



Artistic approaches to anti-racism and anti-oppression

Artists and university students engaging in transformative action in a campus gallery.



University
of Victoria

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Research Project

Artistic approaches to anti-racism and anti-oppression: Artists and university students engaging in transformative action in a campus gallery.

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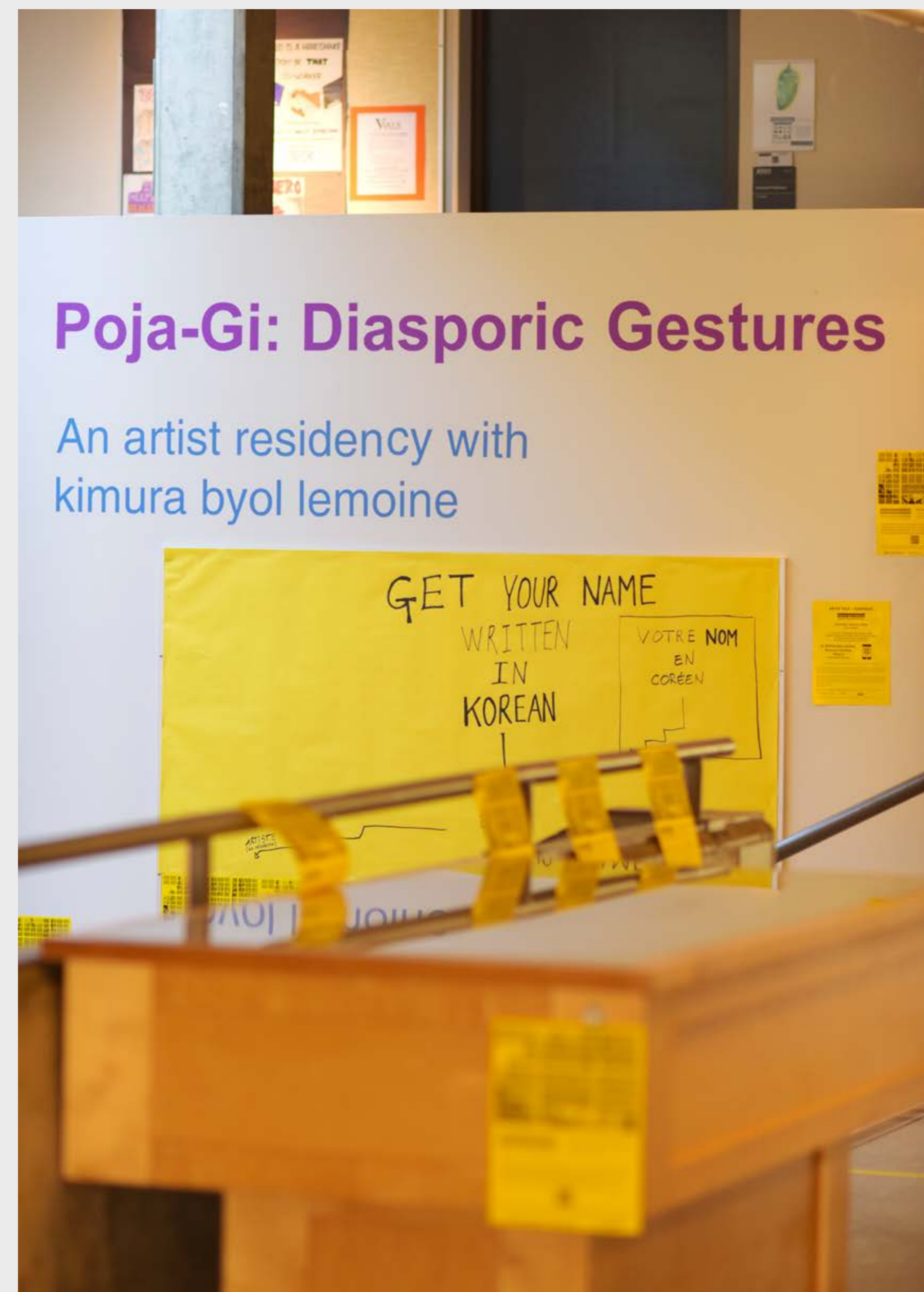
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Poja-Gi: Diasporic Gestures



Credit: Michelle Butterfield

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Walking into Consciousness





How can a gallery be a site of deep learning about racism and oppression?

In 2024 and 2025 the A. Wilfrid Johns Gallery at the University of Victoria campus was the host site for 3 distinct artist residencies. The artist call invited racialized artists – Indigenous, Black, Persons of Colour – whose art practices involved work with anti-racist and anti-oppressive approaches and employed participatory practices. Each residency was driven by the artist-in-residence’s area of expertise. Thus, each residency was unique to the artistic practice of the resident artist and took distinct forms representing diverse contemporary artistic approaches (e.g., performance, participatory drawing, interactive installations, craft-based practices, etc.).

During each residency, artists inhabited the gallery for six hours per day while they engaged in ongoing experimentation with their own artistic practice and offered workshops to visitors. As a result, the gallery was transformed into an active space for students, faculty, and the broader public to learn about contemporary art practices and make art while engaging in dialogues about race, oppression, equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization.

How can using participatory action research impact the inclusivity of an artist residency?

Engaging in Participatory Action Research was vital in this research because the residencies were grounded in participation. The PAR groups' mandate was to work with the artists and the researchers to help shape the interactions that were to occur in the gallery during each residency.

PAR group involvement was vital because of the research focus on the ways in which artists and university students could engage in participatory anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices in a gallery setting. In order to work with the artists and the researchers to help shape the interactions that were to occur in the gallery, PAR participants were invited to explore their lived experiences of (anti-) racism and (anti-) oppression in educational settings and wider

society. This reflection allowed the PAR group to help shape the interactions that were to occur in the gallery during each residency.

Before artists inhabited the gallery, there was a PAR meeting. In the meeting the PAR participants and each artist met. The PAR group, which was made up of students at the University of Victoria, provided the artists with insight into the community in which the residency would be situated. The lively discussions that occurred resulted in both groups delving even more deeply into transforming their thinking about racism and oppression. The discussions primed the PAR participants to engage with the artist during the residency and ultimately offer reflective feedback on the experience after the residency.

First Residency

Artist in Residence

kimura byol lemoine



Credit: Microclimat Films

kimura byol lemoine (ze/zer) is a conceptual multimedia feminist artist and activist. Using calligraphy, painting, digital work, poetry, video, and collaborative practices, kimura-lemoine works with themes of identity (diaspora, ethnicity, colourism, post-colonialism, immigration, and gender). Zer experiences as a Korean-born adoptee are central to zer practice.

Artist's website:
www.starkimproject.com



kimura byol lemoine's work has been widely exhibited, screened, and published nationally and internationally. Ze is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Prix Powerhouse from La Centrale, and grants, including Montréal Arts Interculturels, the Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec, and the Canada Council for the Arts.

