

2023 Resident Faculty Lecture – Park McArthur & Jason Hirata, June 26

Ajay Kurian: Hi, everyone. Let's begin. Park McArthur and Jason Hirata met in 2014 at Yale Union, which is an art space in Portland, Oregon. As a way to introduce them, I'd like to stage a series of encounters between their respective exhibitions since then.

At the end of 2013, Jason presented the exhibition *Optimum LH-3M*, at the Frye Art Museum in Seattle, Washington. White melamine sheets covered the floor, producing an all-white exhibition space. The beloved and dreaded white cube. On the floor in the center of the room were four LCD monitors lined in a row, inches apart. Videos ranging from clip of Miyazaki's 1992 animated film *Porco Rosso* to semi-instructional videos on how to operate high-end lenses circulated consecutively from screen to screen, one after the other, eventually reaching the outer screen, and fully viewable, creating a snake-like flow of moving images. Two speakers, also in a line, were adjacent to the televisions. And next to those were two security floodlights, pointed to the floor, looking like illuminated visors, suggesting that perhaps the space of white light and white walls be thought through – be thought of through the lens of surveillance, security, and property. Lining the walls were paintings from the selection hung salon-style as they are. Hirata's intervention harkened back to the so-called invention of the white cube at the Munich succession, from 1893, where in contrast to the salon-style exhibitions in variously colored and patterned spaces, their first exhibition had lightly colored walls and sparsely hung paintings. It became the grandfather of what we might call optimal viewing conditions. Perhaps Jason was attempting to shift what feels like a necessary condition into a questionable one. The landscapes in *Porco Rosso* have been commented on in such a way that suggest that the European landscapes depicted were here meant to feel distant, as if through the lens of a tourist. Miyazaki was arguably trying to provincialize the European landscape, making it quaint and contingent rather than the necessary backdrop for serious art, as it might often be thought as. Likewise, Jason might be rightly trying to provincialize the cube and the circumstances it manufactures.

In 2014, Park McArthur presented her exhibition, *Ramps*, at Sixth Street Gallery. Against the black floor of the gallery were twelve wheelchair ramps, previously used for galleries or residencies, many of which were made specifically for her. One of which, I believe, actually came from Skowhegan. The effect was unsettling and quiet. It took a moment to realize what this near anthropological survey was marking. It was the kind of exhibition where you might quickly read, look, and leave, unaware of how the exhibition was about to affect you. I remember seeing that exhibition. Unsure how long to stay, and finally walking out unable to fully satisfy the feeling of how to do right by the exhibition. How long is long enough? It didn't matter. Park's exhibition has stayed with me to this very day. Since then, I've thought about Park's ability to access spaces - art spaces, any spaces. I've thought about the spaces that included her, and inadvertently or unintentionally, excluded her. I've thought about minimalism's supposed autonomy, and the exclusions afforded and necessitated.

High above the ramps was an evenly-spaced line of empty blue signs, the same scale as the one that appeared out front the exhibition, noting 'Ramp access located at Essex Street.' Without information, the signs became a rhythm of blue monochromes, like windows, reminiscent of Robert Gober's windows, but with no bars. Here was an emotional contradiction, bound by political and visual knots. Without text, the signs were just about useless, pointing to a kind of political futility. The freedom of the open window insists, to where? For whom? Bars or no bars, accessibility remains an open question. The condition of autonomy, of the optimal body, or a universal subject, are not heroic here. They are neoliberal pathologies.

In 2016, Jason presented *The Brink* at the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle, Washington, and Park presented *Poly* at Chisenhale, in London. Whereas before their exhibitions spoke to local conditions that unfolded as global and philosophical problematics, these appeared to examine the global conditions, in order to reach intimate ones.

At Chisenhale, Park installed three massive black polyurethane foam blocks in the corner, each roughly eight feet tall. (00:05:02) Riffing off the sedate autonomy of minimalist sculpture, Park's appropriated readymade chunks of polyurethane appeared much more bodily, wonky, uneven, and soft. As a material, they're meant to absorb sound and impact for various domestic and industrial purposes. In another series of sculptures entitled *Contact*, Park looked to how differentiated plastics of all kinds are used to absorb, contain, and distribute liquids and substances across bodily borders. Stacked high on top of medical surgical trays were quote dental dams, catheters, condoms, surgical masks, heel pads, baby oil, barrier cream, latex gloves, cannulas, and tissues, as Colby Chamberlain indexed in *ArtForum*. Chamberlain goes on to note that although these objects may perhaps be meta stand-ins for Park as their quote disabled author, quote, 'identity is particularly unstable in the context of disability, since, as Eva Feder Kittay observes, the realities of accidents, diagnoses, and old age ensure that everyone is only temporarily abled.'

If the guiding metaphor and reality of Park's exhibition was absorption, Jason's at the Henry Art Gallery might be consumption. How do we consume and how are we consumed in a global economy that is only thinking about how to optimize labor output, without thinking of the living cost of such a transaction? Sutured together are two disparate sources with nearly two centuries between them: Goya's *Disasters of War* and a 1981 speech by Jack Welch, the CEO of GE at the time. I excerpt the gallery – I excerpt the gallery's text here. 'In one gallery are Hirata's oil pastel drawings re-creating Goya's scene of desperation, and an industrial light fixture that partly illuminates the room, inviting questions about what power structures make visible and what they hide – and what they hide. Another gallery installed with box fans, air filters, word drawings referred to as restaurant specials – chicken tikka masala pizza, and plumpy nut, for example – Hirata makes palpable the forces of our globalized economy, and networked society. Plumpy nut, a therapeutic food used to combat malnutrition and in famine – in famine and disaster-stricken areas, is manufactured by a French company that strictly defends its patent, and restricts the licensing of this life-saving remedy, even though it is unable to meet demand, limiting access to potential beneficiaries.' End quote.

Seen together, Jason's attempts to bring to light the grotesque reality of biopower as formulated by Michel Foucault, where sovereignty shifts from to make die and let live into to make live and let die. Speaking from London to Seattle, Park and Jason's exhibitions each harness their own means of elaborating this contemporary immiseration.

