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Transfer & ReAssembled

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

In Art

by

Eugenia Barbuc

Thesis Committee:

Professor Antoinette LaFarge Chair

Professor Simon Leung

Professor Daniel Martinez

Professor Jennifer Bornstein

2021



## DEDICATION

To

Andrea, Natalie, Rachel, Jules, James, Eylese, Miranda and Josh. I am honored that I can call you friends and co-conspirators. This work would not have been possible without you. You made this year such a warm memory, despite global catastrophes.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1	8
CHAPTER 2	31
CHAPTER 3	39
CONCLUSION	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY	47

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Transfer & ReAssembled

by

Eugenia Barbuc

Master of Fine Arts in Art

University of California, Irvine, 2021

Professor Antoinette LaFarge, Chair

Transfer & ReAssembled describes the collective work of a group of artists, Andrea Hidalgo, Natalie Delgadillo, Rachel Finkelstein, Jules Marasa, James Basilio, Eylese Davis, Miranda Maynard, Eugenia Barbuc and Josh Burwell, interested in exploring collectivity and haptic exchanges in virtual space. Barbuc presents transcripts from zoom meetings, describes the work alongside queer theory of coalition and utopia and situates the collaborative project alongside Fred Moten's essay *Collective Head*. Thinking with Moten's description of the commune as ephemeral, this thesis attempts to embody the affective exchanges between group members, art objects and sibling relationships that inspire ways of assembling to create collective bodies with which to share resources, thoughts and work.

## INTRODUCTION

Collectivity has had traction in our modern and contemporary art world for quite some time from the collaborative nature of Fluxus to the direct action of Act Up. Working collectively, however, is by and large difficult, slow and requires a methodology that both shifts with groups needs and creates enough structure to feel supporting. The appeal of working with a group is that it challenges western notions of centering individualism, artistic genius and authorship. It is a practice in losing oneself, an opportunity to allow others to enter in and co-create. The borders around what one makes is no longer as visible, genius is not the point of the work so much as relationality. What I am interested in exploring when thinking alongside a group is not to idealize the negotiation process of working collaboratively, nor is it to completely obliterate the self in service of the group. I am interested in contextualizing the specificities of the group project I was a part of. Working alongside queer theory, touch, our current historical moment, and a longer arc of history of the commune, our impetus was to investigate haptics in a moment of isolation. The immediate loss of a life world of embodied interactions became mediated by a screen in the first year of Covid. Virtuality became a space to explore affective relationships and we looked for possible alternatives to the authoritative nature of visibility. Haptics and touch were a way to embody a kind of knowing that decenters western rationality. Through the work of Audre Lorde and the erotic, Jose Munoz and queer utopia, Cathy Cohen and coalitions and finally Fred Moten and the (under)commune I weave through the shared possibilities that our group aimed at envisioning.

Our collective work was very much a reaction to our historical moment of Covid and quarantine, however it is not defined solely by this moment. Though my thought was to find



ways to be in touch with others while in isolation, it takes the critique of western modes of knowledge and visibility as a primary impetus in thinking about what it might mean to make haptic art objects. Though our work was very much mediated by a camera, screen and our individual abilities to log onto the internet, my hope was to explore ways for us to think about affective exchanges through virtual space. Touch served as a vehicle to think about our bodies capacity for embodied exchanges. In Karen Barad's lecture "On Touching: The Alterity Within" Barad muses on the possibility of touch through the interactions of particles, touch at the subatomic level. Barad describes the quantum characteristics of electrons that circle around every atom, in their "queer" touches, in other words an electron's ability to touch itself (creating by products that travel backwards in time), but its inability to truly touch another electron. What appears to be touch is really the force generated from the repulsion of electrons from each other, the pressure we think of as touch is an image of touch. There is always distance between bodies even between the body and itself (Barad, 2018). How might we think of that distance in this socio-historical moment? I think of logging onto zoom, the electricity of an electron and the pulse of a signal, wires crossed, misfiring, connecting, uploading, a server bouncing a signal to another server, wifi faltering, signals dropped and reconnected. To think of the distance between two bodies touching and its image counterparts is to think with the ungraspable, a slippery in-betweenness of affect and feeling.

This project started with an invitation to a group of neurodivergent and neurotypical people, disabled and non-disabled group of mixed race people, a group of intergenerational people, a group of people who I can't define in a sentence. The prompt was to make objects that we could trade with each other. Some of us would add robotic and sensor elements to the objects

made so that the objects could sense our bodies and we could sense the objects. When asking people to participate in this project, I thought about Cathy Cohen's text, "Punks Bulldaggers and Welfare Queens." I thought about the ways in which she imagines a new queer politics "where one's relation to power, and not some homogenized identity, is privileged in determining one's political comrades" (1997, 438). It gave shape and pushed the boundaries of what I had previously defined as queer. Our work was not to dismantle political power relations or in coalition building per-se, which Cohen speaks to in her essay. However it is Cohen's stretching of queerness to encompass the destabilization of identity not just through various sexual preferences and encounters, but the destabilization of self that occurs with building coalition across various identities striving to dismantle power(1997), that captured my attention. I wanted to strategically bring together a group of people who challenge upper middle class whiteness, ableism, heteronormativity and gender, in hopes of imagining different possibilities for how to make art and tech for and with one another.

Touch and making object surrogates to be in touch with, quickly transformed into holding space for each other in our weekly zoom meetings. We made weekly drawings using the whiteboard function, we showed our drawings, animations and films to each other, we taught each other simple Arduino code, visual coding programs and wiring Arduino boards. We talked about experimental and Disney films. My experience of our meetings was a space to sit with what Audre Lorde calls the erotic. I want to be clear that I am by no means interested in the essentialism or anti-porn rhetoric from which Lorde theorizes the erotic, so much as thinking with forms of embodied knowledge that sit in opposition to western forms of rationality. In "Uses of the Erotic" Lorde calls to divest from capitalism's measure of productivity as a measure

of a good life, instead the erotic demands us to instead uplift our capacity to feel deeply (1984). It is a call for joy as resistance and what strikes me about “Uses of the Erotic,” is that Lorde calls for it in the anti-hierarchical, anti-competitive being with, as well as “... the open and fearless underlining of my capacity for joy. In the way my body stretches to music and opens into response, hearkening to its deepest rhythms, so every level upon which I sense also opens to the erotically satisfying experience, whether it is dancing, building a bookcase, writing a poem, examining an idea...”(1984, 51-52). For our group this need to feel deeply with others was not always joy, but it opened into moments of frustration, disagreements, misunderstandings, which for me became a litmus test for whether or not we were truly working alongside each other. Meeting on internet platforms creates an atmosphere awkward silences which feels heavier in that there is no way to assess how long or how weighted it might be. The silence in a Zoom room has no diegetic sound to draw from, it is more like an absence of sound. In other words, a long pause on Zoom feels like an eternity. However, I don’t believe the beauty and warmth would have been as poignant without the moments of frustration, awkwardness or difficulties. I would expand Lorde’s exploration of the erotic to also encompass moments of pain, mourning, frustration, arguing and misunderstanding as a legitimate form of feeling deeply together.

Holding space for ways of relating to others through discomfort, misfirings or misaligning takes from Jose Munoz’s *Cruising Utopia*. He theorizes the anti-antirelational through Eileen Myles encounter with and care taking of James Schuyler, of which Myles writes about in *Chelsea Girls*. Myles experiences discomfort and “feeling like a jerk” when Schuyler loses his attention as she tries to entertain him. Myles describes the “crinkly air,” the silence between them, but finds the beauty in being with Schuyler and the ways in which difficult

moments become like music that he is orchestrating (2019, 13-14). Munoz' notes the intergenerational, mixed class exchange between the two as having the capacity for a profound experience in which, "there is both a becoming animal and child that Myles ultimately glimpses in an infirmed Schuyler" (2019, 15). For our group it was not simply positivity nor a negation of relationality, but about a totality of experience that held many different kinds of feeling together. For the majority of our meetings, this was the work we engaged in, a kind of anti-aesthetic art making in which the relationships we built was the work. The simple act of coming together on zoom, to draw, talk, share was a kind of ephemeral performance.