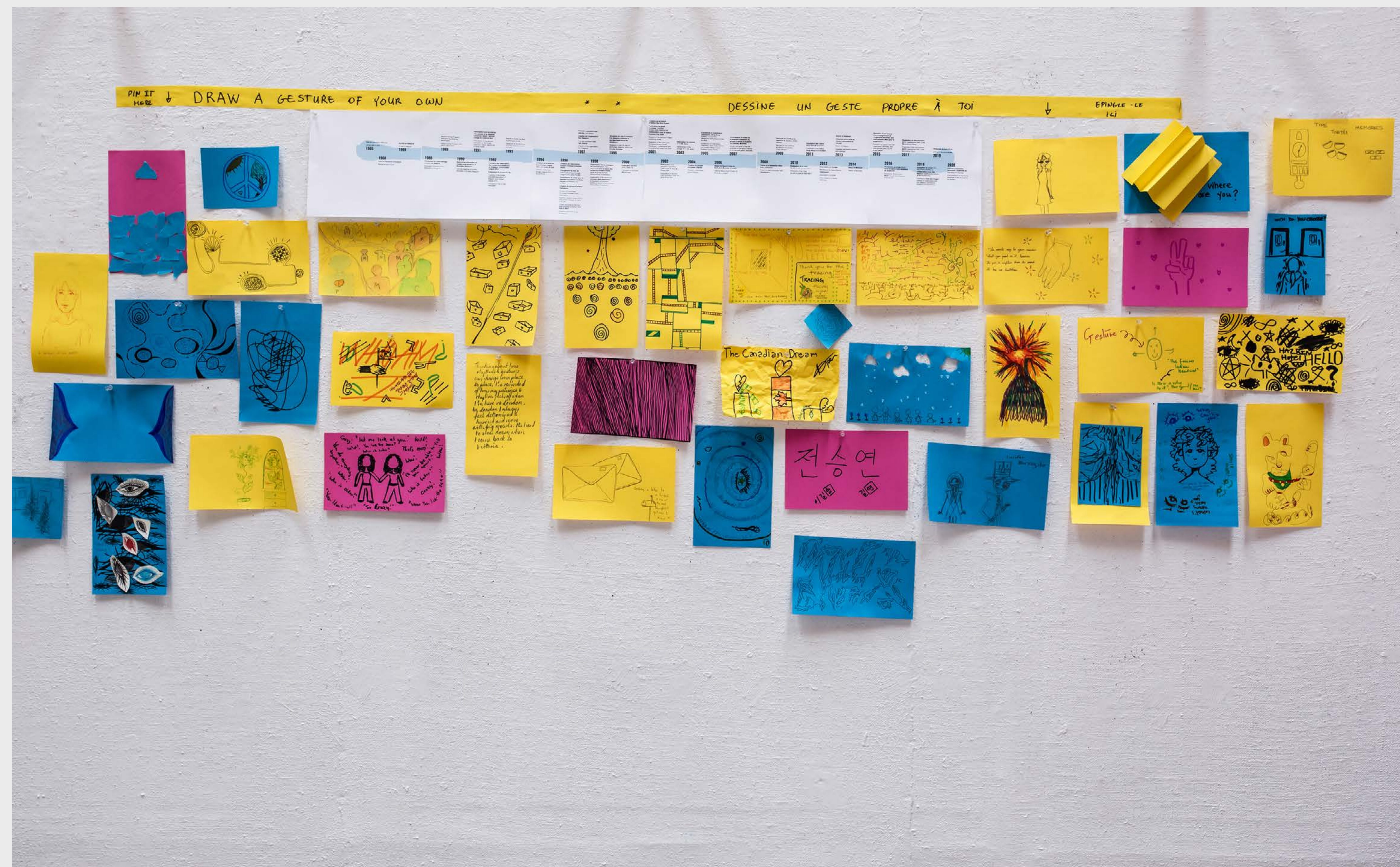
With zer activist work, kimura byol lemoine has co-founded and contributed to numerous initiatives, including the Euro-Korean League, the Network of Korean International Adoptee Artists, and the Adoptees Cultural Archives.

Poja-Gi: Diasporic Gestures

February 26-March 3, 2024

POJAGI denotes a type of traditional Korean patchwork created through the assembly of leftover fabrics. The word is rich in meaning because in Korean, POJA means “let’s look”. Deriving from the Korean word TAE GEUK GI (Tae meaning largeness and Geuk meaning eternity), GI is the name given to the red and blue circle on the Korean flag. The title is thus a play on words, referring to diasporic histories and to the gestures that are unconsciously or consciously learned in new territories of emigration.

During this artist residency, kimura byol lemoine created a space of invitation for publics to visit zer and talk about their diasporic realities, whether international or domestic. True to zer artistic practice, kimura-lemoine spent time interacting with participants to record their experiences of moving away or of being in new situations where they felt othered. Art objects representing these encounters gradually filled the gallery, creating a poja-gi of stories and gestures of diasporic realities.