I'd like to note a final pair of exhibitions, Park's at the Kunsthalle Berne in 2020, and Jason's presented in 2022 at the New York Gallery of Ulrik. Reading about Park's exhibition in Berne made me understand that her introduction of my work was following from an ethic of the exhibition guide as form and artwork. At the Kunsthalle Berne, her audio guide was in many ways the work itself. It also gave me insight into the way, into the way disability communities were already ahead of COVID mandates, understanding the value and importance of remote access well before the world was forced to. Park's exhibition was titled *Kunsthalle_guests Gaeste.Netz.5456*, after the name and password for the wireless router for the museum. The signal for this router was boosted, at Park's request, so it now reached the entire institution's footprint. The audioguide announces early on the goal and purpose of Park's work, quoted here. '*Kunsthalle_guests Gaeste.Netz.5456* is a series of visual and material descriptions of the interior and exterior spaces of Kunsthalle Berne, as well as the artworks installed therein. It moves through the Kunsthalle's seven galleries, the building's elevator, courtyard, and nearby transportation stop. The exhibition reflects Park's, McArthur's inquiries concerning the venue's existing conditions, the people linked to it, the building, and its history. More broadly, it explores various possibilities for sharing and experiencing an art exhibition. One of the infrastructures that this particular exhibition relies upon is the building's wireless network. McArthur asked to permanently expand the building's existing wi-fi, so the network reaches all of the seven galleries, as well as its courtyard, bar, and adjacent park. (00:10:01) Park McArthur named the exhibition after the existing *Kunsthalle_guest* network, and its *gaeste.netz.5456* password. The exhibition was realized with great intimacy, as McArthur did not travel to Berne, Switzerland in order to make or install it. The exhibition comes from questions raised about the particular possibilities that distance provides; after all, Kunsthalle Berne's audience has always included people who do not travel to Berne, Switzerland. This exhibition's approach to such a constellation of individual and social realities might be understood as an invitation to reflect upon the confrontation of presence, and upon who presence relies, wherever one might be. What is presence if not a response to what and who is not there? To the objects and objectivities that are absent, and may be limited – may, to a limited extent, be our influence. Welcome to *Kunsthalle_guests* dot – goddamn it {laughter} *Kunsthalle_guests Gaeste.Netz.5456 Gaeste.Netz.5456*. The guests are here, the guests are online and in the galleries. The guests are at Kunsthalle Berne. The guests are elsewhere.'

Like a shared shadow, Jason's exhibition at Ulrik felt like a subtle meditation on guests being both present and elsewhere, transforming the everyday gallery goer into a ghost of themselves. Photographs of candles whose flames cast shadows were caught in a field of real shadows, cast by those in the room. Jason had de-installed the overhead lighting and instead plugged in bulbs into the wall outlets, again using light as both a surveilling affect as well as, in this case, creating a host of shadows that enabled viewers to find the relation between their flickering shadows and those of the candles. After documentation of these shadows are arrested and the ghosts of so many become present.

Never one to shy away from the intimate and the corporate, the show was aptly titled *Minutes*.

As I close, I'm reminded of Elena Ferrante's brilliant series of Neapolitan novels, because they reformulated what a bildungsroman – a philosophical coming of age story – could look and feel like. By and large, I had considered it the territory of the singular white man, achieving greatness through his apparent autonomy. Lenu and Lila were best friends, constantly chasing after one another, orbiting the greatness one saw in the other, believing the qualities – believe the qualities of one another were both seizable and out of reach. Their orbit created a new way of approaching the bildungsroman for me, where it was not the singular growth of an artist, but two. This two allowed for a totally different kind of capaciousness, where you knew it was always others that made you, always others who carried and kept you, always others that you would need to hold in order to make this life in any way meaningful. That our story is never our own, but of so many orbits of care.

Jason and Park's ongoing conversation and relationship belies the larger condition of their respective bodies of work, that they have always been working and thinking with many, of the many. They have been – they have never been singular; in fact, they refuse it. When they write, when they think, when they love, and live, it is always with one another, and with others. Together, they are helping us devise new ways of being for one another, and to rote out the awful and alienating sense that we are meant to do this alone.

I'd like to end with a quote from a text co-written by Park and Constantine Zavitsanos [music plays 00:14:00 -] who we'll meet in the coming weeks and features a frequent collaborator with Park. 'In our conditions we aren't alone, both in the way that our conditions form solitarities around what might be called shared experience, and also in the ways that our conditions necessitate being together. These needs constitute the we, depending, deep ending parabolic droop bottomed in the catenary, merged in the swerve, singing.' {"Love Hangover" continues} It is my honor and pleasure to introduce Park McArthur and Jason Hirata. {applause, cheering} [music stops] (00:15:02)

Park McArthur: Okay, already crying, thank you. {laughter} Candida, where are the tissues? You're the person with the tissues, right? I'm just kidding. Um, it's kind of unbelievable to have, like, things that you care a lot about spoken about so tenderly, and reflected back to you, so, that, we're starting out with a major gift, so thank you so much, Ajay, for spending time on that, and thinking alongside us.

Hi, everybody. {audience responds} Hi! We had like jokes lined up, but the mood has, um {laughter} the mood has shifted or something, but we'll get back to laughing and crying simultaneously at some point, so. Yeah, we're gonna kinda do it a little bit differently, where we would love to welcome questions and comments and kind of swap the format of the Q&A ending the conversation, and sort of start it in the beginning. And Jason and I have never spoken or done a talk together before, so, it's a privilege to do that, and we're just grateful for making the conditions possible to do that. We're grateful to be here with Sean and Ajay and Candida and Steve, and to all of you for making it to week three {cheering} we wanted to start with a little congratulations and celebration and snaps

and claps, because it's {applause, cheering} yeah, it's a big deal, it's a kind of series of, like, many miracles lined up that we're here, not just that we're here at Skowhegan, but doing this together. So we wanted to give you a space to kind of talk, and, um, and ask us where, where we should start, really. So we do have images, we've got things lined up, we can kind of pull up to maybe elaborate or illustrate concepts or questions, but I'd also just invite you to try to be as comfortable as possible, kind of where we're coming from, and like across disability event space, like, it's not distracting or rude or disruptive to like, leave when you need to, or smoke outside, or get more to drink, and to move your body as you need to, so, that, I feel like, is a practice of love to try to care for yourself in these event spaces. So, if there are things that we can do now to shift, or do it together if you want to do it yourself, that's, that makes us feel good.