The goal of our collaborative work shifted from making objects together and trading them, to working on drawings. I took our drawings and created objects for us to exist as bodies in the gallery space. We drew based on prompts that members from the group would ask of us. I used these drawings to lay over video footage of communal, albeit white settler, land usage in Taos, New Mexico and Slab City California. We chose clips of the film together and when I shared early versions of the film, our group drew on the film stills. The editing of the film was structured to the cadence of one of our group members, Natalie Delgadillo, counting each still from her animation of a mermaid tail sign that would greet visitors to her invented digital city, "Natterville." Although our group did not make objects together, I served as the maker for the group, turning drawings into objects, specifically pots. I took the pots and added Arduino controlled motor and piezo disks, so when the motor spun, the attached piezo disk would amplify the sound of the disk dragging on itself. The color of the pots were variations of the mermaid tail animation, the cadence of the motors was timed to the editing of the film.

The self touching pots hold space in the gallery in a way that the film and projected pieces do not. They react to the ending of the film in which they begin turning and amplifying the tracing of their contours. The pots, however are turned so that they are facing each other, not specifically performing for the viewer. They move quietly and sporadically. They are choreographed to be in conversation with other projections in the gallery space, creating a moment in which the viewer has to turn away from the sculptures to take in the projections and vice versa. The viewer is unable to take all of it in at once, it is meant to exist as fractured or never completely seen.

In Fred Moten's text, "Collective Head," he opens with a passage from Marx' Grundrisse, plops us right into the action. In the passage selected, there is a distinction made between a group of individuals who are a united group of owners of land and those who come together and in their action of assembling we find the commune of people (2017). Much like Natalie, our group member, I was simultaneously exploring what a commune might look like in practice (our collective) and in location (Taos, Slab City). Out of some kind of kismet, I found Moten's text which I used as a guide to think about what a commune might look like, how we envision modern architecture, the city as well as the work of Lygia Clark who is interested in collective bodies activating an anti-architectural sculpture called, *Cabeça Colectiva* (2017). Moten deftly points to Marx' description of the commune as a set of relations and only in the act of convening does the commune's ephemeral body form. It is this kind of relationality that is made up of affective exchanges between individuals that form a way of being in the world that is not like a representative form of group unity, but one that only exists in the act of coming together, assembling and in sharing of resources. In addition, wealth is not about production that would

then lead to wealth, as in a beougius state, but is about private consumption. Material products are outside of the individual and the individual does not have a standard of production, or is in unity with a group aiming for certain level of development, but only has oneself to imagine what their production could be (2017, 184-186). It is in the imagining of what came before the city that Moten finds moments of alternative modes of being that speak to Munoz' utopian project in that it functions as a critique of our present. Moreover the distinction between a group of people that exist within the defined unity of ownership is not a commune, that is an already structured group with clear limits and boundaries of who is and is not in the governing body of which we call "unity," is more in line with what makes up governing bodies like nation-states. Instead Moten emphasizes what Walter Mignolo might describe as a kind of individual in brackets (2020), or a person who cannot speak for another, or know beyond themselves, coming together to and with other individuals in brackets, and in that momentary space we have an assembly with whom to create the common.

The ephemerality of our coming together as the space of assembly was the work. The objects created are displayed in the gallery in way that speaks to a kind of ephemerality of coming together, in that the videos, projections and objects converse with each other at various moments and with exchanging partners to make various meanings. For example, the sculptures relate to the group video in one way, but then pivot to converse with an installation of projections in another. The sound emanating from pots are an extension of their presence, offering an audible tactility that punctuates the envelopment of projected images. The images themselves engulf the viewer in ways that offer a kind of bodily sensation that the texture and color of film and video projected onto scrims can evoke.

## Chapter 1

Transcript from Zoom meeting 4/21/2021

The following transcript is a result of a recorded Zoom meeting with Eugenia Barbus, Natalie Delgadillo, Andrea Hidalgo, Miranda Maynard, Jules Marasa, James Basilio and Josh Burwell.

Eugenia: Okay. How has your, how was your week? Last week?

Natalie: My week, last week is good.

Eugenia: Did you get the eyeballs?

Natalie: Yes.

Eugenia: Good, glad to hear it. How's your, uh, how's Kujo coming along.

Natalie: It was good, but not finished.

Eugenia: Not finished. Okay. Are you almost done?

Natalie: Almost done probably, but not without a tail or color.

Eugenia: Oh, shoot.

Natalie: But, I got the color and the tail inside the bag.

Eugenia: Oh, okay. Good. All right. That's great to hear. Oh, that's so exciting. I can't wait to see it.

Natalie: Yeah. Only when it's finished.

Eugenia: My hair is a little funky today. I was hoping to wear a hat, but I couldn't find one that's okay. That's the look for today. How has, uh, what does everybody else been up to that you've been talking to at ECF?

Natalie: Uh, we've been talking about Spring-o-ween, like two o'clock, you know?

Eugenia: What's, what's that? What's spring, it's like Halloween in the spring?

Natalie: Yes. Halloween and spring, like werewolves and pumpkin, something like that or bunnies.

Eugenia: I love it. I think that's a great idea. Are you guys going to do it at the park? Are you going to do it at the center when you guys get back to the art center?

Natalie: I don't think I should come back to the center. I prefer zooming.

Eugenia: Oh, you do? So forever and ever you're going to forever zoom.

Natalie: Yeah.

Eugenia: Natalie, that's a, that's a big decision. Um, you know, glad that you're thinking about it, um, you're thinking about what works for you and what's right for you. Yeah. So you don't like being in this space in the art center?

Natalie: Right.

Eugenia: Wow. That's interesting. I wonder how that's going to go. I'm sure they're going to have hybrid options for people. That's so cool. Well, I'm glad you found your niche and you felt the thing that you really like, you, you like talking on the computer more than you like talking to people in person?

Natalie: I talk to on a computer.

Eugenia: Yeah. You liked that better.

Natalie: Yeah.

Eugenia: Wow, Natalie, that's really fascinating. That's interesting. Wow. I'm the opposite. I'm definitely like, I really, it's been really difficult being by myself and talking to people on the



computer, it has its privileges and its perks for sure that I like in that, like, we can talk to a lot of different kinds of people all over the world, which is cool. But you know, sometimes I like being around people that feels kind of good. Feel the vibe as the young ones say today. We're gonna, we're gonna work on some drawings, some group drawings. Uh, and we share some of our work. I know that you only want to share your work when it's finished, but maybe you can tell us a little bit about your project so far. What do you think?

Natalie: It'll be nice. And I drew aerial with tomatoes and olives and stars and hearts.

Eugenia: Why does she have olives and tomatoes?

Natalie: Because she has to make salads.

Eugenia: For, for who?

Natalie: For her sisters to make them feel healthy, that they didn't try.

Eugenia: Wow. That makes sense. You know, I've been trying to make, I made a salad myself yesterday and I felt better. That's great. I'm glad she's so thoughtful. She's so, you know, she's thinking about her sisters. Who are her sisters?

Natalie: Like Aquota, Andrena, Arista, Atina, Adela and Alonda

Eugenia: Hey, she's got a lot of sisters, 1, 2, 5 sisters?

Natalie: 6.

Eugenia: 6, oh, missed one. That's really nice of her. She went and made dinner for them. Are they also all mermaids?

Natalie: Uh, and Ariel, sometimes a mermaid and sometimes a human with prince Eric.