***How can you
value your
individuality?***



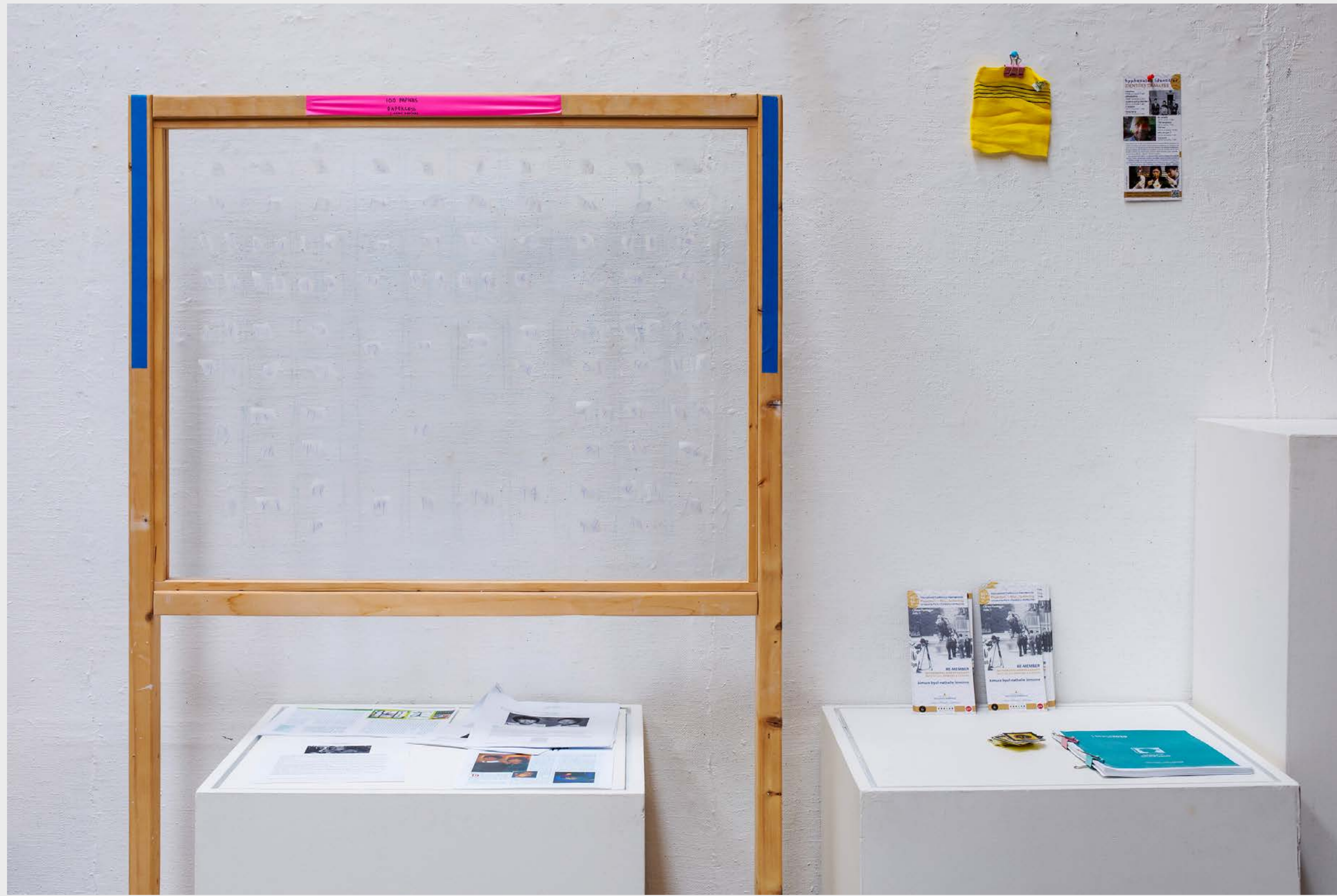
Sharing with Tenderness

Deep personal sharing to build connections and understanding.

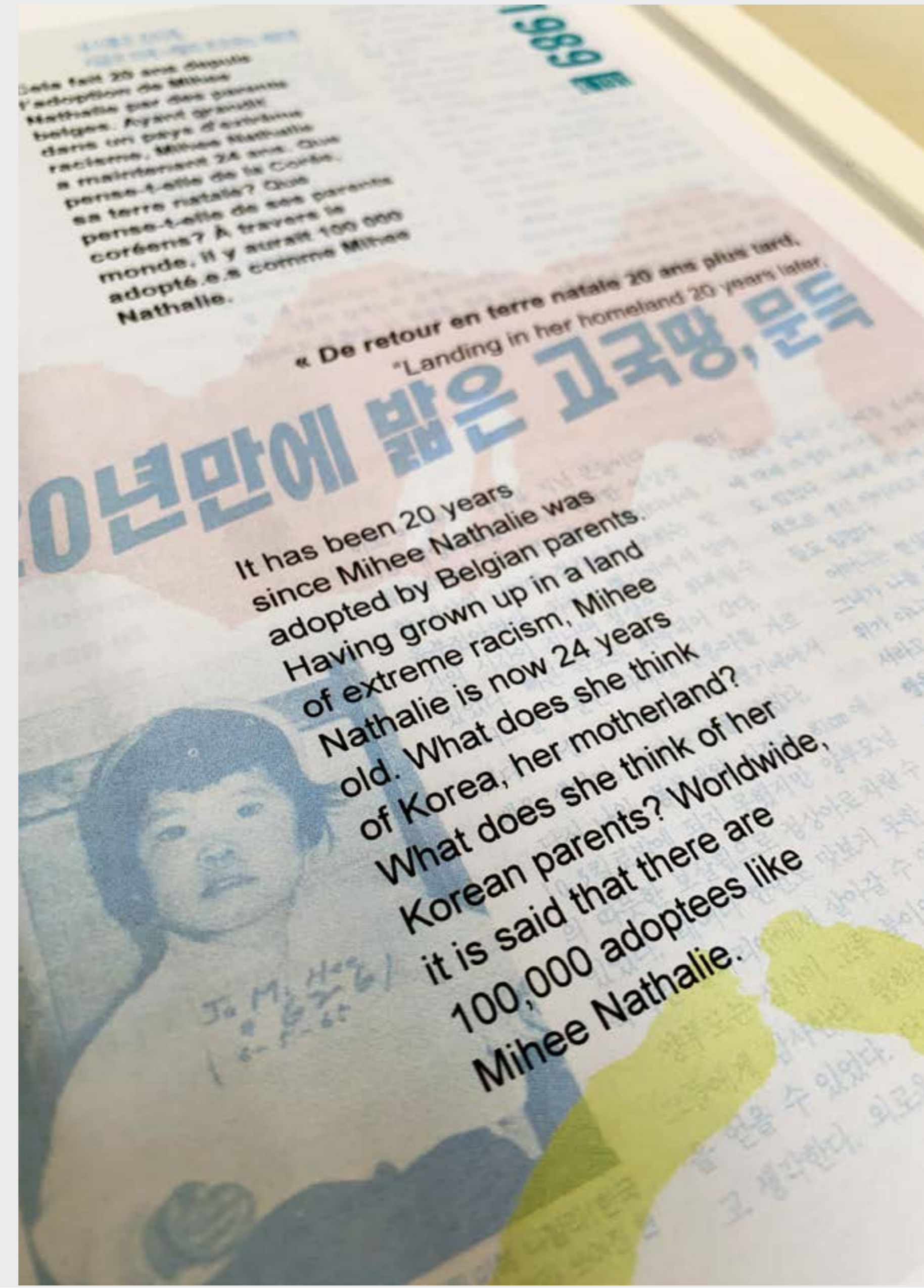


MY ADOPTION
is connected
with
this number and this film "Hiroshima Mylove"