Jason Hirata: Anybody? {laughter}

But that is to say, like, um, we would kind of like to start with questions, rather than taking them last. But I wanted to show one thing while people might be recalling a question they might have had, or making one on the spot, {laughter} that, um, [pulling up slide] these are the speakers that Ajay mentioned in this very first show of mine, and those are the reason why we met. {laughter} Because Park was having a show in Portland right after this show came down, and they needed speakers there, and my friend was the curator there, and he called me to ask if I had any speakers they could borrow, so I brought them to the gallery, and that's how I met Park.

Audience member #1: Woo! Those are sexy speakers.

Hirata: They are. {laughter}

Audience member #1: Like, wow.

Hirata: They are.

Audience member #1: Since I have the microphone, I do have a question. {laughter} Um, {laughs} sorry, uh, my question is for both of you, I have been researching your work, and the thing that I think that you both have that I love is that at first glance, your work seems weird, or absurd, or, um, kind of like asking a question inside out. So, I just sounded like a Canadian, oot. Didn't I, Sandra? {laughter}

Hirata: No, Sandra's from Vancouver, they don't say that there.

Audience member #1: She's from Toronto, and she says 'oot.' I've heard her say it a million times. {laughter}

Hirata: What!

Audience member #1: She walks around the studio going oot, oot, oot. Okay. {laughter} So, my question {laughs} sorry, Jason did want me to do a roast; originally, that is what we talked about, so –

McArthur: We did request that in our studio visit, we said –

Audience member #1: Yes. We're not doing that.

McArthur: -- Kristin could do a roast.

Audience member #1: It is not comfortable on the start of week three to do a roast. We have to know each other really well. Okay, I'm done, okay. {laughter} So my question is, Jason or Park, how do you get to weird? Or how do you get to the absurd? Or do you go, throw it really far out there and then start to pull it back in, and when do you stop? Uh, yeah, that's my question.

Hirata: Should we pile up a few questions? {laughter} I have a bit of an answer for it ready, but – for me I think get to the weird by looking at the normal, or the, you know, the banal. Like as an example, I'll go to the last show of mine that Ajay mentioned. [switches slide] Like, what he – oh, he did talk about was, there were actually two parts to this show. So while the show makes shadows, it also kind of has – while the shadows are visible, there's also, like, for while the exhibition is a visible part of what's happening, there's also an invisible part of what's happening. So here's a visible part. I'm literally in my RAW files right now. {laughter} Go to JPGs. [switches slide] So these are the kind of perplexing shadows that – I don't know if you can see it on the screen, but this is a candle, and it somehow is making a shadow, but it's a light, so it shouldn't make a shadow, it seems. [switches slides] But that's the physical part of – so that's, that's something odd that I noticed while, like, looking at something normal. [switches slide] Like this. But the body of this show that made the visible shadow possible was something extremely banal and normal, which was a financial loan that I leant to the gallery in order for them to fund my show. {laughter}

McArthur: Which in normal terms would be just like production or something. Right.

Hirata: Like I would have asked them, I would have said I'll just pay for it myself, normally. But instead, I wanted to take, I wanted to – I really just actually wanted to give them support, and make that, make the exhibition a gesture of that, and in doing so, I indebted them to me. {laughs} Sort of on accident, but, some of the conditions of the loan, if you're interested, you can read the document. {laughs} It's only three pages. Legal, legal, legal pages. But some of the conditions of the loan really also turn something super banal like that again into something, like it has a zero percent interest rate, and it has no payment period. And I've since sold their debt to someone else. Anyways. {laughter}

McArthur: How much did you sell it for?

Hirata: Well, I sold it to someone for eighty dollars, and I think he sold it to someone who about a hundred seventy dollars. And it, that person's name is Scott Lorinsky, and he's available for offers {laughter} if anybody wants to buy it. But what's left of the loan, what they still owe me is only two hundred sixty dollars, so I wouldn't buy it for more than that. {laughter}

McArthur: But when you say that he's available, you mean that the loan, like other loans, or financialized assets, could be continually purchased. Or one part of it is this proposition that it could keep going. Is that right?

Hirata: Yeah. It's –

McArthur: This is, I'm asking this cause this is a piece, in many ways, even as Jason was making it, it was like really over my head. (00:25:00) We would kind of talk about it daily, and I still {laughing} like wouldn't understand it. So this is {laughter} also an opportunity for me to learn about this artwork.

Hirata: Yeah, wait, I kind of want to bring up a Three Stooges video, but – should I try?

McArthur: I mean, we're not on shop wifi, so, let's rip. {laughter}

Hirata: Um. [searching for video] Yeah, it could work something kind of like this. [video plays 00:25:38 – 00:26:05] – can you hear?

McArthur: Is the audio on? {laughter}

Hirata: So, yeah, I think you can make {laughter} – if someone owns something, it's up, you know, it's up for debate whether you can get it off them or not, I guess. Make an offer.

McArthur: But one thing that's interesting about that make an offer, and that you're giving us the kind of invitation to is a kind of non-verbalized or, now it's verbalized, but it's kind of a source of information that's maybe not widely available or written down, and I think a lot of things within art operate that way. Both to kind of wondrous effect and also to exclusionary effect, and sometimes at the same time, so, it's kind of interesting to learn about this piece, and some of it's like interior logic, but also, at the same time, not know that I could approach someone or go into a gallery and try to own a work by Jason Hirata, or something.

