk injury. All of the buildings are sharp and plain, the ground unswept and filthy; no expenses were wasted on making their space a comfortable one.

Light hits the pretzel vendor's face and highlights her features: her downturned smile and squinted eyes give her a personality and humanity that many immigrants and laborers aren't usually afforded. Despite that, the immigrant man, presumably a factory worker, blends into his clothing. His eyes, which are often referred to as portals to the soul, are shrouded by the shadow cast by his hat's brim, and the grime on his face conflates him with the black of his coat. This could be symbolic of how different immigrant professions came with different perceptions of the worker: to be a vendor, one had to be more social, hence the attention to the face, but in the factories, men were separated from their peers and transformed into the faceless masses, hence the obstruction of his eyes. Austen dedicated her life to the investigation and documentation of gender and immigrant life. Through this particular image, it's evident she successfully shot impactful and thought-provoking photographs that provided insight into immigrant laborers' lives, as well as questioned the gender roles of female immigrants.

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see/saw



What Really Matters
Oil on Paper Grocery Bag, 17 x 24in

Tyler Ripel

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The DC Supermarket is the small business created by my grandparents in the 80s immediately upon immigrating to the United States from Korea. They have since retired and sold the store to new Korean owners that now struggle, being unable to compete with the gentrified neighborhood. This gentrification is represented in the grounds of the work, being a Whole Foods bag. The epitome of the store's struggle against the changing environment is this recently established Whole Foods that popped up only two blocks away.

This piece depicts the store's prime. The shelves are stocked and my grandparents contently pose in front. I wanted this piece to feel ephemeral. The viewer understands the decline in business that looms in the future of the happy pair's store, temporarily covered by the stocked shelves and lavish clothing. Even after experiencing the materialistic peak of the supermarket, they admirably aren't put down by its current materialistic descent. Through a more translucent approach to the clothing and products, I aim to portray the insignificance of the store's materialistic success in my grandparent's eyes and critique my own initial impression of the space that was through a purely consumeristic lens. What really matters isn't that the current business is failing, but rather that it is a tangible representation of my grandparent's perseverance.

The Potency of the Past:

Julie Gough and Dismantling
the Colonial Gaze

Hugh Magnus
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Julie Gough's pioneering video work *The Gathering* (2015) serves as an interrogation of colonial approaches to the invasion and settlement of lutruwita/Tasmania. Referencing the pastoral eye of early colonial Australian painters, the trawlwoolway artist critiques patterns of colonial control, especially as it was exerted over the island's original inhabitants, the palawa peoples.¹ This essay serves as an in-depth analysis of *The Gathering*, referencing other works by the artist to enhance evaluation of this specific work. I conduct this examination thematically, first discussing the various subjects of the video aspect of the work and how they contribute to the overarching theme of colonial Control. Following this, I approach the underlying theme of the colonial gaze present in the video, yet significantly more explicit in the broader installation. The video itself is 18 minutes long and intersperses footage of the Tasmanian landscape with historic texts pertaining to the Tasmanian War and the Black Line. This work covers the early 1830s, by which time many of the Indigenous people of lutruwita/Tasmania had been murdered in a brutal genocide. Whilst *The Gathering* is a complex installation, the themes present in the video inextricably inform the wider composition. Thus, discussion of the video's content in isolation must precede holistic consideration of the work. The video contains four recurring motifs, all interrelated: cleared land, fencing, naming and burning, which I discuss in the following paragraph.

The video's first five scenes depict cleared land, a theme that continues throughout the work. On arriving in Tasmania, colonists were surprised to discover seemingly natural and expansive parklands, akin to the carefully landscaped ones found in their native Britain.²



Figure 1. John Glover, *Montacute*, oil on canvas, 1838, Private Collection.

Noted colonial artist John Glover recorded in reference to Mills Plains in the island's north that "it is possible, almost every-where, to drive a carriage as easily as in a park in England."³ However, these landscapes were not natural, but rather the result of an extensive cultural practice of burning by the island's original inhabitants.⁴ Unsatisfied with the limits of these parklands, colonists began a wide-scale regime of land clearing, largely following the course of rivers into the state's interior. By the period interrogated by *The Gathering*, thousands of hectares of land had been granted to settlers and swiftly cleared of native bush.⁵ The art of colonial painters like Glover, seen in paintings like *Cawood* (1837) and *Montacute* (1839) (Fig. 1) enshrined the clearing of land as a celebration of the success of the colonial effort, 'taming' the unruly bush through removing both its Indigenous people and its native flora. In Gough's work *Hunting Ground (Pastoral) Van Diemen's Land* (2017), another video work, the artist references Glover's work explicitly, superimposing a colonial quote — "Seventeen miserable black natives shot in cold blood by settlers, River Clyde" — on Glover's painting of *Montacute* (Fig. 2).⁶

In *The Gathering*, Gough interrogates this celebration of colonial control through video depictions of the real landscape, depicting cleared land, piles of wood, and fire racing across fields as a dynamic and ongoing, rather than static process. Early on in the video, Gough interpolates a quote from a colonial *Times* article, a prominent newspaper of the 1820s and 30s in Tasmania. This article, entitled 'The Black Natives', urges landholders to cut down all trees and undergrowth, "so as to not leave any cover, under which the Natives could make their approach."⁷ Today, Western audiences take cleared land for granted.