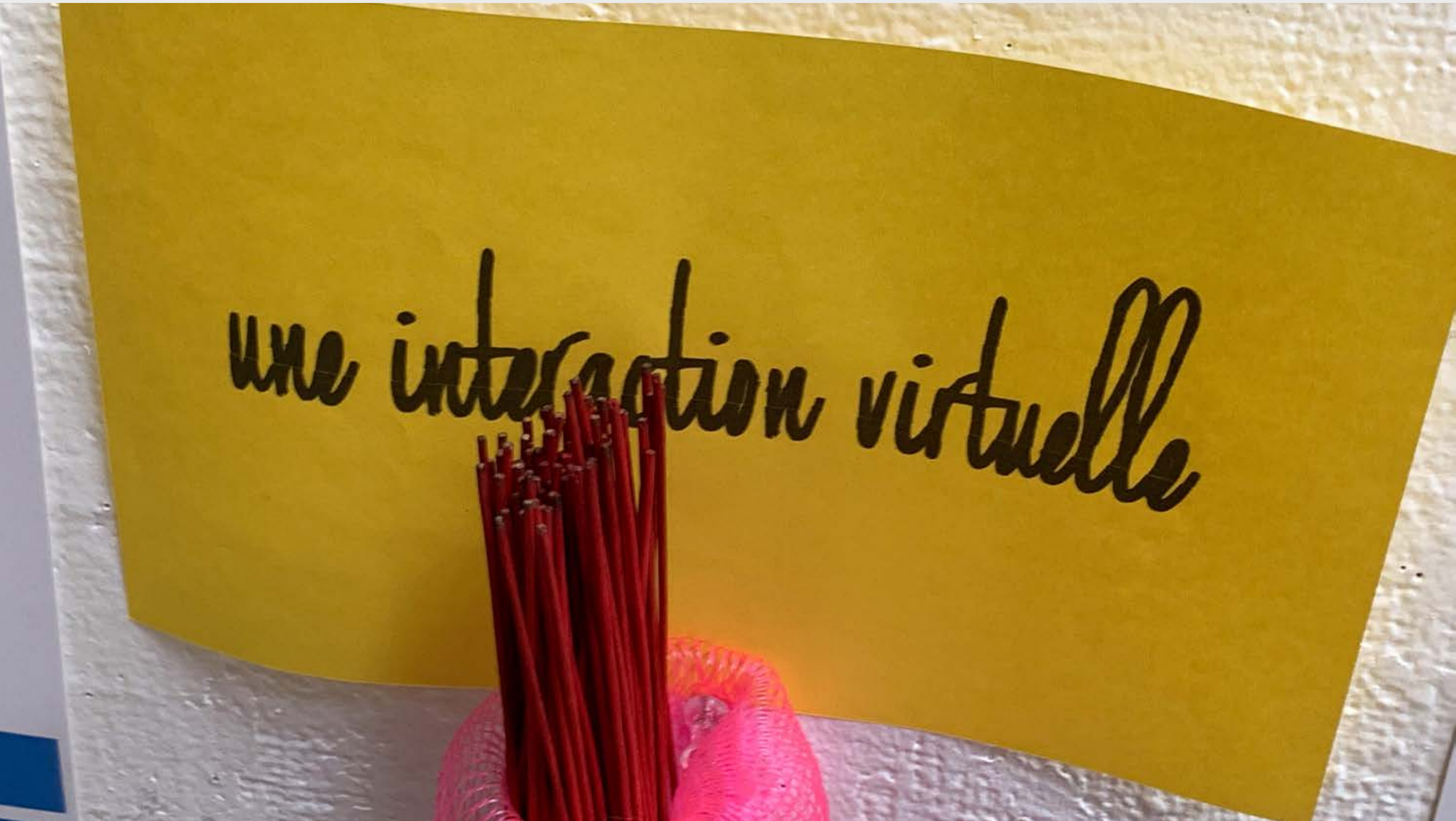


Being Open to Vulnerability





Credit: Michelle Butterfield

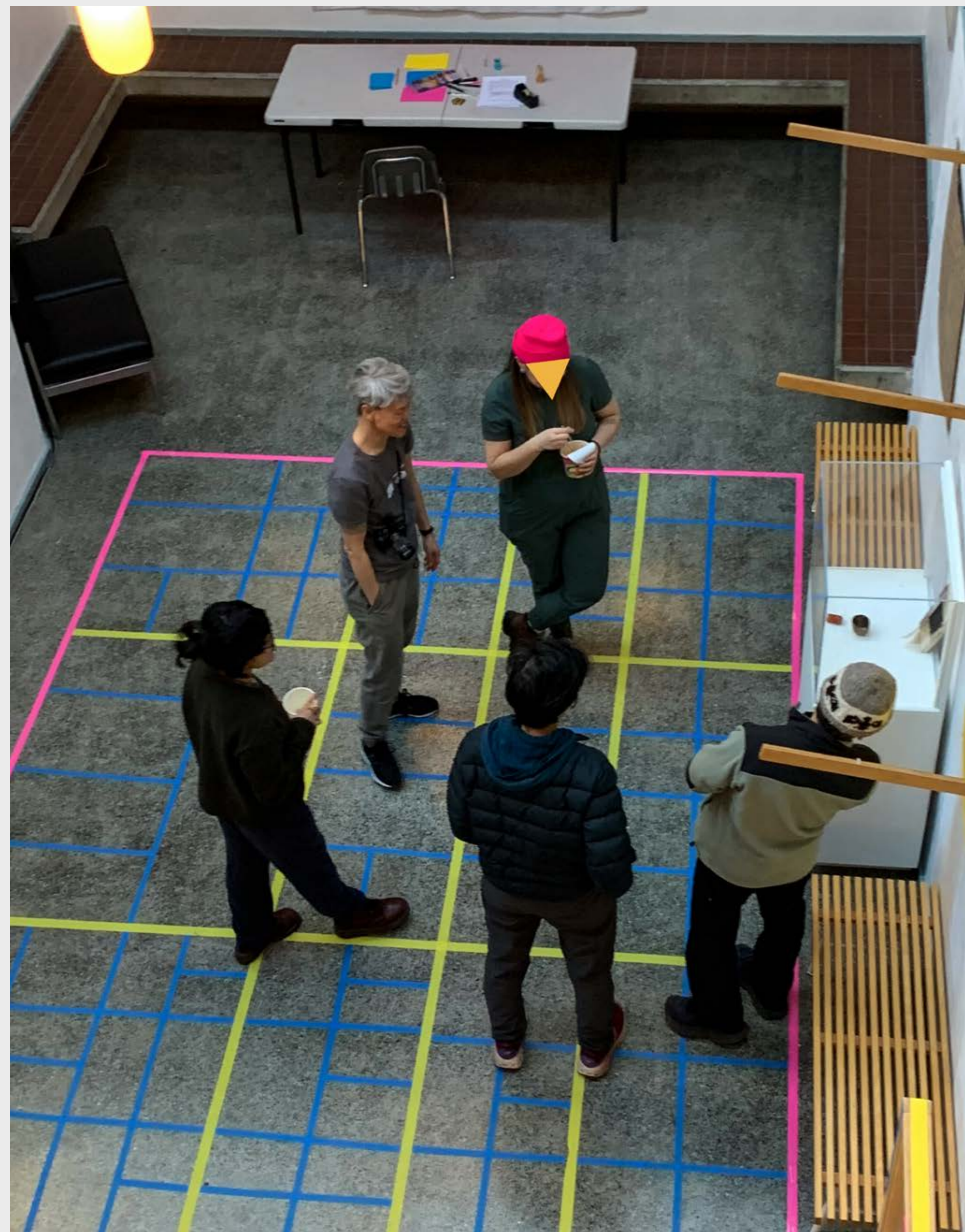


Responsive Offerings

Credit: Michelle Butterfield

Celebration of Uniqueness

- Unique views arise from sharing experience and this is to be celebrated.
- Being gentle and non-judgemental.
- Open to accepting alternate approaches/ views.





Building Connections



- Building connections to deepen understanding of each other.
- Shared eating.
- Drawing stories, feelings, interpretations.