Hirata: Yeah, that's exactly what I was hoping for, that it could be, like, this very affordable thing, that even if you buy it, you can sell it, or know that you could try to sell it. It's also not expensive even then. But that is as long as we don't regard it as an artwork, cause I think that, you know, it's approaching the point where it'll, where someone won't want to sell it for less than what the debt is, meaning like, they will think that the contract is more valuable than what the contract is for, and that –

McArthur: You mean like keeping the actual piece of paper?

Hirata: Yeah. Yeah, like how old money is more valuable than it actually is, like, than the circulatory value of it, just because it's collected. And that kind of might be turning something into an artwork.

McArthur: I'm gonna probably answer your question towards the end, because it's such a good one, and I'm still chewing on it. I, a lot of my work is extremely literal, actually, and a lot of it's about questions that are sort of still unresolved and, you know, exceed my own lifetime, so it's not like they're going to be, um, answered, or something. So I think the weird and the, um, kind of, being perplexed inside of the process of making an artwork is, um, I guess the joy and magic of being able to be an artist, in this way.

Jason is prompting me with an artwork, which I really appreciate. I think I'll just talk about this now as a segue, and maybe you'll find something weird in it. But it is, maybe a linkage is kind of the, the conventions that we find when we go to spaces of display, and the information that we're given – and the kind of assumptions about what information we'd like to know when we're experiencing something on display, and in this case, an artwork. So I took up the form of a wall label, which is a fairly standard thing in museums and galleries, and they're there to accompany the work, and they often tell you things like the title, the date, the artist. And then you may find a line that's called the courtesy line, and the courtesy line is something that speaks of ownership or acquisition, provenance or stewardship. (00:30:23) So it's often the person or the museum who's kind of lending this work to be visible or on display. It's the person or the museum or the institution that owns it. And, um, I guess right before coming here, and, um, and on, afterwards, this work is an extra elongated wall label, it's forty inches long, and it –

Hirata: You mean, sorry, coming here as a –

McArthur: As a participant. Yeah, thanks, sorry, good clarification; as a participant. In 2012, um, and it, um, was conceived, I was trying to think of life and the kind of life inseparable art continuum, and these are people who have carried or held my physically, although I've been really rethinking what physical caring and holding is, you know, in or alongside emotional or spiritual or other forms of caring and holding. And that those are often not separable. So I've been really thinking about naming, you know, additional names that come through various forms of caring and holding. But it lists all of the names of people who have, have done that with me, and so there, um, and in many cases I've asked the people if I can name them, and in other cases I haven't. Um, and so there is an ongoing question of like, how this work circulates, or how I check in with someone or not about that. That's something I will probably change in the future. Ash [NAME UNCLEAR] is on here, for example. I don't think I asked you, to name you. And yeah, it starts with my mom, like in utero, and it speaks of, you know, familial relationships, care providing, um, romantic, names of many people that I can't remember, people who are strangers who have performed acts of, you know, gone with me through care or supporting me, like, um, going up stairs, or getting on and off an airplane, or nurses or doctors, things like that. Um, and it's ongoing, so each time that it's exhibited I try to think of it as being up to date, and trying to add to the list of names, and, um, it, um, yeah, it's often, I ask that it's displayed on the

wall, as a museum wall label would be, and so it kind of looks like there's a missing art work on the wall, or in the gallery, too, so it very, ideally, in my mind, it's kind of gesturing towards the surround, or, or what is in the space already, and also outside the space of display. And it's a work that I've, each time it's produced and printed new, for a display, I ask to have the wall labels returned to me, and I have a series of five or six, and I've not displayed them all together, but it's not a piece that I've let go of in terms of having, um, a, a museum or a collector collect, because it feels like it's already made and, and owned, for lack of a better word, by the people whose, whose names are listed. And so it's kind of an open question as to, you know, where the artwork is, I guess, for lack of a better word. I think there's one example of seeing it installed.

Hirata: Yeah, go for it. (00:34:56)

McArthur: Ah, sorry, can you navigate me around? Jason has an amazing desktop that every time I get in there I get, like, super disoriented. This one?

Hirata: That's the only thing from your email.

McArthur: Oh. Okay. My bad. Okay.

Hirata: What about this?

McArthur: We could bring another question into the room.

Audience member #2: Perfect.

McArthur: Hello.

Audience member #2: Yay!

McArthur: [NAME UNCLEAR].

Audience member #2: Hi.

McArthur: Hi.

Audience member #2: Well, while you're on the subject, so this work was created after Skowhegan? Or the –

McArthur: I think right before, yeah.

Audience member #2: Right before it?

McArthur: Mmhmm.

Audience member #2: So my question was about reflecting on your time here at Skowhegan, um, and what, maybe like, your challenges were, and the impact, or lasting effect, that it might have had on, you know, your art and career.

McArthur: Sure. Wow, good, open question. Awesome, I love it. And sorry, as a segue, Jason is pulling up a website that I made recently to try to communicate my artistic production to the world, so this is – I was like, do I name it after myself? And I also [WORD UNCLEAR] dotnet. Um, and I'm, I'm increasingly getting really interested in like artists foundations and estates as the ways in which, um, you know, work is preserved and advocated for, and they're often, um, primarily made around a solo artist's practice, so it's like the estate of Sol LeWitt, or the estate of Cy Twombly, and I'm curious how the estate or foundation model could help create a more social view of art history, so that practices that were deeply entangled or embedded with one another as art was being made could thusly be understood historically, or preserved as such moving forward. So that's an open question for me.

But, to return to your question, is – I'm gonna pull up --

Hirata: Right here.