Eugenia: Right, right, right. She transitioned, she goes, she gets, she gets out of the water, but she goes back sometimes too. If she goes back in the water.

Natalie: Yeah. Just to see her, her dad, to talk to him and then she goes back home.

Eugenia: Got it, got it. That makes a lot of sense. Yeah. She had her home is on the land. It's not an ocean.

Natalie: Right.

Eugenia: I didn't realize that, but that makes sense. She, little Eric does. How, how are things with Eric? I mean, have you drawn any pictures of Eric?

Natalie: Eric the gentle creature? Oh yeah. He's doing good. Figuring things out. Without getting them hostile. Like, like they go, oh, I am so sorry.

Eugenia: Oh, I see. I see. He's very gentle. I see. He like, keeps the calm. That makes a lot of sense.

Natalie: Yep. And when, when something messes up on a floor and their palace, they were like, oh, it's okay. We'll, we'll clean it together.

Eugenia: Hmm. Hmm. That's really thoughtful. So he's not like reprimanding anybody that spills stuff.

Natalie: Yes.

Eugenia: He's like, I'll help you clean it.

Natalie: Yep.

Eugenia: That's cool. Sounds like a nice dude. He sounds very gentle, gentle Eric, as you called

him, gentle creature. Love. I love it, well, let's see who pops up today. Well, we'll do another group drawing. Oh, I wanted to ask you, Natalie, how do you draw on the computer? Do you draw it with a mouse, with a little mouse that you hold?

Natalie: Just a mouse on the laptop? On the laptop.

Eugenia: Okay. So it's like the little pad that you have on top of your laptop, right?

Natalie: Yeah.

Eugenia: A pad. It looks like flat like this and you have to press it. Like this was your finger

Natalie: With the finger. It's like this. Yeah. Yes. Yeah.

Eugenia: Got it. Yeah. Okay, cool. Got it. Okay. So I'm hoping to do some drawings. Uh, I wanna try to do some experiments cause you know, what's really interesting about it. Well, I guess I'll talk to everybody when they comes in, but I was really thinking about, you know, how we have to like, literally we're touching. Yeah, look at their finger and we're like away from everybody. So we can't really touch each other, but we're touching this device to like draw on a screen or something, but maybe there's a way in which we can like try to like, try with each other by really thinking about that touch and choreographing that touch in some ways. But I'll talk to the group about it and we'll try to figure it out together. Um, something a little bit embodied. Maybe it could be, could be, could be fun. Oh, let me figure out. Hey cool background. Oh, shoot.

Andrea: It's a, Hey Natalie.

Natalie: Never been better. You see the sketches of Kenai from brother bear and that in a mermaid tail for my homework.

Miranda : I did those look awesome.

Natalie: Uh, how come you didn't didn't accidentally call.

Miranda : Oh my gosh. You're right. I, I didn't. I'm so sorry. It's been a crazy day. Little Nat. Um, how about I call you tomorrow?

Natalie: Friday or

Miranda : Friday. Okay. That's perfect.

Natalie: And is there. Is there any Tarot cards for today or tomorrow?

Miranda : Yeah, I was just going to ask you about that. I have to do a tech drop-off. Um, but why don't I email you about it? Cause I don't want to, um, take over Eugenia's meeting. Yeah.

Eugenia: How's everyone doing?.

Andrea: I feel I've been a little MIA for a couple of weeks with this group because of being, uh, super busy at work, but I'm good. I'll turn off my camera.

Eugenia: Oh, cool. I sorry, my Internet's like really kind of messed up right now. So I'm going to turn off my camera for a second.

Andrea: Oh, I think you're frozen.

Eugenia: I know, I know. I got super frozen. Oh no, hold on. I'm going to make someone to co host real quick and see if I can shift over participants. All right. I'm going to make you call us Andrea, and then let's see their work. Oh my goodness. Okay, cool. Okay. I'm going to just jump off and try to, or at least shift over internets and see what happens. Sorry. Oh, wow.

That's interesting.

Jules: Hello?

Andrea: I can hear you.

Jules: Yeah. There's someone asked me about some papers?

Andrea: Yeah. I was just wondering, um, Eugenia dropped off the paper for the project. But am is the large paper, is it intended to be used double-sided or one-sided? Is it supposed to be folded or, um, do you have any direction for that?

Jules: Uh I do not whatever you'd like it's okay. Yes. Go forth.

Eugenia: I have reemerged. Okay. The internet is fine. Um, thank you. Oh, you were saying, uh, ceramics. I've got your, you're doing the second part of your Arduino too, so I can drop it off.

Um, we can do a switch.

Jules: Cool.

Andrea: Whenever you're ready.

Eugenia: Cool. Um, Yeah. I wanted to check in with everybody and see how everyone is doing and hopefully hoping to like redirect the conversation a little bit back into to thinking through touch. Um, and yeah, maybe we can kind of go around and sort of talk about, um, what, what is touching us at the moment, um, or how we're thinking about touches. Like we're reemerging in the world for some of us. So, uh, yeah, I don't know. I think, um, I don't know. I I'd like to start there, but I'm super open to, to folks taking in whatever direction they want to. But, um, if that sounds good, I can, I can, I can definitely start. Um, well, yeah. So how was I? I was thinking a little about touch. Uh, I went to, well, I went on a trip last week, um,

and like saw people in the world. Generally. We were like, away from people, but, um, one was really striking is like, I like hugged a person. Who I like, I don't touch people. Like I hugged this person. I barely knew. And I was like, oh my God, what is this weird experience? It's very weird. It's very strange with like very intense. Um, it was like a very quick like side hug. And I was just like, wow, I haven't done this in a year. This is just like extreme. It felt extreme. Um, but in like, like on another level, I've been really thinking a lot about like utopian societies and their pitfalls and a lot of these like really things that sort of come with some of the things that I went and saw I was in Taos and was like, you know, in earth ships, but also thinking about like new Buffalo commune and like the, you know, the, these desires to like want to like live on the outskirts of a city. Um, and thinking through building and making things together or thinking about collaboration and ways in which it didn't quite work, you know, obviously. Taking over indigenous communities, ideologies and being white bros. Like these kinds of it's like, it's a very specific kind of space, but there's something kind of touching about hope or at least hoping and like entering into the world and like having held on to a hope of like, oh, we're going to meet, we're going to eventually come out of this. Um, granted, people are very much still in it. Um, but yeah, I was really moved by this earth ship that I was in. And like, you know, it's just like weird space where there's like green greenery and like bananas growing inside this like weird structure that's built into the earth. I don't know. There's something really amazing about it. Um, and that it's like very much off the grid and self-sustaining, but, um, that, and like hugging someone for the first time. Uh, but I don't know if it wants to, to, to jump in or talk or if, if folks

want to, yeah—

Jules: I had, yeah, I met a stranger recently. It was really overwhelming. I've been alone this whole year. So it was really strange, um, really different. And I felt like I'm not the same person I was before this started. And I've been afraid of becoming the same person that I was when it started, because everything, the structures will be similar. So I'll return the idea of returning to society, whether that's true, however, true. Whatever we want to think about that we can think about that, but I'm going to have to do that and I'm going to have to see if I can be the person that alone, during the pandemic, I think I am, or if I'm going to become the person that I was. And so for me, it's kind of scary to have to go back into a, uh, environment. That's more out of my control physically, too. It's kind of scary. That's where I'm at. I'm just being honest, you know?

Yeah, yeah, yeah—

Eugenia: Yeah. I totally hear you about like, feeling like a different person and like there's like a slowness to this experience that I don't want to let go of or at least rededicating time to myself that I never did before, that I feel like, at least on my end, I'm like, oh my God, I don't want to let go of that. But reentering into a world of like what being out of, like, out of our own control, like that's intense, like a physical environment, literally that isn't ours. Uh, yeah, I hear ya.

Jules: Yeah. Yeah. 24 little hours.