Poja-Gi: Diasporic Gestures

An artist residency with
kimura byol lemoine



Credit: Michelle Butterfield

Giving

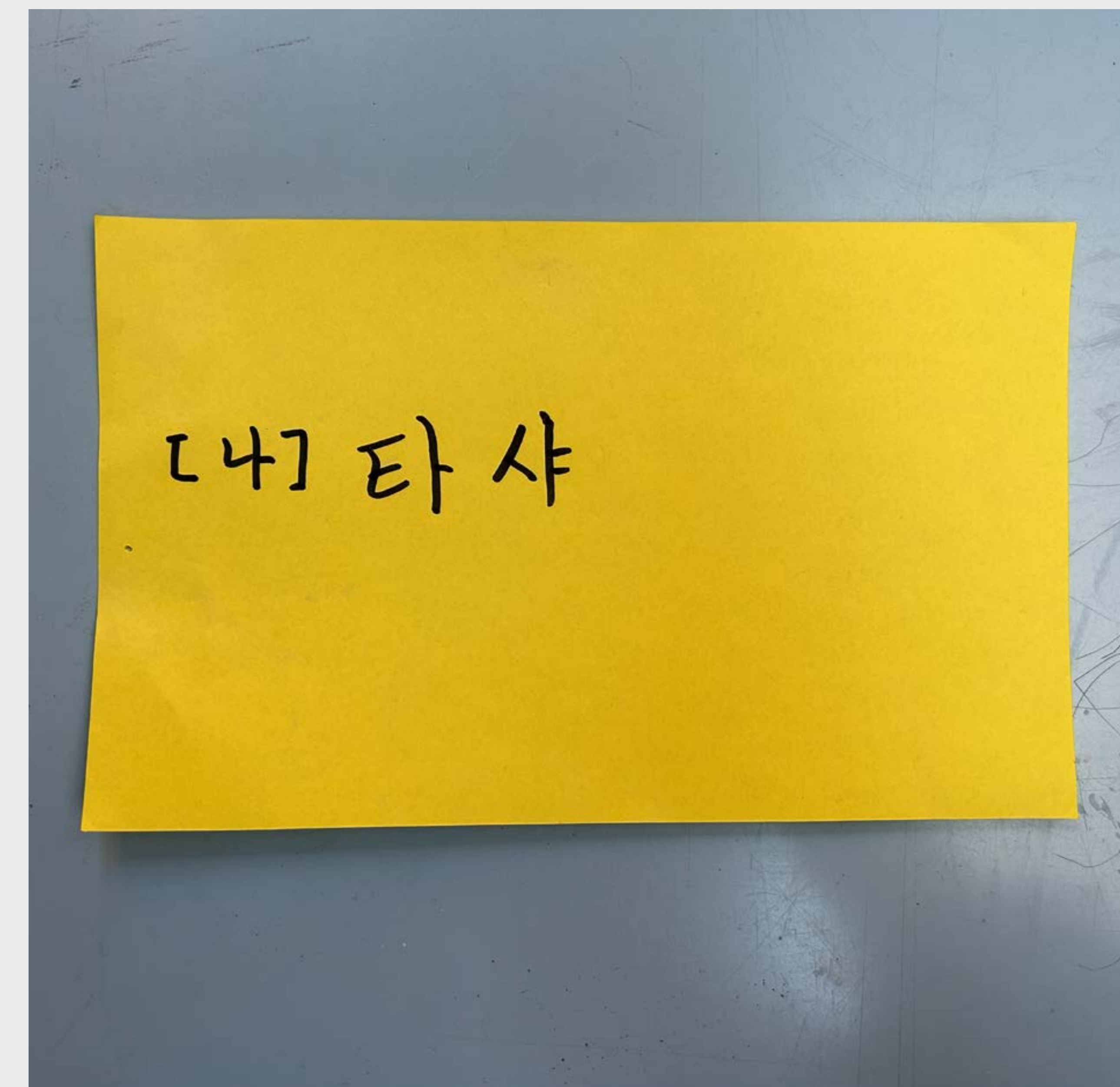


*“Unlike the sale of a commodity,
the giving of a gift tends to
establish a relationship between
the parties involved.”*

(Gerofsky et al., 2020, p. 21)



Presenting others with a gift, no matter how small is an act of giving that opens paths of communication.



Putting it into Practice

During the *Poja-Gi* residency visitors were invited to hear stories and see artifacts from kimura-lemoine's richly varied experience, allowing students the opportunity to reflect and draw stories of when they felt othered as a means to develop understanding and acceptance. kimura-lemoine's willingness to be vulnerable and to share opened the door for others to do the same and this approach works when it begins with a willingness to be vulnerable.

What follows are reflective prompts and potential practical applications.

- kimura-lemoine promoted reflective listening as well as the sharing of personal narratives. In response to a comment about positive reactions to zer's videos, which gave people voice, kimura-lemoine said, "I think we have to take our place, and people are scared of that. Hey, that's not too complicated, ..., if we give you some time and space."

Opening space for reflection and sharing in a variety of ways can invite students/participants to listen as well as share. Encouraging participants to "take their place" and tell who they are is validating and freeing.

- kimura-lemoine placed significant objects throughout the gallery as openings to illustrate experience. Ze shared the significance of the objects with participants, which added visual weight to the stories of displacement that ze shared.

Consider objects/images that help to tell a story of a time when you had to learn a new way of being or of a time when the way that you acted was not accepted. Share your object/image while you explain why it is meaningful and listen to the story that goes with another person's object/image.

- The residency featured Ramen days when kimura-lemoine prepared and shared Ramen noodles with visitors. The act of giving and sharing food broke down barriers while it honoured participants as being worthy of this gift.

Food often represents culture while it also embodies nurturing. Consider ways to honour and share different nurturing practices.

Second Residency

Artist in Residence

Golboo Amani



Credit: Golboo Amani

Golboo Amani (she/they) is a multi-disciplinary artist, educator and curator best known for their performance and social practice works. Amani produces sites for aesthetic intervention by utilizing ready-made and familiar social engagements as a point of entry in their practice.

Amani's work often examines relationships to learning by addressing the conditions of knowledge production that render epistemic violence as invisible, insignificant and benign. As a result, Amani's works often experiment with collective agency and egalitarian epistemology by producing sites where one gets to play with pedagogy.

www.golbooamani.com



Artist in Residence

Anna Jane McIntyre



Credit: @annajanemcintyre

Anna Jane McIntyre (she/her) is a visual artist-parent with a practice combining listening, drawing, thinking, doing, looking, breathing, sharing, telling, being, non-being, shapeshifting, \$5-improv-benevolent-capitalism and microactivism. Anna's work investigates how people perceive, create and maintain their notions-of-self, belonging and culture through behaviour and visual

cues. Anna's projects are an aesthetic expression of Afropresentism that combines her Trinidadian, British, and adoptive-Canadian cultural influences. Anna's work acknowledges the past-present-future, in joyous response to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s prompt *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*

Instagram: @ annajanemcintyre



we.school

September 22-25, 2024

"The schools we go to are reflections of the societies that created them."

(Shakur, 1987, p. 181)

***How do you
claim your
personal
power?***





we.school was construed as a collaborative exchange between transdisciplinary artists Golboo Amani and Anna Jane McIntyre.

The residency was planned to prioritize unsettling participants through explorations of non-hierarchical negotiation-centred unschooling play.

Participants were invited to barter knowledge, steep in the practice of deep listening, to unpack the lingering legacies as well as the present and future potentials of the institutions we call school, and to question and challenge the rules of a game.



“Our relationships to ‘school’ have lasting impacts on our lived experiences and social histories. Schools play a significant role in the operations of power, reflecting what is normalized and what is othered.”

“School is where we are first made into social subjects, where ideas and behaviours are inscribed onto our bodies and psyches through epistemic domination, forming the foundation of internalized hierarchies. To use Paulo Freire’s words, ‘There’s no such thing as neutral education.’ ”

Golboo & Anna



Bartering knowledge

Not something that is beyond us but something that is shared – not hierarchical but equal.



A different kind of knowledge sharing.
Something to be gained in being unsettled.