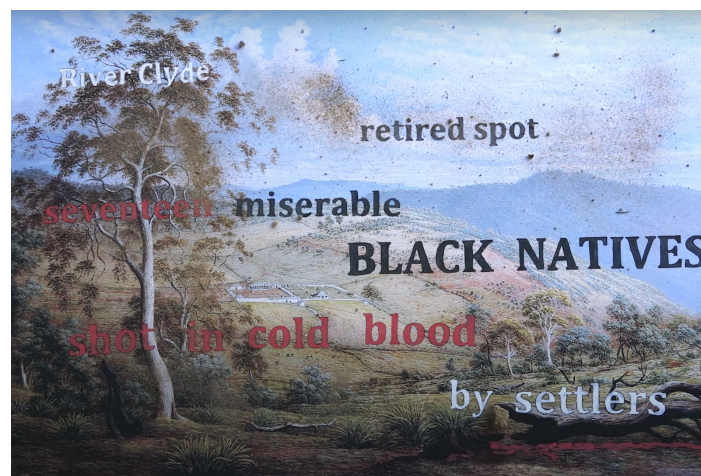


Figure 2. Julie Gough, *Hunting Ground (Pastoral) Van Diemen's Land*, still from color video projection, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

However this subtle claim of Gough's attacks that assumption at its core, revealing the true motivations for such wide-scale landscaping.

Cleared land is a motif repeated throughout the whole work, emphasized by scenes that depict denuded hills rolling off into the far distance. The scale of this effort is unfathomable, and the repeated scenes of bare Country reinforce the alienation of the land initiated by colonial settlers and practiced to this day. The interpolation of this quote contributes to the importance Gough places on truth-telling, and the use of archival materials to support the claim she makes through her depiction of the landscape. The landscape within *The Gathering* is familiar to Tasmanians but largely could be any of South-Eastern Australia. This universality manifests in a serious discomfort in the viewer, with the reminder that the crimes committed against Indigenous Australians occurred continent-wide.

The second theme present in *The Gathering*, fencing, works in close association with land clearing and is also supported by Gough's use of archival material. While historically, land clearing has not been a static process, the act of fencing has been even more enduring. The dual symbolic-physical fence holds two significant functions, both of which have been the same since Invasion.

The first of these is the act of physically barring Indigenous peoples from their Country, as explored by Gough in *The Gathering* and more explicitly in *Traveller* (2013), amongst many other works. As Waradgerie artist Lorraine Connely Northey describes the process of missionisation, "Wire was used to keep mum in, like sheep in a paddock, but also to keep her out of her traditional Country, to go and hunt and gather, and those kind of things."⁸ Much of the traditional Country of different palawa people around Tasmania remains fenced off and has in many places been out of reach for more than two hundred years. This land was granted for free to British settlers, and in some cases, remains with their direct descendants.⁹ Indigenous writer

Tristan Harwood describes fencing as "the de facto frame within which the settler colonial occupation of Indigenous land has been etched into being... claiming proprietary ownership over something that can never be owned."¹⁰ Eager to protect their grants, colonists embarked on large-scale fencing efforts, keeping sheep in and Indigenous people out.¹¹ In *The Gathering*, Gough quotes William Clark, a colonist who owned Cluny Farm in Bothwell as reporting on the efficacy of different types of palisades and fences, writing "I have known this fence useful in other

countries, for we are not the only people, that meet with annoyance from Aborigines."¹² Barbed wire is the most common type of fencing present in *The Gathering* (as in Fig. 3), but the video also contains the white pickets and sandstone walls more associated with the home grounds of a colonial country estate. Gough depicts fences snaking across the land, playing and replaying the roles of Invasion, carving Country up into colonial constructs.

The second, symbolic meaning of Gough's preoccupation with fencing relates more to that kept inside: the concealment of colonial narratives within. A significant motif in *The Gathering* is repeated views of colonial driveways, framed by hedges, avenues, and fences. At the end of these drives are the epicenters of colonial power, still standing two hundred years after Invasion. Gough has an interest in the histories and stories held within the places she depicts; describing *The Gathering*, she says of the properties enclosed by fences that "they've enclosed something that they're keeping hidden. There's a story in there and some of those families

know that there is and some know the details of what happened."¹³ Many stories of the frontier violence and genocide that occurred in Tasmania are not represented in the Archive, existing rather as oral histories held within the sanctum of the Estate. This is what the artist interrogates through the depiction of locations in *The Gathering*; by surveilling the sites of the crimes, Gough brings attention to what has been concealed.