McArthur: Thanks. I'm gonna pull up the ramps that Ajay was speaking of. [switches slide] In terms of a lot of planning and work and care by everyone here, um, and by Sarah, Chris, and Bill, to make it possible to come to Skowhegan in the first place. And then to once here move ramps around in order to get into different buildings and studio spaces. And that's kind of maybe the more structural mode of access, and then there are other ways of being and joining with people, which, maybe the ramps like kind of gesture to [switches slide] but obviously don't encompass all of, but in planning this exhibition, it was, um, dated 2014, but [switches slide] I was, I was kind of thinking about how to share material evidence of, um, you know, phone calls or questions [switches slide] about, in this case, the physical structures of how to get into buildings, and I think we all do that in various ways that aren't necessarily about a ramp, but we do that in terms of, like, um, [switches slide] you know, how much does it cost to come here, what is it like once I get here, what's the connectivity to the outside world, like [switches slide] will I be able to go to a hospital if I need to, you know, lots of different ways in which – are my, you know, dietary needs gonna be like, part of how food is cared for and made. [switches slide] Um [switches slide] in this case it was a show that, um, was called *Ramps* but it was citing a book by the writer Marta Russell, and this book is called *Beyond Ramps: Disability at the End of the Social Contract*. And so, even though it was titled *The Objects in the Room*, it was very much trying to, um, emphasize the way that ramps or any kind of material entry point are just the kind of initial foundation for what happens inside, and also, like, how do you get out as much as how do you get in. So, um, her understanding of disability and access as a social project, and not as, um, an individual one was really important to the conceptualization of the show. (00:40:20) Um, and of, of my thinking in general. And so, um, I think it maybe gets emphasized that the kind of, like, ramps are the most important thing, but really the beyond ramps is maybe where we're all at, and I'm trying, trying to go with some of those questions. But I think

[switches slide] this image is also showing, um, [switches through slides] – we cycled through that, sorry, one second.

Hirata: Do you want –

McArthur: There's an image that Chris forwarded me from Bill, about specifically three Skowhegan ramps that [switching through slides] were brought as part of the show and leant – and in thinking through the show, I imagined that the ramps, the one for New York would come and go, so a lot of the places that loaned me the ramps were ones I had personal contact with, and they would, I gave them the dealer, the gallery's phone number, and I said, okay, if somebody calls and wants the ramp, like, the, we're gonna come get it to you. Like, it's gonna be a show that kind of expands and diminishes while it's up, and that this would, there would be movement between a sculpture and then the ramp returning to a, as a functional ramp. And that was probably too idealistic in terms of the planning that would require something like that, but there were these signs that the lenders of the exhibition were given to post in a semi-public [switches through slides] to kind of call towards this ambiguous place Essex Street as to where it would be. So it wasn't incredibly very helpful, but it was like a kind of marker or connector device between the lenders of the objects, and where they were temporarily brought together.

My plan was to return all the ramps to the places, and, um, dealers, god bless them, sometimes have different ideas, and I'm very, in some ways, as an artist, grateful that the works stayed together, and were collected, but as an artist, it left me with a question of, like, how, where do I, um, how can I ever return or repay or, um, uh, give back the ramp that was taken from the lender? So part of the sales were offered, like, this is AVA, actually, which is where Ajay had an exhibition, and it's a kind of, as I got back to, to maybe your show there, but as a lender, you can see, there's a small ramp, and Justin hand-built a ramp, and so for the lenders, I said would you like the cost of the materials for ramp, would you like me to purchase you a new one, maybe just store-bought? And in some cases, the ramps there we purchased to replace the lent ones were structurally more usable, and, and, um, and kind of sturdy and stuff. And in other cases, like Bill's ramps, from here, they're like works of art that can't be repaid in a way, so it's a gift that, um, basically made my whole career as an artist, essentially, and Sarah said, um, you can have them, and that's really kind of a life raft that's like kept me going, and was a real, both like, kind of emotional and intellectual, like, act of faith to give that. So, that's something that, you know, I haven't repaid, or isn't repayable, and so it is, it is a true gift. Um, and I can [switches slide] only, you know, hope that through the idea of making access for oneself, it is a, you're doing that with and for others. (00:44:57)

And I think the other thing I learned about my time at Skowhegan was that a lot of the work and thinking that I do is in my day-to-day life, and so restabilizing, or thinking about what that looks like here took me out of some of those questions and people I'm thinking alongside with. And that's not a bad thing at all. It just made me realize that, um, that sometimes leaving the day-to-day, though it gives you distance and reflective perspective, it's felt more like maybe more of an incubation phase, where when I left then I

was kind of put back into daily questions that helped or make produce certain material artworks after that.

Um, maybe I'll pause there for now and, um, I'll just, or, actually, can I just share one more thing about the ramps? It was kind of at the time where, like, the Wikipedia edit-a-thon of like expanding what Wikipedia offered in terms of information was popular, and Marta, aside from *Beyond Ramps*, most of her writings and essays were online, and so making a Wikipedia page for her, as a, another space to kind of point outside of the gallery, like I was hoping someone might, you know, pull that up on their phone, or even if they're looking at a digital documentation of the image, like, go to the Wikipedia page and then gain a link to these other essays that had previously not been brought together in an anthology. And so, it was a place both to kind of document and honor some of her thoughts that she's given us, and then bring together pieces of writing. That work, I've kind of since, this is maybe a theme in my work, but I, I've since – it's a simple kind of, um, [switches slides] vinyl printout that sticks to the wall, similar, like museum wall text or something. And not in this case, but the work has been shown since, and I'll ask to save the vinyl. And I then put, I saved the vinyl and then kind of stuck it to the inside of some vitrine. So I've started making sculptural works from the saved vinyl, and that will be, those just kind of get made as I have the material, to, to re-use.

So [switching through slides] I think – that's not, oh, these are blue signs that I made and then put out into the world. And, um, they got taken down and stuff but I was doing this at the same time as I was making ramps, and I was thinking about [switches slide] the different kinds of blue that are used to designate –something called quote unquote handicap blue, and there's a pretty wide variety, and in my way, I was re-making them on InDesign and then printing them as just dye-bond signs, so I'm kind of color matching but I'm also just sort of perceptually being like, is that the blue, is that the blue, and just sort of like more painterly, sort of playing with the different hues. And [switches slide] also the different designs that don't have the symbols, or the text. And in that case I am really thinking of an invitation for what might go there. I mean the icon of the, of disability as someone in a wheelchair is, is useful, but as we know, like, um, many, many, there could be many forms of symbols for what we might not even think of, and might not even know what disability is. And so, in removing the, the handicap, um, icon, I wanted to kind of think about what other things could coalesce under this kind of, um, identity that does have an immense political and social power, but could have other forms of representation. So, when I think about signage and, in many cases, using signs as a kind of blank format, to me it is an open field for a sort of future elaboration or representation, inside of that space. (00:49:51) But just showing some sort of simultaneous activity, and [switches slide] oh yeah, inside Marta, these are the examples of the re-used and saved vinyl wall. So they get adhered to the inside and I, cause I don't really know how vinyl works, I thought maybe after – they're quite, they become brittle after a time, and I thought they might like peel and fall down onto the – I thought they might change shape from signage or language to the kind of thing being preserved inside of, um, inside of a plexibox, but they've faithfully [switches slide] stuck very {laughter} well, and this is another one, so they're identical in some ways, but with many discrepancies. And that's a kind of nother – sorry, I'm gonna hand you the mic in a sec, I've just been talking a long time – but, maybe as I keep talking and sharing works,