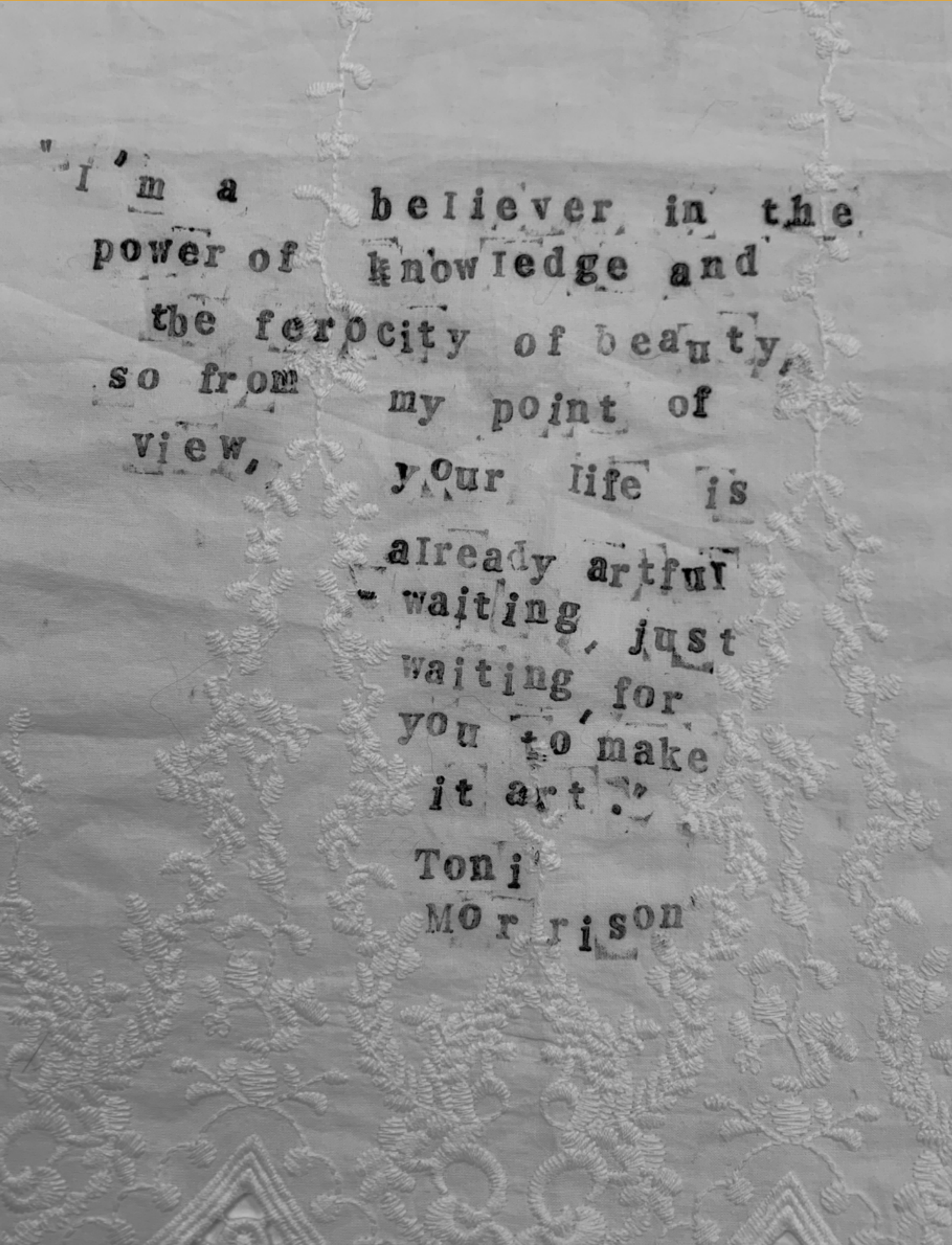


Public Reading





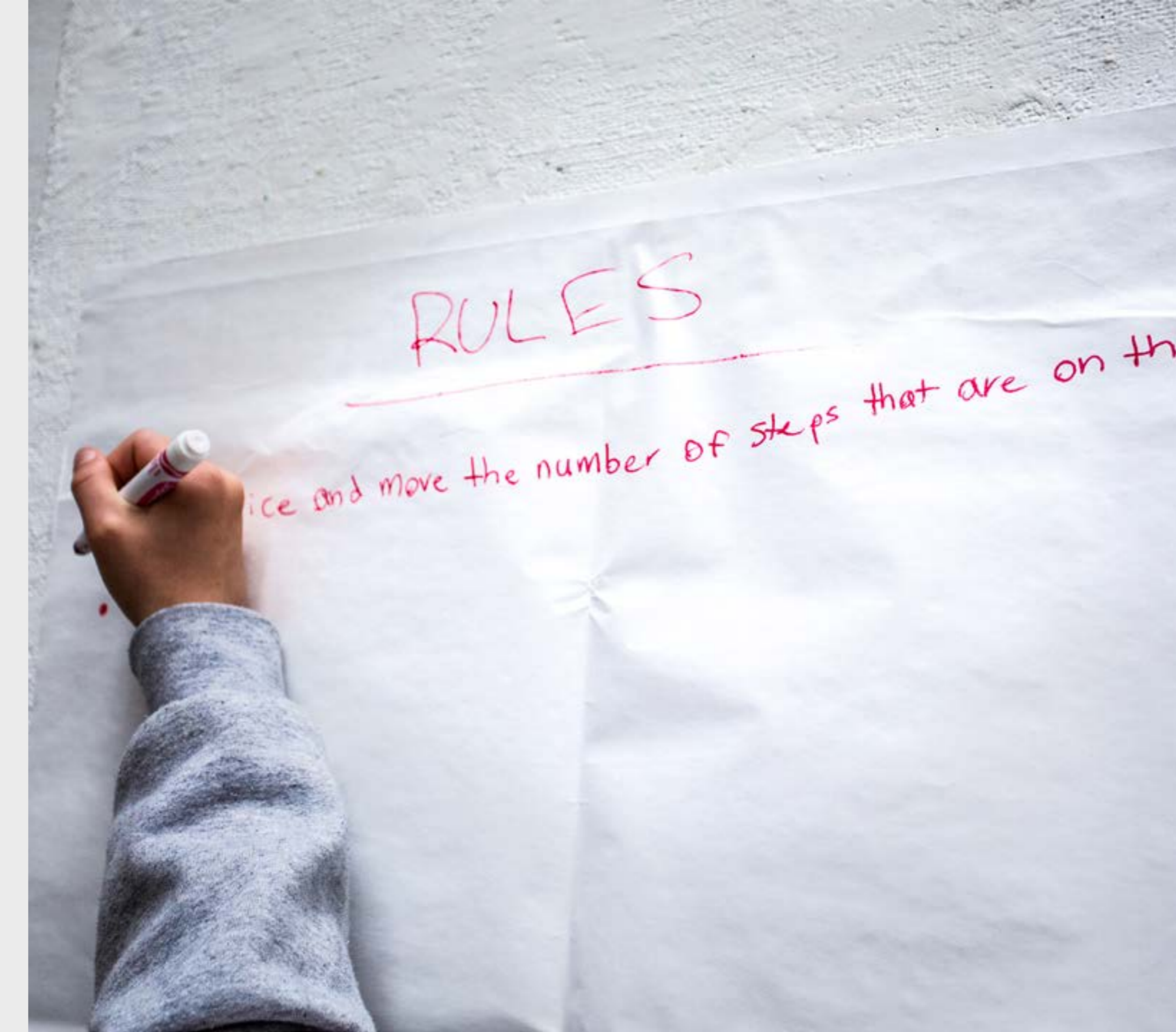
Spill the Tea



Recognizing that we all have stories about the system/creating community through shared 'gossip' / developing community through shared food and tea.