Eugenia: Oh my God. I was, I watched this crazy documentary about time and how time slows down if you're close to like really large objects or like the earth. So we were like in the earth ship or whatever, the part that's like built into the earth. We like stood

next to it. We're like, is time slower here or near the door? But it was just kind of the same yeah.

Yes. 24 little hours. Yeah. What was it like seeing the stranger person?

Jules: It was interesting because it was, again, I've been, so I've been unemployed and alone. I'm not emotionally alone, but physically. Um, and so being around strangers and interacting in a social environment was very, it was like a roller coaster of, of, uh, like biological response, like excitement over conversation, humor and all these unexpected things that otherwise have, you know, I've been in like a cloistered like, nun, you know, silent retreat for a year, otherwise. Um, so that was mostly like some kind of roller coasters. I mean, it was nice and everything, but then afterwards I was like, it's very socially, socially awkward. I think that social, the social aspect of it is another side of it too. It was a lot.

Andrea: Yeah. I've been thinking a lot about, um, I spend most of my life working, like most of my waking life working. And so I feel like a lot about a lot of decisions that I make are in terms of what do I need to do to function and feel comfortable and safe? Um, in my experience at work and the work that I do and working with the people that I work with and also like how I contribute to that experience with them. But, and I very much because I feel like I spend most of my time working. I very much try to have this separation between work and like, non-work like outside of work. And that's been really difficult to manage throughout this past year. As working remotely now occasionally has like just blended things. And I've also like been in this weird haze of, sometimes I'm just like, what day is it? What month is it? And so I felt like lost in that sense. You know my supervisor asked me yesterday, how I felt about coming back for



like a full return. And it's weird. It feels weird to start having that conversation. Because I don't think that I've spent much time thinking about it or have having it framed as like what my opinion might be on it or not. Um, and so there's that, but I've also been experiencing like this weird sensation of disembodiment, which I think is just lifelong anyways. Like I've always, even as a child felt like, my body is not truly me in a way. And, um, but I think it's just been heightened with, having to be on camera and on zoom and then only interacting really with people like in that kind of mediated way and having so little in-person contact, such little in-person contact with people. And I have my partner here and we have touch and things like that, but, not really so much with anything or anyone outside of my home. And I was invited to a party on like March 15th or something, and I just received it yesterday and I'm freaking out. I'm just like, wait, this is happening. People are doing that. Like what? Like I'm actually with the terms of the party, I feel less nervous about COVID but more nervous about what it would be like to like interact with people in a party environment. Cause I don't feel myself in general.

Jules: I think it's safe to say there's so many of us are feeling that right now, a little uncertainty, a little excitement, maybe a bit a social awkwardness that we haven't felt before in life, perhaps. Um, it just makes me want to laugh though. That's my human response. It's the last

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Eugenia: oh my goodness. I'm not at all looking forward to large groups of people, social awkwardness has been my life. So I totally understand. Yeah. I've just become so much more aware of how it's existing in my body. I think that I'm just like experiencing it a much

stronger, it's just so much stronger, so I'm just like, whoa, I need to escape or something.

And it was just a lot. When I was talking to Natalie, who's thinking about like your,

Natalie, you were saying that you don't want to go back to the art center. You're just like down to just be online. Like you're just like, this is great. The zoom world is awesome.

Natalie: Yes, it's true. It's all true. That, uh, I, my desire is to, is to stay at home and doing the zoom meetings with y'all fellers.

Jules: Only

Natalie: to see you during the zoom classes and when the COVID has gone, I'll go back to the center. I decided, okay. That's cool. I made as clear as a crystal.

Eugenia: Gotcha. Gotcha. I misheard you then. I totally thought that you were like, not interested in going back. Gotcha. Sorry. I'm sorry. I misheard you.

Miranda : I think, Eugenia, Natalie was saying last week that she doesn't want to go back right now? Oh, that, yeah. Yeah. Cause we're opening the art centers in June. So we just did like a survey to all the clients to see if any of them wanted to come back.

Eugenia: So. Gotcha. Yeah. Wow. So everybody is thinking about going back, like not everyone's thinking about, but they were thinking about opening it up for everybody in June.

Miranda: Yeah. Staff goes back in like two weeks, uh, three weeks. Yeah. So—

Eugenia: How are you feeling about it?

Miranda : Um, uh, it's just been a wild time, Matt hurt his neck. Um, so we've been busy with that. He's getting surgery in a couple of weeks. It's just been like a lot.

Eugenia: Oh my God. I'm sorry.

Miranda : It's okay. It's gonna, I mean, he's got a great surgeon. It's gonna be fine. You know, it's a weird time, but at least now I think they're gonna let me go to some of his appointments, which in the past, because of COVID I wasn't allowed to do so. I'm relieved about that.

Eugenia: Yeah. Yeah, I definitely, yeah, I couldn't, I couldn't go to Corinna's appointments either. It was like in the office, just like waiting. Yeah.

Miranda : It's so hard. I just like, especially like at the beginning, when I had to just like drop him off outside and be like, okay, I'll just be waiting here. Like it, it feels very cold and unsupportive, yeah.

Jules: Jeez,

Eugenia: I'm glad you get to go.

Jules: A lot of medical stuff this year. I had to be alone for all of it. Um, even some after care stuff. I was alone, you know, too. It's part of this year. Yeah. It's affected us.

Eugenia: Wow.

Jules: Things overall like, well, everyone's going to be fine. As long as we admit some vulnerability, it's okay to make mistakes. Uh, everyone worked together a little bit as, as respectfully as we can work together and help each other out for this. Everyone's had a really rough, rough year and a lot of changes. So make it, as long as everyone's honest about it, there won't be too much desperation. I hope or stress. Yeah. Yeah. I've been like on a, on a, yeah—

Eugenia: that makes sense. So aftercare part though, that's tough.

Jules: Yeah. Yeah. It was, uh, no, a lot of things. It was a lot of things at the time, in retrospect it's it was a very interesting, very strange. Yeah.

Eugenia: How about you James? How are you doing about like, are you feeling excited to go back into the world?

James: It's better than staying home.

Eugenia: And it seems like, yeah, I, I I'm in that same boat, James. I'm just like, I want to see people. I want to see people at like a pace in which I can control, but yeah. Josh, how are you doing? Are things ok?.

Josh: Okay. I'm good. I'm in Mississippi right now. Yeah, traveling.

Eugenia: You seeing your parents or your family?

Josh: Yeah, to see my sister who is older. Funny to be back in the old house.

Eugenia: Oh my gosh. Wow. You got to see like, so it's been a year since you've seen your parents basically, or your family pretty much? Oh my gosh. That's wild.

Josh: Yeah, it's definitely way different in the south. A little bit more lax about Corona stuff. It's weird.

Eugenia: Oh my God. Yeah. Like even when I was traveling to New Mexico, Arizona. We were in Sedona and we went to like a juice shop and no one was wearing masks. And I was like, this is a juice shop!

Josh: Arizona is sort of conservative

Eugenia: Arizona. It's so intense. I can't even, oh my God. Yeah. Long beach is totally like that

too.

Josh: Oh, yeah. Anaheim.

Eugenia: Orange county. It's a hard, a hard space.

Natalie: It is a very good place with Disneyland and Ariel was around.

Eugenia: She would be wearing a mask. I'm sure of it.

Natalie: And I assure you, I made a, I love you to aerial sign and you rock aerial sign.

Josh: Did she sign back?

Natalie: Back? Just like, she, she did a same way, like I did. And my dad, Steve does too.

Josh: That's cool. Yeah.

Eugenia: Oh, wow. Well, I was hoping to, to, to do some group drawings. Um, but I wanted to see if we could do, well, Andrea, I was looking, I was looking over our old group, some of our older group drawings and picking out some pieces that are just incredible, really beautiful moments. Um, and I was also looking at some of our chats. And Andrea, you had mentioned something along the lines of like, we don't have to just draw on these white boards or we don't have to just draw and I didn't even see you write that. So, I mean, I wanted to ask, what were you thinking like outside of just drawing?