like, um, I love the kind of blur between a unique object and an editioned object, or not even object, editioned kind of, like, book, or print, or, um, artwork, and so in *Carried and Held*, these wall labels, you know, are all unique, because the names change over time, but they really take the same form essentially, and so wherever it's confusing to me as to whether it's an edition or a multiple or a unique work, I kind of love not knowing those things, so. I guess for kind of, I think [switches slide] other people in art want to know, or have a fixed understanding of whether it's a unique work or a multiple, but I think there are lots of cool ways to trouble that, so.

Okay, maybe – okay, one more thing. In the back room {laughter} – this was not like in the show, I was like, where again –

Hirata: Oh yeah.

McArthur: -- I was like working on this a lot, and the, everyone was like, this is a little too literal, like, don't do it, but I showed this again, and I've shown it in previous, or, subsequent exhibitions, but, um, my grandfather made a ramp for one of his neighbors when I was staying at her house, [switches slide] and this is the ramp that he made, and so he had some notes [switches slide] about it, that then I said, could you read all those notes for me? So this is the kind of final work, it was in the back room, and I've shown it since, and it was his drawing that was part of the show and it was kind of another way to get at the really socially made and produced ways in which we gather together, ie, we, you know, think of access. And in the press release [switches slide] there was an invitation for like Facetime tours, and touch tours, and, you know, any way that we could try to distribute or, or bring the show outward as much as asking someone to come to the gallery. And that's been an ongoing desire and concern of mine since.

Question --

Hirata: Well one, I'll put one other thing in, too.

McArthur: Okay. [switching slides]

Hirata: That, another detail. That, um, and maybe kind of being here, um, shortly before making this exhibition and artwork, you became part of a number of experiences that would inform this kind of decision making, but this corridor here that runs the length of the gallery, and also makes a slight turn here, is, like, um –

McArthur: Necessary for a three-point turn?

Hirata: Yeah, well, it's like, you know, it's easily missable, it's just a minor detail of, like, let's just lay 'em out, and, but it actually is like an extremely, yeah, necessary, thought-through element of the exhibition, that it's like the width of your wheelchair, or a little bit wider, for any type of wheeled device that needs to make contact with the ground to get through there. To be able to get to the back of the exhibition, and then turn around and make the three-point turn.

McArthur: Mmm.

Hirata: [switching through slides] That, like your negotiation of space I see, you know, that's a way that, in the gallery, you're kind of like branching past the object of the artwork into the context of the artwork. (00:55:03) Just the spatiality of the work, and then obviously, as the ramp located at Essex Street signs show, you're also interested in the social context, and, and pathways –

McArthur: Yeah, like –

Hirata: -- that are connected to the objects.

McArthur: Yeah, thanks, that's – yeah, like how's a [WORD UNCLEAR] gonna get in through this space, that's really important.

These, the work's not been shown since, and these are the works in storage, so I just wanted to show you the ongoing afterlife of things that get taped up and, and stored. And did I show Bill, did I show the picture from Chris yet?

Hirata: Yeah.

McArthur: You did. Okay. Thank you. Um –

Hirata: Other question?

McArthur: Other thoughts?

Audience member #3: Um, yeah, still a question about this exhibition, Park, you know, when I learned about this show, it was kind of similar to how Ajay introduced it, which is people talk about it as kind of an intervention, or a re-tooling of the palette of minimalism, or the readymade. And then I also see kind of the use of the wall vinyl as a way to kind of redirect viewers outward from the art historical discourses that they might be entering it into, into the area of critical disability studies that people tend to know less about – at least our audience ten - so I was just wondering if you would talk about how you feel about, yeah, that, that read of the work, and more generally kind of being imploded between those two discourses.

McArthur: Mmm. Cool. Awesome question.

Um, yeah maybe it's like my experience of rolling over a Richard Serra, or something, is the most haptic way I could answer that question, or, um, mmm, the kind of beauty of sculpture being a lot of different things, and also very much, like, of the built world, the environment, so that we can experience it inside of an art context and then see it again duplicated like, right outside, not only as like a public artwork but just like as something that we're navigating in space together. So, um, mm, I have to think about it.

Yeah, I have, my general answer to minimalism is that it's like, I'm a really bad student of that, I haven't thought through a lot of it actually, unfortunately, even though it's, um, its language or its visual language seems really present, like, also this is a work that preceded this [switches slide] that was at, is where I met Sarah, actually, the residency where she was director prior to Skowhegan. And she, um, accepted me there, this was out of grad school, and this was called *How To Get A Wheelchair Over Sand*. And this is a series of maybe, you know, affectively they feel like minimalist sculpture, maybe, or they feel, um, you know, like Roni Horn's gold shimmer, um, in with a Felix Gonzales-Torres or something, but these are also, um, you know, David put these, and other residents put these down as a place to get to the communal camp fire, which was the very kind of post-dinner social space. And so it was a way to be together and, um, you know, it came directly from the scrap pile. Probably if it weren't too, maybe if it wasn't part of this succession of sand platforms, it might have ended up in someone else's artwork, who knows. It was the fluidity, similar to here, maybe where and how things get brought into and undone in artwork was pretty open, um, and so this is something, a photograph I took in 2010, or 2009, and I printed it maybe five years later as an artwork, but at the time I was kind of documenting where and how these social-made forms of access were getting me through the day at an artist's residency. (01:00:16) So, um, it's, yeah, kind of one of the first artworks that I really felt like I recognized as depending upon and being made with other people's energies and labors, but could also be – thanks – part of some authorial gesture or creative gesture on my part, too.