Figure 3. Julie Gough, *The Gathering*, 2015, still from Multi-media installation, courtesy of the artist.

Figure 4. Julie Gough, *The Gathering*, 2015, still from Multi-media installation, courtesy of the artist.



POTENCY OF THE PAST/MAGNUS

The third theme present within *The Gathering* is the power of names, and the imposition of alien nomenclature on Country. A clear motif repeated in *The Gathering* is views of colonial driveways, almost always with the name of the property engraved at the drive's head (Fig. 4). Gough comments that "Tasmania has the same county names as England — those military leaders were in charge of that."¹⁴ Not only did colonists lay claim to the Country of her ancestors by dividing it up in arbitrary physical ways, they also did this symbolically, using the framework and vocabulary of their homeland to do so. This imposition is maintained and revealed by Gough through the depiction of these colonial names, many reflecting places or names from England, Ireland, or Scotland. These repeat like a mantra of Anglo-Celtic domination; Douglas Park, Nugent Farm, Huntworth, Weedington, Iveridge, Mount Morrison, Richmond Hill, Brickendon, Kenilworth, Westfield, Leighlands, Winton, Quamby, East Cluny, Baskerville Hill, Killymoon, Valleyfield, Beams Hollow, North Down. Later on in the video, when Gough displays the names of all the colonists who signed letters to the Governor, they come from the districts of Cornwall, Campbell Town, New Norfolk, Great Swan Port, and Richmond, further written symbols of colonial power, and names of towns in Tasmania that persist to this day.

Gough is concerned with the colonial power of language, with *The Gathering* focusing on its impact on the land. Other works by the artist have more of a focus on the linguistic effects of Colonisation. In *Observance*, another video work, Gough shows shots of the landscape of tebrikunna, as well as shots of the artist spying on ecotourists walking through her Country.¹⁵ These tourists act as a ceaseless flow of intrusion on Country, disrupting Gough. Superimposed on the views of ecotourists and the landscape of tebrikunna are words introduced into the various palawa languages for colonial innovations. For example, panebothi/flour, kannowner/free white man, and warkener/musket. All

of the words in *Observance* and their meanings had a role to play in the oppression and subjugation of Tasmania's Indigenous peoples. Unlike in *Observance*, Gough does not suggest dual names for the colonial Estates she depicts within *The Gathering*, reinforcing the totality of colonial control.

The fourth and final theme present in the video aspect of *The Gathering* is the repeated pyres of burning or unburnt wood (Fig. 5), colloquially referred to in Tasmania as 'burnoff piles'. These piles of wood are perhaps the most common motif repeated in *The Gathering* and serve

a dual purpose. The first references the land clearing, but the second, reflected in several of the historical quotes included in *The Gathering*, refers to the 'Black Line', an island-wide effort in October 1830 to physically 'round up' the remaining people of the Big River, Oyster Bay, and Ben Lomond nations and funnel them to the Tasman Peninsula in the island's South.¹⁶ While this effort was a failure, and only apprehended two indigenous people, the scale of effort demonstrated the measures Colonists would take to rid the land of its original inhabitants.¹⁷ As one of the quotes in *The Gathering* describes, large fires were to be kept burning on all of the hills so as to organize and regiment the lines of soldiers and volunteers.¹⁸ Gough mimics this through her depiction of these piles, interrogating both the historic and contemporary attitudes and motivations behind their prevalence.

Having examined the video work in depth, I will focus on the installation and its purpose as a whole. The colonial gaze, and colonial voyeurism more specifically, is central to *The Gathering*. The artwork is a complex installation, comprising a video projected in a reconstructed colonial Tasmanian dining room. On the dining table (Fig. 7), which sits directly in front of the screen, a grid of 28 wooden crosses is placed, each of which is engraved with the name of a colonial Tasmanian property and topped with a stone from the respective area. Viewers are invited to observe the work seated on a colonial dining chair



Figure 5. Julie Gough, *Observance*, 2012, still from video projection, courtesy of the artist.

Figure 6. Julie Gough, *The Gathering*, 2015, still from multi-media installation, courtesy of the artist.





Figure 7. Julie Gough, *The Gathering* (installation view), 2015, Multi-media installation, courtesy of the Artist and Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

atop a custom carpet printed with a wallpaper pattern from Woolmers Estate, one of the key centers of colonial power in Northern Tasmania. Gough describes the setting of the work as referencing an archetypal room of colonial control, with viewers looking out through the window of the screen to the landscape.¹⁹ This definition of space is brutally ironic: the colonists, whom the viewers take the role of, voyeuristically witness the eradication of Tasmania's people and the destruction of their environment while remaining safe inside their dining room.