Andrea: Well, I think that there was I can't remember who it was. Somebody was having difficulty, figuring out how to draw on the whiteboard. And so I was like, what are other ways? Um, sometimes I play this game with my students where one person is like describing something verbally, and then somebody else is the drawer of the verbal description. And it's like this weird, a

different way of doing kind of um, what are those collaborative drawings? kind of like, you don't know what they're gonna turn out to be like. Yeah. So it's like our, our current version of that.

And so I think that there's this interesting type of chance that occurs in terms of what the outcome might turn out like. Um, and I think it's also like a release of you know, that you're kind of probably never going to get it. Fully be able to draw whatever the, the instructions are. Cause you have just different interpretations of what that is, but for like participants to kind of like the, the point is to create something new together with those that mesh.

Eugenia: Should we do that? Yeah, that sounds like so much fun. And I, so I read that prompt and I was like, okay, what are other ways that we can like, think about drawing?, I went on zoom and I looked up like ways to experiment with whiteboard zoom. And like, the thing is called touch, how to be in touch with others. And like, it's literally that. That's how, cause we're using a touch pad for some of us, some of us are using a mouse, but then I was thinking about like how we're doing this and trying to literally touch each other, you know what I mean? Like, or like touching a screen together. And then I was like, what if we all like, tried to draw the same line at the same time? And so literally try to be touching lines, you know what I mean? Touch each other's line on the page. So that was one thing I was thinking about. And maybe we can all come up with some ways in which we can work differently with the whiteboard, if we want to. Um, but I'm so down Andrea, I would love to. Maybe someone can, I don't know, I would be down to do what you said. Cause that sounds like a lot of fun.

Andrea: We also do it with like, sometimes it's some one's verbal that they can kind of say

whatever they want. Like it could say, you could say like a description of what you want them to try to do. Or you could just say a statement or a line of poetry, or like you can play like an audio file and somebody is trying to draw their interpretation. Um, I think. It doesn't really have to be specific. It's kind of whatever somebody wants to like share and express and then the other person tries to like receive it and kind of bounce it back, I guess. Yeah. Yeah.

Eugenia: Oh my God. Yes, I am so down. We could really structure that and like make that part of our meetings.

Josh: Um, Eugenia, do you have a picture of James's map?

Eugenia: Uh, I think I do. I definitely do. I'll send it in the chat, but I couldn't find the file. hold on, I'll send you an email, hold on. I'm going to have to find it. Oh, you probably have it here.

Andrea: So I play that game with my students and we also play Drawful, which is like an app based, I guess it's like Pictionary. Um, and those are fun because I usually draw my Pictionary thing on my phone. And it's not really good because of the size of my screen and my finger. And like, my students are much more prepared and they have like a tablet with like a stylus and so they can draw much better than I can. So I always have the, like the less understandable drawings.

Eugenia: Um, I'm so down, that sounds awesome. Wait, hold on. I'm trying to do like three things at once, but I would love to do that or Pictionary sounds. I love Pictionary.

Jules: Okay.

Eugenia: Oh, here. I'm going to pull up the, Josh. Okay. Hold on. Let's pause that. Right. Oh, no,

what happened? Okay. Sorry. Who, what's the? And then who would like to start, and maybe we can start with the first, the first prompt, uh, Andrea, which was like someone is the person who describes the thing and then maybe everybody else can draw or what do you think?

Andrea: Everybody has their annotate menu open.

Eugenia: Let's do it. Hold on. Oh, wait. I've got spotlight. Yeah. Yeah, it can. Can, is everybody able to get on here? There we go. Should we also change the color? Is everybody cool with the white background? Okay. We'll keep away. Alright. Who would like to describe a thing Andrea you want to lead us to the first part? If you want to, you can also just like call someone to do it and see if they want to,

Andrea: um, let me think. Um, Sometimes I, I think about, um, things that I keep around to like represent kind of like things that I love. And I always think about, I know clearly the things that I have that like kind of mean that for me, but I always think about what other [00:44:00] people have that does that for them. And so I guess I'd be interested to like see how we could use the whiteboard to like, share the idea with each other. And I can say it again, if anyone wants. Okay.

Josh: Are you purple Eugenia.

Jules: Old man. Walter

Josh: I thought of Walter as well.

Andrea: Mine's a cake. Y'all are like our like animal friends and I'm like, food.

Jules: Mine is a mine is my incense burner. I like the smoke.

Josh: Pretty good. Walter Eugenia.



Eugenia: James how are you doing? Did you get a chance to draw?

James: I still have nothing

Eugenia: I didn't mean to interrupt.

Jules: Nice mug,

Andrea: that's my caffeine mug.

Josh: How do you make the text smaller. There you go Basilio

James: Oh really?

Jules: That Walter looks like a little Moses in his little basket.

Eugenia: Hold on. Let me, let me, let me, uh, I'm going to show you, Walter.

Jules: You have Walter? Oh wow. I had to full screen that for a minute,

Eugenia: he had a time last night, he like threw up and was like dry heaving. We don't know why.

Jules: Oh no.

Eugenia: We have an eye on him. He's probably fine. He just ate some weird stuff but probably tired from being sick. Oh yea he's very comfortable.

Jules: Oh, I know.

Andrea: Whose yellow cat is this?

Josh: Standing on top of my dog's head?

Andrea: It looks like a mix between either in Garfield or Meowth

Eugenia: Rollerskates?.

Jules: Yeah. That's it. Uh, a version of my running shoes. As I'm floating into the smoke of the

universe, you cover yourself, incense and Sage. Before you go running, you have to, so you don't bring anything home. Wow. Look at that other dogs coming up there. That's some grass growing too.

Josh: Nature. Very important.

Jules: Don't forget the nature, Molly?

Miranda : Eugenia. I've got to hop back to make a call. Oh yeah. Have a great week, everybody.

Eugenia: Yeah. It's good to talk to you.

Miranda : All right, I'll talk to you guys soon.

Eugenia: All right.

Andrea: But I think I figured out how to change the text size, the font size. If you click on format, you can change the color, the line width, and then there's some options of changing the font. I see. I see. Oh, wait, somebody else already figured that out right now that I'm looking at the sign. It has much smaller texts.

Josh: I figured it out right after I asked, but I didn't share it with the group. I like you in that scene.

Natalie: In Inglewood or somewhere else, but in the rain last night, I think

Jules: all these fires, it has gotta be raining somewhere.

Eugenia: Yeah.

Jules: Hopefully.

Andrea: Well, who is that? Like cup or bottle,

Eugenia: because that's what I've been drinking. I've been surrounded by a dropper bottles and tinctures this whole year.

Jules: That's okay. Take your time. Exactly. Yes. Take your time. Calm in a bottle, very, very nice

Josh: That's usually how writing on tincture bottles looks.

Andrea: Yeah, I was very impressed with your like line work for the texture of that.

Jules: I'm just setting fires over here. Don't mind me going down the past. Um, oh, that sun is getting bumpy

Josh: Billy, now by accident.

Jules: I like the mischievous, squid energy. The fire, the —

Eugenia: Book of poop doodle doodles.

Andrea: It's kind of interesting, cause it reminds me of, um, like when I was in kindergarten or first grade and we would have, uh, what'd we call it, show and tell. And so kids would bring things on Fridays to share with the whole class and it was, they could bring whatever, whatever they wanted to share with everybody. And so just the randomness of kind of like what, what your favorite thing is that you want to share with somebody.

Jules: Um, my favorite thing is destruction and fire. I think there's some, there's some burning in spring time. It depends on where you're at in the world though. Some worlds, they leave all of the stuff from winter on the ground to fertilize. Um, so there's not a lot of burning. There's more burning at the end of summer than at the beginning, but yeah, something about the fires. Nice.