Unsettling the Rules of a Game





Thinking about 'rules' that are inclusive instead of designed to pit one against the other.

Putting it into Practice

The *we.school* residency was comprised of a series of events designed to encourage participants to rethink our hierarchical system of schooling. By questioning power structures, participants were prompted to consider systems of oppression that perpetuate societal power structures.

What follows are reflective prompts and potential practical applications.

- With *Public Reading*, Golboo and Anna curated a selection of books they connect with anti-racist and anti-oppressive thinking and ways of being. Prioritizing diversity, they selected authors who provide an array of perspectives and lived experiences. They asked visitors to select a book, from which the artists then read excerpts. Filling the A-Wing with the audible words of these authors, the artists called on passersby to pause and reflect. Extending this, they invited visitors to write their reflections on blank bookmarks, and then insert these into the respective book.

Reflect on a book that has impacted the way you perceive power dynamics. Create a bookmark for the book that encapsulates this impact either visually, or with words, or both.

- The *School of Bartered Knowledge* invited participants to exchange knowledge as a way of honoring the unique knowledge each one of us carries. It becomes easier to respect different ways of knowing and being when we start to share what we know because with the sharing comes the realization that we can learn from each other. Bartering knowledge requires that we open ourselves to learning from each other.

Try this yourself – create a space for sharing with the agreement that each participant will exchange knowledge. The shared knowledge can be cultural, familial, or experiential. Then consider how what you have learned can change the way you respond to others.

- To “spill the tea” is often associated with Black vernacular English, referring to sharing one’s truth. *Spill the Tea* was an activist artistic event where participants were invited to share their truths regarding visions for reimagined futures, institutional power dynamics, and how and where we learn. Around a table, participants were invited to reflect on quotes from Black thinkers printed on a tablecloth, while sipping a selection of teas that connected with the artists’ cultural backgrounds (Caribbean-British and Persian). Participants had opportunities to write their voices on the tablecloth and to both literally and metaphorically “spill their tea”.

Think about a time when you felt voiceless or unheard.

- *Create a visual poem to share your feelings.*
- *Think about a story you have heard from your parents, grandparents, or others where they were voiceless or unheard. Then consider how this ‘family’ story was impactful.*
- *Create a talisman, either as a small sculpture or a drawing, that could offer comfort.*

- The planning for *Game Day*, engaged young participants in a lively experience focused on reimagining existing games they enjoy playing. Through play, participants were to collectively envision new rules, environments, relationships, characters, and moves for their chosen game. Game Day aimed to guide students to critically think about hierarchies, power, and restrictions in games and other aspects of daily life.

Reflect on one of your favourite games.

- *What could you do to reimagine this game in a way that makes it more inclusive?*
- *Reimagine the game pieces, the setting, and the rules of the game so that it becomes more inclusive and inspires thought.*

Third Residency

Artist in Residence

Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde



Credit: KI Peruzzo

Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde (she/her), is a Kaniénke'haka from Kahnawake. She has an MFA & an MA-Indigenous Communities Counseling Psychology from University of Victoria and is currently a PhD candidate in the Indigenous Governance program at University of Victoria while also being the Audain Professor in Visual Arts. With an artistic practice focused on Indigenous theatre, land-based dramaturgy, site-specific performance art, co-creative collaborative practice, cultural resurgence and social/political activism and decolonial methodologies in art, Lindsay's philosophy is grounded within Indigenous aesthetic artistic practices influenced and shaped by Haudenosaunee epistemologies.

www.lindsaydelaronde.ca



Her solo and community projects intimately converse with the socio-political relationship to land, body, cosmos, identity, Indigenous sovereignty to forge artistic pathways towards a liberatory existence for self-actualization and self-determination. She weaves culture, art, history, ceremony, healing, spirituality, breath, song, human development and mindfulness into the tapestry of the creative process to support the re-visioning of Indigenous futurities of hope and beauty.

Walking into Consciousness

January 27-February 8, 2025

Walking into consciousness was envisioned as a project that invited participants to journey through anti-racist and decolonial approaches. This journey allowed participants to merge creative expression with deep-rooted Indigenous cosmologies. Through participatory, land-based, and ceremonial methodologies, the residency invited participants to collectively explore how art becomes a vehicle for social change, fostering a more inclusive and awakened world.

Throughout the residency, Lindsay guided participants by having them engage in discussion and reflection on connected topics that changed each day. This guided thinking flowed into visual representations encouraging participants to unlock the power of art to open doors, expand consciousness, and transform spaces of learning. A goal of the residency was to foster relational dialogue to help participants awaken to their feeling bodies.





How can art be a catalyst for social consciousness?

Awakening

Learning the Language of the feeling body.





- Working to connect with how we feel and why.
- Considering how our own histories and experiences shape us.
- Recognizing how our culture can be shared visually.
- Honouring ourselves through our stories and lineages.



Colonial Legacies & Origin Stories

Reflecting on how our origins impact who we are and how we act.





Reflecting on how our colonial legacies influence us daily.