Assembling the full installation in this way, rather than presenting the video aspect alone, establishes the viewers in a position of colonial power as if they themselves had ordered the actions depicted and described in the video work. The artist posits *The Gathering* as a symbolic gathering of colonial pastoralists; framing the viewer as the perpetrator of the crime. Gough crafts further layers of meaning through her observation that many Tasmanians are the descendants (in some part) of the colonial men whose names are displayed in the petitions shown in *The Gathering*. "Those surnames now are most of Tasmania," according to Gough.²⁰ This is a point observed by the artist in the 2012 display of her work 'Driving Black Home II' at Clarendon House in Evandale, Tasmania. Gough observed that visitors to the exhibition sat and watched the film for hours, solely to find their ancestor's name in the roll-call of Colonists responsible for the genocide against the palawa.²¹ Gough's

work *Observance* acts as a provocative foil to the discomfort caused by *The Gathering*. In this work, Gough surveils colonial intruders on her Country in the form of bushwalking ecotourists. The ceaseless stream of walkers in the video, unwittingly recorded by a concealed Gough, places the viewer in the opposite, and yet equally uncomfortable position. Unlike the safety and comfort of *The Gathering's* dining room, viewers become the observed in a (foreign) landscape free from fences and livestock.

The Gathering is a complex installation, acting as an exercise in truth-telling through an examination of the landscape. Through her video lens, Gough

depicts scenes from the Tasmanian landscape, all relating to the exertion of colonial control over the island's Indigenous inhabitants, manifesting as dispossession and genocide. Gough depicts the act of arbitrarily carving up Country, through the use of fences and alien names. The contemporaneousness of the video medium highlights the ongoing, dynamic nature of colonial oppression. Through the interpolation of historic quotes, Gough reminds the viewer of concealed histories and brings attention to further concealed stories held within the colonial estates that remain centers of power in Tasmania. The work's medium enables an immersive and uncomfortable experience for many viewers, reminded of the crimes of their colonial ancestors. The genesis of the work's setting — the colonial dining room — approaches that archetype of power by playing and replaying it to the point of satire. Through appropriating this historico-cultural material, Gough critiques colonial patterns of control in lutruwita/Tasmania, both acting as a historical detective but also making potent claims about Tasmania today.

Endnotes

1. Note on Capitalization: words in palawa kani, the reconstructed language of the pakana/palawa, Tasmania's Indigenous people, are conventionally not capitalized. Words are also conventionally not italicized, as italicisation is seen as an othering act. Therefore words like palawa, and place names like lutruwita and tebrikunna are not capitalized or italicized in this essay. As I have used the word Invasion specifically to refer to the invasion of Tasmania, that word is capitalized. Likewise with the word Country: this refers not to a nation-state but rather Australian Indigenous people's deeply symbolic and spiritual connection to specific land.
2. Michelle Heatherington and Seona Doherty, *The World Upside Down: Australia 1788-1830* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2000).
3. John Glover, a catalogue of sixty eight pictures descriptive of the scenery and customs of the inhabitants of van diemen's land together with views in england and italy &c, painted by John Glover esq. (London, 1835).
4. Rebecca Bliege Bird et al., "The 'Fire Stick Farming' Hypothesis: Australian Aboriginal Foraging Strategies, Biodiversity, And Anthropogenic Fire Mosaics," *Proceedings Of The National Academy Of Sciences* 105, no. 39 (2008): 14796.
5. Alistair Davidson and Andrew Wells, "Carving up the Country," *A Most Valuable Acquisition*, ed. Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988), 42–56.
6. Julie Gough, *Hunting Ground (Pastoral) Van Diemen's Land*, silent color video projection, 2017.
7. Julie Gough, *The Gathering*, 2015, multi-media installation, video, 2015., 1.20
8. Myles Russell-Cook, "Wurrdha Marra," National Gallery of Victoria, 2023, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/wurrdha-marra/>.
9. Henry Reynolds, *A History of Tasmania* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).
10. Tristen Harwood, "Along the Road, Sadlands," *Meanjin* 82, no. 3 (2023), 46–51.
11. Reynolds, *History of Tasmania*.
12. Gough, *The Gathering*, 6.00.
13. Gough, *Gathering Evidence*.
14. Ibid.
15. Tebrikunna is the trawlwoolway name for far north-eastern corner of Tasmania, around Musselroe Bay and Cape Portland
16. Reynolds, *History of Tasmania*.
17. Ibid.
18. Gough, *The Gathering*, 8.00.
19. Gough, *Gathering Evidence*.
20. Ibid.
21. Dee Jefferson, "Dark Chapters of Tasmania's Colonisation Are Brought to Light in Artist's Exhibition," *ABC*, October 23, 2019.