Eugenia: Yeah, it's transformative.

Jules: Precisely.

Eugenia: What's that one movie. Oh my God. There's this like incredible burning scene. Well, there's two incredible burning scenes that like have you ever seen Nina Menkes' films. They are just like really intense weirdo movies, but there's this one scene where it's just like 10 minutes of burning Palm tree that is just incredible. It's just so good. Yeah, no, no. I think that in that particular movie it's important, but then there's this other movie where there's like a, uh, burning scene. It's a what's the name of this dude? The gay filmmaker who made the garden and it was like the last couple of years of his life . Oh my God. Jar, jar. Derek Jarman . And there's this scene of like this, candy wrapper that catches flame. And it's just burns, its like really transformative. It's incredible. It's really beautiful.

Jules: The 10th attention of fire, destroying and fire is also turning things into tools or into, or into fertilizer itself. Oh yeah. It's but it is, yeah, I guess it's exciting. Cause it's, it's powerful, but it can also be a bit unsettling of course. Cause it can be, it can always get out of human control. Of course. Yes.

Andrea: Eugenia, you were like naming these different films with like transformative fire and in my mind I just went to Bambi.

Eugenia: I don't think I ever really watched Bambi though. What happens with the fire in the movie? There's like the deer that dies?

Josh: A forest burns or something?

Eugenia: Oh my God. No way. I thought it was like some hunter thing, but I—

Andrea: think it's also supposed to be this like, framed as this coming of age into adult deer hood

Eugenia: Hilarious. Oh my God. I didn't even know that.

Jules: They have a fire and then she gets sick from the fire.

Eugenia: Oh my God.

Jules: I mean, the mother gets sick from the fire or something.

James: Yeah. They shot her

Jules: I pictured her just like dying from smoke inhalation to be honest. Wow.

Josh: We can go with that. Yeah, well—

Jules: Hopefully they, they, uh, were respectful to her, uh, hunters.

Andrea: I don't think they ever do. They never show, I don't think they show any people like any humans in that movie.

Josh: No its just like an ominous presence in the woods.

Jules: Wow.

Eugenia: Wow. Sorry.

James: She also makes friends with a rabbit and a skunk.

Jules: We might have to, uh, we might have to review Bambi in this, uh, to get ready to go out on our own here, back into society and back into it, all the buildings.

Eugenia: So, human ominous presence, for sure.

Natalie: I go to go fellers. I've got to do to two o'clock meeting.

Eugenia: Oh is that time? All right.

## Chapter 2

### Beginnings and Las Vegas

How do films start? There have been many methods used to introduce us to the world a film creates. Classic Hollywood introductions often begin in a macro scale dropping down to the interpersonal world of the interior of a house or a street corner, or the character's immediate surroundings. For example we begin with an aerial shot of a city, then we pan down or use a crane to float us into the world of the city street. It is the image of the city and the characters inhabiting this world that I am interested exploring in this specific moment in history where participation in the physical realities of a city is simultaneous to participation in virtual platforms and Zoom rooms. What then makes a city or how have we come to know it as an image, like that in film and what might be the space of an alternative to a city? Is it a commune? Fred Moten, in his essay "Collective Head" follows Marx' Grundrisse, he stays with Masao Miyoshi, conjures Jose Munoz and he joins Lygia Clark in thinking alongside *Cabeza Collective*. In a play of anti-tracking, a dense weaving, he asks us to consider the before of the city, or the commune, as an act of coming together. A site from which we might think about how we envision a gathering of people for shared interests that is not bound by representative politics, unifying bordered identities or nation-states.

In the early days of the pandemic I, like many, began reaching out to my close and estranged friends and family to make sure they were ok. It was an opportunity to restructure intimacies and find ways to survive in our new physically isolated realities. I spoke weekly with my estranged brother, I called my old co workers, I checked in on my mentees at ECF Art

Center. Virtuality became a site in which I could attempt to reach out to others, find ways to think through what it might mean to be online and how to hold on to embodied interactions.

Virtuality became a space to contemplate the loss of touch and new forms of coming together.

Our collective shifted from making objects with which to trade to making a collaborative film. Zoom rooms became the primary site of exchange in which we would screen the work, add drawings, clips or audio. The film begins with a Zoom meeting, a shared screen, the squares encompassing our portraits form a column to the right of the image. Natalie's voice is heard and we see her operate the mouse to click through the layers in a photoshop illustration of a mermaid tail. She counts through each layer, creating her own internal temporality, as she pulls up each of the frames of the animation. We see the green and teal tail of the mermaid move from right to left, the tail situated on a blue ball. We are presented with a slowed down sequence of stills, the temporality of her clicking through the images subverts the animation, hovering between movement and stillness. Her counting and internal rhythm reflects her embodied staccato sense of time, at once calming and assured. This sequence is followed by a selection of found footage we curated as a group. The images encompass popular films that speak of technology gone wrong, like Jurassic Park, footage from U.S. atomic bomb testing in the Nevada desert, and films of traversing worlds like *The Little Mermaid*. The film then shifts to a landscape of sculptural detritus of Slab City and the scene extends in time, the quiet, diegetic sound creates a spaciousness distinct from the visual language of quick cuts. The editing of the film was inspired by Leslie Thornton's *X-TRACTS* (1975), however instead of using mathematical equations to structure our film, it is Natalie's off beat cadence and counting that embodies our filmic temporality, folding in her voice as a call, with the images that function as a response. An attempt

at co-authoring that holds difference (individual as well as each reformulation of our group) as our structuring methodology not just for the film, but for how we approached each other.

The beginning sequence of our collective film is a beginning that resurfaces, creating a rhythm in the work, the audio track that the editing sequence follows punctuates the middle and end of the film a perpetual restarting. The film itself plays on a loop so that a visitor could enter at any part of the work, which is to say there is no definitive beginning and ending in the form in which it is displayed. The film is comprised of a selection of audio and video recordings of our zoom meetings, spanning February to May of 2021. The selected clips and group drawings are not in sequential order, it does not keep sequential time, instead the clips blur moments and hold a temporality that explores virtuality's unique characteristic of asynchronicity, time lapse and lag time. It is most visible in the drawings that are overlaid on video footage of earth ships built on shared land in Taos. The cursor appears and disappears as do the drawings. Some lines drag on, are redrawn, fall off as our members experience a variety of internet speeds or dropping of signals. A time that sits in difference to and disrupts the temporality of the underlay of the video. The long shot, a captured image of a landscape and adobe structures, is not the primary focus, however the playful effacing of settler-colonial captured image of a southwest landscape, is.

Another way of thinking about an intro to a film is to plop a person into the action, without any sense as to who is or isn't important. For example we find ourselves in a casino, a close up of a craps table. On second look we see the green of a craps table, but there is a crease in it, are we in a casino? A close up of a hand pointing and holding dice. It is degraded in quality, not quite pixelated it is more like there is a hazy quality to the movement of the hand. The image shifts and we see the edge of frame appear within the frame. The ghost artifacts clue us in to the



digital projection that is being refilmed. This kind of beginning is a space of activated spectatorship, we are challenged to read a bit harder into a narrative that has not been constructed for us. I chose to start *Risk, A Structure, an Interval*, this way to create a separation from the autobiographical nature of the work and the sibling characters I was building. It is a film in which I visit my brother who is a craps dealer in Las Vegas. I ask him to teach me how to play craps. I used video to film his instruction. I projected what I filmed and re-filmed it using 16mm film. I then transfer the footage and use it as a ground to overlay text from Fred Moten's "Collective Head," Masao Miyoshi's "Outside Architecture," and an imagined narrative of a sibling relationship.