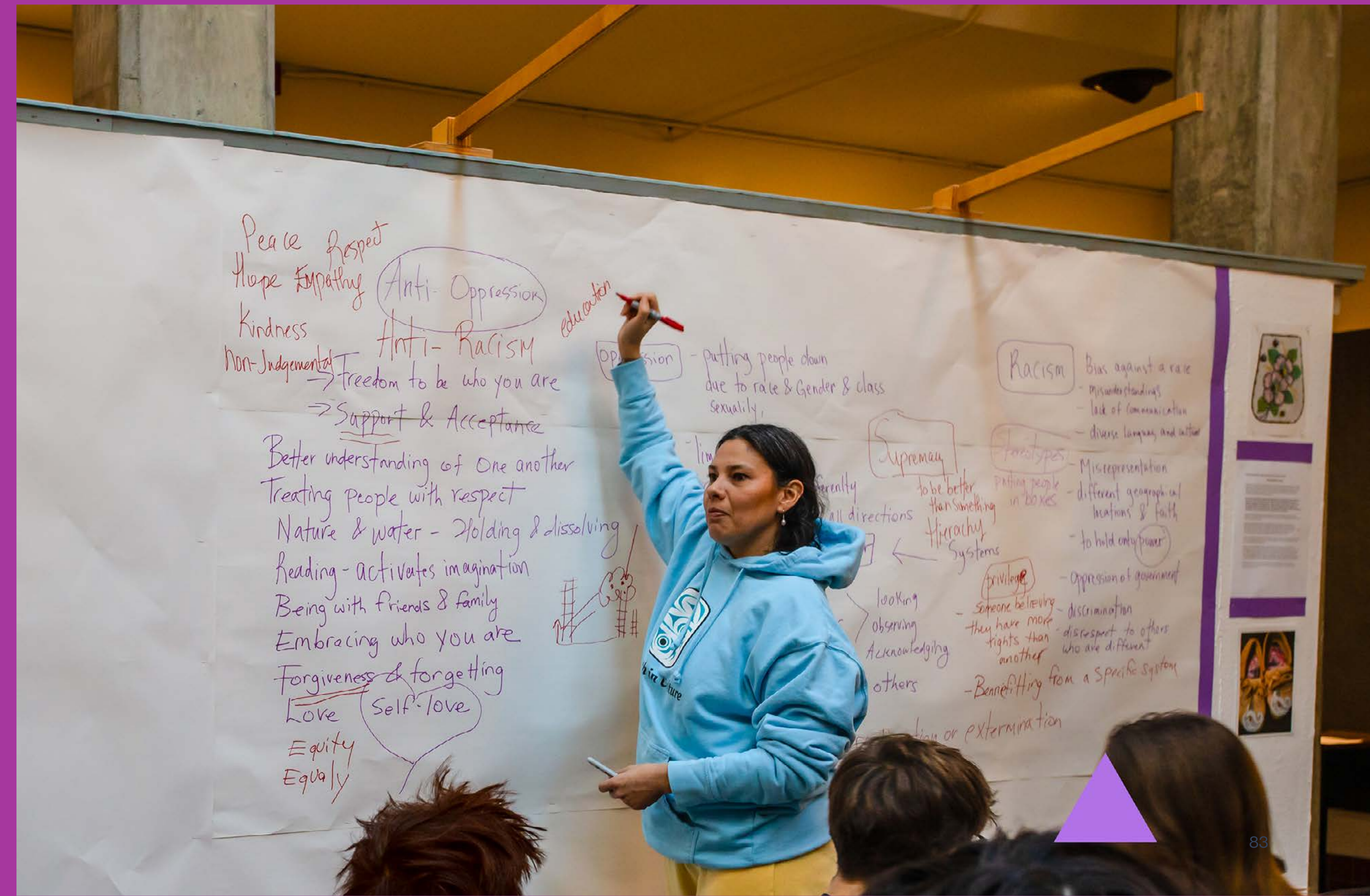


Belonging

"We also believe that a sense of belonging should not be neglected or is often critical and essential for all race related learning because marginalized group members often deal with isolation and discrimination from other groups of people."

(Shin et al., 2023, p. 174)

Thinking about what helps you feel a sense of belonging in the world.





Thinking about what helps us feel accepted.

Thinking about how we can share to help others feel belonging and acceptance.





Co-existence

"We know that we're different from another, but we can respectfully and peacefully coexist in the same environment, knowing we're different, knowing we don't have to see eye to eye, knowing we have different lived experiences."

Lindsay

Learning to value the gifts of others.



- Reflecting on the gifts we bring to the world.
- Reflecting on our own gifts that shape who we are.

Putting it into Practice

Walking into Consciousness featured distinct themes each day. The artist indicated that the most impactful aspect of the residency resided in “the strategies that we use and the methods that we use to help people make meaning of their own lives and their own stories.” Lindsay encouraged participants to understand their own biases while reflecting on what they could bring to create more acceptance. Daily themes included consideration of our origin stories and narratives, colonial legacies, awakening to our feeling bodies, our sense of belonging, and co-existence.

What follows are reflective prompts and potential practical applications.

- Participants created a basic body map by tracing around their prone bodies, which were in a pose of their choosing. To honour participant comfort level, however, participants were also able to choose a portion of their body. Tracing around their own hands or feet allowed participants to engage in reflection comfortably.

Consider how a body mapping exercise can encourage participants to connect their personal lived experience to who they are and the way that they occupy their place in the world.

- *What do I bring with me in all that I do?*
- *How can I represent who I am pictorially?*
- *How can reflecting on who I am help me share with others?*

- Lindsay used a mind map exercise where she solicited ideas from participants to create a definition of racism and approaches to counter it. The mind map exercise meant that each idea was recorded and then clearly visible for all to see. She recorded difficult comments with great care but honoured input by including the ideas. The ideas evident on the mind map were then used to spark designs.

Consider the value of a group discussion wherein ideas are faithfully recorded and discussed as a preliminary idea generating exercise. The group discussion can spark a time for reflection and further discussion and lead to exercises arising from different themes.

■ The themes throughout the residency were designed to motivate participants to examine who they were from different perspectives. Reflecting on personal beliefs and ways of being in the world followed by sharing insights, supported a journey into consciousness.

- *Depict your personal origin story in a line design. Consider the colours you use as well as the forms you include.*
- *Consider your personal colonial legacy and how that has shaped your life. How can you depict this visually and how can you share it?*
- *Consider images that help you tune in to your feelings. What sparks joy? What sparks awakening?*
- *Consider how you would like to be seen. How can you depict an element of you that you keep hidden but depict it in such a way that it feels safe?*

Concluding Remarks

The work of these artists as they inhabited the A. Wilfrid Johns Gallery, invited art educators, students, and community to collectively study and practice anti-racism and anti-oppression. Although the focus of each residency was unique and each artist approached anti-racism and anti-oppression in a different way, common themes emerged.

At the conclusion of *Walking into Consciousness*, Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde said “art definitely is an expression of creativity but it’s also a community builder. You know when people are co-learning and co-creating. It’s also a community.” The importance of

community was a salient characteristic in each residency. *we.school* featured a day of Bartered Knowledge to show that knowledge is not something that is beyond us but something that is shared – not hierarchical but equal. During *Poja-Gi*, the importance of sharing experience to deepen understanding of each other and thereby build connection, also subtly guided participants towards the value of community.

Through different gallery activities, each residency drew attention to the importance of not only knowing ourselves but also honoring the individuality of others. When participants ‘Spilled the

Tea’ in *we.school*, the sharing underlined the ways in which we experience similar events from different perspectives. The ensuing discussion resulted in deeper personal understanding and reflection. Body mapping during *Walking into Consciousness* invited participants to think about what made them who they were. The sharing circle that followed, encouraged personal and group understanding. During *Poja-Gi*, kimura-lemoine’s willingness to expose her own story, modeled the importance of authentic sharing. Her invitation to draw their own stories, exemplified gentle, non-judgmental attunement to alternate views.

As the A. Wilfrid Johns Gallery was animated during each residency, those who participated were awakened to the work we can all do to become a community that is free from oppression and racism. Understanding ourselves and sharing honestly with others was modeled, which allowed participants to practice building connections with others. Connection invites understanding and thus ameliorates oppression and racism. As this exhibition catalogue has shown, learning extended beyond these common themes and all who participated gained new skills for anti-racism and anti-oppression.

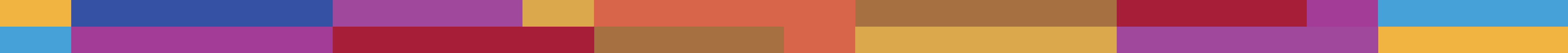
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**Additional research findings and products are available on the research website.
Access by scanning the QR code.**





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