Hirata: Well, there's another experience from your time in grad school, that like, you used photography to do this. This is a photograph, it's not a sculpture.

McArthur: Mm, mmhmm.

Hirata: Maybe you could talk about what your friend Kathryn – Kathryn, right? No, Christine?

McArthur: Kathleen?

Hirata: Kathleen. Taught you about photography.

McArthur: What did she teach me about photography?

Hirata: Well, you {laughter} said, many kinds, I think you're just, okay –

McArthur: No, I'm really not. I think --

Hirata: No, she told you how, like, just look at the verbiage used around photography, it's like shoot and capture –

McArthur: Mm. Or make.

Hirata: -- and fix, and stop. That was, uh, that, you know, that are kind of things that, especially capture was like synonymous with some kind of idea of what the object is. Or how, how, how the object is made in, under maybe modernism or something, that maybe minimalism also uses.

But you don't think of yourself as – I mean, you never por, like, por, you're never portrayed as a photographer, either by other people or by you, but you've used photography kind of throughout your practice. Should we look at other photographs?

McArthur: Sure! I guess I'll add that maybe in the connection to grad school, like, cause it connects a little bit to [NAME UNCLEAR]'s question, but Kathleen Hudspeth and Adler Guerrier are both amazing artists, and they're kind of essentially my teachers from grad school, even though they were my colleagues and peers, Kathleen was my peer in grad school. And I started my grad program in, as a painter, and I'd applied with a suite of abstract paintings, that's what I was making in college, and I was, I entered that first semester, and the painting studios weren't accessible, and rather than – not rather, but I was daunted by fighting a kind of larger system outside the art department, so I went to my chair, and she switched my studios over to the printmaking facility, and so I got to know Kathleen Hudspeth, who's a printmaker, um, through that process, and also witnessed printmaking as a art making which often requires the coordination of more than one artist to make a print, so, lithography stones are really heavy, like [switching through slides] working a press together and registering a print often requires multiple people figuring that out together in real time, and so it was an incredibly instructive moment for me to witness the ways that outside of, you know – and this is not bad to say that if make your paintings by yourself, or your sculptures by yourself, that, I'm not making an evaluative statement, but it was a really new idea for me to see how artists were making their work, and figuring out how to do that with others, because the materiality or the technics of making the work exceeded one person's capacity. Um, and so, I was working in a way that, that kind of led me to a thesis show, which got kind of articulated as a series of debts, and I started making, trying to describe artworks that I myself couldn't physically or materially or conceptually realize at the time, and so I would write what the artwork might be, and I could, I would say, IOU a print, or IOU a sculpture, or IOU a song. And I would think about what I wanted to give, or engender, for the audience through that artwork, and then do my best to communicate that somehow in the artworks. (01:05:07) And that was a really helpful way, maybe that's the kind of delay or future-oriented ways in which I make work is that even though the absence of the actual work that I wanted to give you, by giving a description there was some kind of offering, or kind of space, or gesture, towards, um, what that artwork could be, so – yeah, we could play that at the end, maybe, if we wanted to.

Hirata: I don't know, the IOUs, or something from your end of grad school years. Kind of like, definitely some kind of moment.

McArthur: Do you want to talk about anything? In relationship to photography, since you are a photographer? Or, um –

Hirata: I don't know –

McArthur: I shared some of my background, but I don't know if you want to do that –

Hirata: Oh, well, mine, yeah, I studied photography, but I kind of never took photographs after I got out of school. And, I mean, except for that last show of the candles --

McArthur: That was a cool return, yeah –

Hirata: -- that Ajay –

McArthur: -- making photographs.

Hirata: Yeah.

McArthur: Are there questions? Oh, okay, that was stretching.

Hirata: Oh, but, no, about photography for you, like {laughter} I enjoy how you've used other people's photographs to create these things that are artworks. That's why I was showing this [switches slide] that's not really officially considered an artwork, but it kind of like –

McArthur: This was an Instagram takeover, and the museum was asking artists in the show to say, do you want to be part of an Instagram takeover? And I didn't really want to, [switching slides] but I thought, I should, for, I like the curator, and it felt nice, and so I didn't know what to do, but I did ask, it was part of the museum's education program, and, or, education department, and I asked, could we share what we're eating for lunch on the Instagram, and could you describe what that is? And so some of the images are mine, for the week that it was up, and I would send them images of what I was eating, and describing it, and then they posted some things they were eating, and you can see a lot of the meals are taken at the desk, so, that was an unwitting comment on the nature of museum work, and {laughter} time for lunch. Or not. Yeah, but that's not an artwork, it more was like a public, a kind of public, um, I don't know, what can be made public and what do you say when you're asked to work in that space.

Hirata: Here's an example of *How To Get A Wheelchair Over Sand* in an exhibition.

McArthur: Maybe while we're loading we could take another or two questions – I see someone in the back waving their hand. And also Ajay has his hand up.

Audience member #4: Hi. Can you hear me? Yeah, my question is to Jason, about his exhibition of *Sometimes You're Both*, um, the role of artist and curator, and other works that were exhibited then, and just in general, a little bit like, how was the whole approach and how did it go?

McArthur: Amazing! Okay, can I repeat the question a little bit, just to make sure you heard it. The question is about your exhibition *Sometimes You're Both*, and as the title gestures to,

in this case, being both an artist and a curator, or an exhibition organizer. And can you correct me, is there another part to that question?

Audience member #4: Like there were other artists' works under Jason's name.

McArthur: Yeah. There were artists' works under Jason's name. Love it, thank you, I'm excited for the answer.

Hirata: Wait, what was the question, though? Is it just to talk about the show?

McArthur: Yeah.