The car ride to Las Vegas is about 5 hours if you are leaving from Los Angeles. I grew up in the Inland Empire taking the 210 to the 15, driving alongside the foothills, through the suburban towns, past strip malls and enclave of freeway on ramps merging in from abandoned vineyards before entering the Mojave. I memorized the walls that contain the 210 and 15 freeways, the surfaces and carved motifs of mountains, bells and clusters of grapes. In the spirit of *Learning from Las Vegas*' a seminal text analyzing buildings with signage and buildings as signage, these freeway walls are our modern hieroglyphics (Venturri, Brown, 2017).

*Learning from Las Vegas* is arguably the first postmodern theory of architecture in that it shifts our gaze from architectural genius and authorship to strip malls, signage, parking garages, mimetic architecture as worth theorizing. They photograph and film the Las Vegas Strip as a methodology of investigation. Brown and Venturi, taking cues from Pop Arts interest in mining and creating texts from the mundanity of the every day mass produced objects, turn to Las Vegas as a case study of, what they call, the first modern American City( Venturi, Brown, 2017). They

propose a way of reading the city, signage parking lots and buildings as structuring interactions and movements, specifically in relation to Roman architecture, streets, market places and structures. They explore the interior space of a Casino, noting it's anti-architectural usage of light, in that it does not use light as a way of exploring form, scale or finitude (Venturi, Brown, 2017). "The combination of darkness and enclosure of the gambling room and its subspaces makes for privacy, protection, concentration and control" (Venturi, Brown, 2017, 49). The floors and walls are carpeted, artificial light abound, there is no sense of time. I wonder what it might be like to work inside a casino all day. I make a point here, not to think of this text with the tourists eye, but use this text to reach out to my brother, imagining what dealing might be like.

"When the girl and her brother would play, he would cast her as his sidekick. She imagined herself as a little boy playing alongside him. They jumped from couch to couch, island to island avoiding the sea of carpet beneath their feet. If one fell into the sea the other would try their best to save them" (Barbuc, 2021).

In his essay "Outside Architecture," Masao Miyoshi calls for an architecture against architecture (2010). He calls for the field to move beyond itself, that is, move beyond the self isolation that is symptomatic of postmodernity's turn to buildings as autonomous texts (2010). He does not propose to go back to modernist utopian architecture, but to do something to counter postmodernity's decontextualization of material realities of architecture and city planning (2010). He notes the shortcomings of critical discourse like Learning from Las Vegas in it's focus in on architectural discourse for the sake of itself and cites the growing homeless population and the implication of globalization in Las Vegas' turn toward "Hollywoodification" (2010). It is, for Miyoshi, about the context in which these building-texts occupy, or the slum that surrounds the

centered texts (2010). These contexts are not voids, devoid of the “amenity” or “attraction” of what we associate with architecture or city planning, but the fullness of life and a right to live (2010). Miyoshi continues, “In the United States, especially, urban geography is increasingly fragmented in a permanent design of fortification and incarceration along the borders of wealth and race, which might be another version of utopia— at least for those who are safely barricaded” (2010, 153).

“The child found themselves on an island not touching the ocean, safely in the middle. They could see their brother far on the horizon, a line that shifted both behind and in front of them” (Barbuc, 2021).

The anti-space of 1970’s interior of a casino described by Brown and Venturi’s lends itself to reflecting back Miyoshi’s critique of 1996’ growing globalization and extreme exclusion in the service of accumulated wealth, as well as the physical isolation of our pandemic era. What is virtuality but an anti-spatial temporality? Architecture, for Miyoshi, should be reimagined alongside the unattractive, the filthy and uninviting, the slum, the outside. What does it mean to make things for people to inhabit or for others to use? Architecture provides a kind of metaphor for structuring use or proposing spatial interaction, but it is also a practice that designs from the top down rather than a deeply entangled exchange. For Moten, in “Collective Head,” he imagines Miyoshi’s line of questioning as a turn towards, “[l]ife in the very fugitivity of the working and playing that escape whatever might have been experienced or theorized as its own bare self...”(2017, 188). I am reminded here of the autonomous architectural text that can only exist in conversation with what surrounds it, but also the ways in which play allows for a consistent structuring and restructuring in relation to those who one plays alongside. There is a

slipperiness of self that, like Cohen's description of queerness, as a fluid exchange between those we come together with to build our relational commune. It is unstable, existing only in the act and shifting depending on who attends the assembly. Similarly Moten describes Lygia Clark's sculpture *Cabeça Colectiva*, as a point in the constellation of thinking with the commune. The sculpture is activated by the group that takes turns becoming the structure that holds the hat-sculpture-shelter, changing hands or more to the point held by the many hands of a collective body, moving through the streets in stark juxtaposition to the buildings of Paris or Rio de Janeiro (Moten, 2017).

My intention in exploring Las Vegas was less about the city, but imagining what my brother might be experiencing in a specific location with a history during a global pandemic. "What is the image of the thing that happens when a limited form (the city of attractions and its attendant, etiolated notion of wealth and necessity) is stripped away? Maybe you have to be a curmudgeon to ask questions that bring the world and the city—their geographical delineations and historical divisions—into play by way of the questions of the thing, this indexing of the commune and the earth that anticipate and survive the end of the city and the end fo the old by placing them under the disarranging pressure of performative study" (Moten, 2017, 188-189). My impulse was to film the edges of a frame, to quite literally reframe and overlay images onto each other using projections and a matte box to block out alternating edges of the lens of a Bolex. I then rewound the film to re-expose those matte-d out areas in Los Angeles, at Disney Concert Hall, in a park near my studio. I cut up paper and clay hardened doilies my grandmother made. An intimate history overlaid on a building, a Las Vegas mall in the shape of a Frank Gehry building overlaid on an actual Gehry building, the image of a city cut mid frame. Taking

from Matta Clark's film, *City Slivers* who used a matte box to cut up New York City scenes, I too used a matte box to piece Las Vegas , Los Angeles and doily sculptures into each other. Matta-Clark's strategies of disarranging structures, questioning functionality, cutting holes into urban spaces and reimagining architecture is an interesting response to Moten's questions of what a city could be re-imagined as. Looking back to *City Slivers* as a way to think of an alternate futurity, I think of a collective displacement, the images themselves are displaced, in filming with this technique. How might that resonate with a continuous form of ephemeral assembly?

“ The brother and sister are two distant shadowy lines. They stand alongside the edges, peering across the imaginary water” (Barbuc, 2021)

“ Risk, A Structure, an Interval,” ends with an image that is cropped in at the left and right of the image. A pronounced frame signaling the interval that separates images in a film strip. A part of the film that is not exposed to light, a void that is not empty parse, but extends into a world outside of the containment of singular image.

### Chapter 3

Transcript of Zoom meeting 03/03/2021

The following transcript is a result of a recorded Zoom meeting with Eugenia Barbuc, Natalie Delgadillo, Miranda Maynard, Jules Marasa, Eylese Davis and Josh Burwell.

Eugenia: You know, like I think that there's something really exciting about the ways in which folks imagined what it could do, uh, or using it for something that isn't about performing, you know, why not, you know, shift your use and make a really hard, like very poorly performing robot. That's hilarious to me. Or like the most gimmicky thing that is like really, you know, that really pushes against the language that we've come to know as automaton, which is something that performs well, that's something that, you know, we rely on or something that does something

Jules: Yeah. Something that we aspire to become. Right. Yeah. Like a robot.

Eugenia: Yeah. So make an imperfect robot or make a robot that does the exact opposite of what you expect it to do. You know what I mean? Like, you know, I don't know—

Jules: A robot that does —

Eugenia: Wow. I don't know. I think there's a lot of joy in the potential of, you know, I don't know. It just depends. I feel like the language of the gimmick right now is something that I'm really thinking about or thinking through specifically with like electronics, you know.

Jules: yeah. Like they just, they just released like, um, like eight different iPhones, in their last release. Right. And, and so it's like too many gimmicks for electronics.

Eugenia: Right. But like, I feel like the gimmick can sort of create the space in which it isn't really about selling a thing. Well, like the point of the gimmick is that it is so bad. You know what I mean? Like the ridiculous knife that can chop through a can, like who wants that? But it's kind of like a symptom of, you know, like it's kind of ridiculous and it's like, those kinds of moments I think are really ways or a space in which you can really push back against this machine where we're accustomed to the, the new iPhone. Who cares about the new, like, of course we're all going to have to care because they're feeding it to us to care. But, you know, I feel like if something is really gimmicky, it's just so bad that we can now see it as what it is, what it is trying to do. Right. It's like the thing that was supposed to sell us this thing, but now we kind of love it because it didn't. Because it failed really bad, but it was just kind of ridiculous. Um, I don't know. There's a lot there that I think is kind of important and it's just like part of our, yeah, I don't know. I mean, yeah, I think it's totally fair to be super suspicious of, you know, what a robot is or like what an automaton is or what electronics are. But the fact is we live with them. And have relationships with our phones in a way that I wish I didn't, but yeah.

Jules: Yeah. I don't think that there needs to be a binary like pro and anti access for thinking about technology. Um, I don't think that it can be inherently good or inherently bad, just like any thing or anybody. Um, But it's just, it's still, even though, you know, I was born in 1990 and I have robots all around me in the world and I can see like the other day I saw the delivering Amazon robot that like delivers food, goes on the street by itself.

Eugenia: So creepy.

Jules: And, and something inside of me just like, thinks that that's kind of— like maybe it's new technology and I've been seeing a lot of new technology that doesn't work well, but they're just pushing it to purchase it still. So stuff like electric scooters or, uh, like heart rate monitor watches that you can buy are very inaccurate. The scooters do not go very far and they're very, very bad quality. So is that kind of like that kind of stuff. Funny robots kind of like the, the gleeful failure and like observing their failure is kind of nice because they kind of do dictate and like challenge our ability as humans to move our own bodies. And then the robots come along. They're like, I can do that too. And I can do it better than you because I'm a robot, you know? So is there some kind of power that is reclaimed when then when the robot is a failure?

Eugenia: You know, I think that at least for me, I'm really trying to think about it in terms of like, we are all objects. It's not that that is an object trying to be like us subjects. You know what I mean? Like I think that there's something kind of important, at least for me to sort of think about not in the term of it trying to be like us, but you know what I mean? Is it, is that what you mean?

Jules: Well, I suppose, um, the robots that we have in our daily lives are things that do replace our actions. So yeah, I guess, like, uh, as human beings, how do we feel about robots? Is there a moral question? That's an old question too.

Eugenia: Yeah. I think that that's a totally fair question. Right? Like, you know, Amazon. There's so many different plants of robots taking jobs and whatever. Yeah, absolutely. I also wonder if there's a space in which, you know we're, but we're also not in that. Let's be clear, we're not in Silicon valley trying to make robots to take over our jobs. You know what I mean? So it's like a



different space that we're in and operating under. It's, it's really however you, you, you think through it or want to work through it. Yeah. I think there's a lot of really important questions.

Um, Yeah. Actually the one who gets to make it, who, who makes it for whom? Like, who gets to say, like, do I have a say in like how these objects operate? Like yeah.

Jules: Are you responsible for like, if it like electrocutes somebody or something weird?

Natalie: Like Jurassic Park?

Jules: Yes.

Eugenia: Yeah. Yeah, and like maybe so, but I think another part of it is as we make things and we give to, to each other, we are now like in a different production line or at least a different way of thinking about it because we're like, at least what I hope to do if you're, if you're willing to do it this way is uh, you know, as we make our objects and we gift it to somebody else, we're in conversation with the person who we give it to. And we're kind of making it for them in an intimate way that isn't about making an object or we're getting an object from a market and like, you know, having data collected, steal your whole identity and having no, you have no say in its how it's made. So I think in some ways what I'm hoping to accomplish, at least in the part that turns into the gifting part is, you know, having a different kind of intimate relationship with making a thing and making it for somebody else. I think it is really important, um, that can sort of be in itself a critique that doesn't even have to do with making it like technological thing and just be like, the idea of gifting is like, you know, a critical space worth rescuing or thinking through or thinking with.

Jules: A gift robot.

Eugenia: Yeah. James, Natalie, how do you all feel? Or Josh?

Natalie: Like, I, I gotta go. I gotta do the two o'clock meeting for sure.

Jules: I got to go too, sorry. I like rambled for like 10 minutes at the end there, but I think robots are just kind of interesting and I'll see you all next time. Bye.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is in the act of assembly, not in a city, but in what might be in the glimpses of the imagined digital world of Natalie's "Natterville", or in the act of drawing together, the space of deeply feeling the difficulties of our individual experiences of quarantine, or in the moments of play in learning craps that evoked memories of the structuring and restructuring of our childhood selves through play, that holds possibilities of the commune. I can think of no better way of concluding than by sharing a transcript of the group work in which we shared some of our artwork together.

### Transcript from Zoom meeting 4/28/2021

The following transcript is a result of a recorded Zoom meeting with Eugenia Barbuc, Natalie Delgadillo, Miranda Maynard, Jules Marasa, Rachel Finkelstein, Eylese Davis and James Basilio.

Miranda: Natalie. Do you want to share your screen?

Eugenia: Let me make you a co-host. Ah, oh my god, Natalie. Also, maybe we can do some drawings for your Natterville, if you want us to.

Natalie: Uh—

Eugenia: Or not, it is your world. It's your city. Or you could share, you could just share

Natalie: 1, 2—

Eugenia: Oh my gosh.

Natalie: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13.

Eugenia: Oh my goodness.

Andrea: That's good,

Rachel: Is it an animation?

Natalie: Yeah.

Rachel: Interesting. Can, can it run? Can you run it as well? Is it on Photoshop?

Natalie: Yeah,

Miranda: It is. We don't have it. We haven't gotten to that stage yet. That's next week.

Rachel: Yeah. It's exciting.

Natalie: And Miranda, what am I going to do? Shall I exit out?

Miranda: Yeah, you can exit out and.

Eugenia: Oh, my goodness.

Miranda: You can say yes. I don't think you've made any major changes though. But look at those bubbles, they look so good, Natalie. You're the queen of homework.

Natalie: Yeah.

Miranda: Natalie always get her homework done before the day's over.

Natalie: Such as finishing the Natterville sign with a mermaid tail and, and crossword.

Miranda: Are you doing your Sudoku?

Natalie: What is Sudoku?

Miranda: Is it crossword puzzles, Sudoku? Sorry, from your grandma?

Natalie: Um, from my grandma, she gave me as an Easter gift.

Rachel: Wow.

Miranda: Oh, cool. Well, word finds, those are awesome.

Natalie: Yeah. Oh, I need it and more,

Rachel: Yeah, we all need more peace of mind.

Eugenia: Oh my gosh. A hundred percent, Natalie. This is so great. I'm excited to see. I'm excited to see it all together.

Natalie: Yeah.

Eugenia: Also give me tips on how you finish your homework.

Andrea: I'm already planning to do finish up my homework on the weekend. Cause I know I can't finish.

Natalie: And also I colored my Fox in a hound dog or a beagle.

Eugenia: Oh, my gosh

Andrea: Looks great.

Natalie: So great.

Eugenia: That looks rad, dude.

Andrea: Did you draw that or did you just color it?

Natalie: I color it like after they, they left it, its uncolored

Eugenia: You did a really great job coloring.

Rachel: Uh, we Expecting anyone else?

Eugenia: Natalie, is it okay if you, uh, do you want to share more of your work or do you want to stop sharing screen?

Natalie: I'll stop sharing screen.

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