Hirata: Okay. Yeah, it was called *Sometimes You're Both*, that was, um, actually a title that Park and I came up with [switches slide] for one of her artworks that she showed two years prior to this show, I think. So I'll show you what it looked like. (01:09:57) [switches slide] And to describe, you know, we see like a pretty informal situation with a folding table, and like some folding chairs that have speakers on them. On the table is a computer hooked up to a projector, and an audio amplifier, speaker amplifier, and a red chair, and then [switches slide] you see another view of the same room to show that the chair was kind of like situated to be a, you know, to view what the projector's showing. [switches slide] And here's a view of the screen. [switches slide] [switches slide]

So this first film that's being shown here is an artwork by Hannah Black. I think it might have just been called *The Phantom*. You know what, I have the work list here. [switches slides] Ugh! I didn't download it before. {laughter} I didn't download it. Well, that's an artwork by Hannah Black. I, I shot it for her. [switches slide] And then this is an artwork by Carissa Rodriguez called *Girls* that I helped her edit. [switches slide] And this is, you know, sort of an empty room, but it's also like, it contains a wifi router and a speaker. [switches slide] And that speaker was connected to this other speaker, in a red room [switches slide] just beyond it. You can kind of see the red room here. [switches slide] With – oh yeah, you're excited for [NAME UNCLEAR] to ask that question because [NAME UNCLEAR] also used the, um, apple, like, flurry –

McArthur: Firework bodily orifice.

Hirata: -- screensaver --

McArthur: Sea anemone.

Hirata: -- in the background, and I used, that was actually my primary signifier of self in this exhibition. But {laughter} [switches slide] no but, it actually really is. So, I mean there were two. So, the reason why this wifi router is significant is that I had been making exhibitions where I showed work that I had made for other people, when I was being asked to appear as an artist. Kind of like just thinking, one, that like if I was making art, then like, I was an artist, and even if it wasn't my work, I was still an artist. And, then, also [switches slide] – there it is. Just also gonna get the angle – oh yeah, *Ramey and Raymond*. And

Raymond was, um, speaking about his experiences as a dancer and performer in *The Phantom of the Opera* on Broadway, and Ramey was speaking about film editing and her relationship to her mother, who was one of the first female film editors in the US. [switches slide] but wait, there was another reason why this was significant. Well, I had been asked to do what I had been doing elsewhere here at this gallery. So I had been under the radar sort of showing other people's work as mine, where I'd be invited to a show, and I would ask them to also invite someone else whose work I made with them, or whose work I supported the making of. And I felt like maybe the absence of an artwork that could be attributed to me in the show would be some kind of clue, kind of, that like there's this name on the list that doesn't have an artwork. And it would at least just be enough, and maybe a question could be asked about why that is. And I'm not sure about if that question was ever asked, although I guess it has to have been asked at least once, because these people invited me to make, to do this again. {laughs} Here. But the conceit in this exhibition was that the show needed to be, like my gesture, like there needed to be some way [switches slide] of, um, demonstrating that I was activating and orchestrating everything that was happening in the entirety of this space at NYU called 80WSE. And [switches slide] that stipulation was really interesting to me – sorry, that stipulation was really interesting to me because it was a high dependency of the curator there, that I would never really think about if they hadn't, like, um, shared it with me. (01:15:05) Which was that in New York, [switching through slides] you know, big giant empty white spaces are rare, and, I mean, any kind of space is rare, and a big giant empty white one is like especially kind of like resource. So this curator was constantly subject to other people in NYU coming and asking if they could use the space. Cause they'd come and they'd see, you know, like, they'd see a room like this, and they'd say, like, could I use that to put up the posters about the like, catalytic process I invented in my lab, cause I have a symposium coming up? And she would have to explain to them that, like, it's not empty, it's full, an art {laughter} – so I had to, the way that we figured out how to occupy the entire space – so really, I had to aid her in her occupancy of the space. [switches slide] And I had already been doing that, cause I was a worker at that gallery, I would set up audiovisual installation for artists there, and that's like how they came to own these projectors is that I had to like figure out which ones would fit certain specifications for an artist who was having a show there. And then I also, [switches slide] right before this show, installed this multichannel work and learned how to, like, orchestrate multiple channels, and multiple projectors and computers in rooms, [switching slides] so then I used those skills that I learned on the job to help that job stay mine, kind of, or like, help it do, you know, answer to its own needs. So I, so this entire show was all timed, meaning that like, what you see on this screen will always be up when this is up. And to make that kind of abundantly clear, I had this AV cart that played like a recorded mix of the sound mixing that would already be going on in that room. Meaning like, you know, if I had one song playing in one room, and the other song playing in the other room, you could already hear them in the middle room, but then this was a audio file that I had made that was both of those things put together digitally. And, um, that was sort of meant to be this kind of like overt gesture of, like, activity, to say that, like, the sound is mixing passively, but it's also mixing actively, and it's also like, it's orchestrated. Like, doubly orchestrated, like it's not just that these rooms happen, like, the sound has to pass through this room, but it is kind of, the room is available for that sound to pass through. And the wifi router is what connected, like, the devices.

[switching through slides] But then another dependency kind of came up while making the exhibition, which was that this artist, Hito Steyerl, has a rule that her work is never shown in a reel with other works. And it at minimum has to have its own screen, and ideally also, like, its own seating, uh, its own sound device, like, probably headphones if it's in a gallery where there's other sound, and it has to show the, like, cast and crew. So this one, this was the only video that was like not part of that, like, orchestration. And it was, you know, because of her stipulations. And it had the cast and crew, and it kind of made it, again, more abundantly clear as my name appeared on it multiple times, as the video producer. And like, cinematographer and editor and stuff.

Um [switches slide] this was a reading that Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves gave, called *Earth*, and it was in John Giorno's – I think that's in, yeah, that's in his basement that his boyfriend had just remodeled for him, and he lives, like, where there used to be a YMCA on Bowery Street in New York. And he kind of like was squatting it, and is a, you know, was a really successful squatter. And he's passed away recently.

McArthur: I guess, yeah, maybe that elaborates, like, there were works that you were, um, helping edit, there were works that you maybe post-production did sound on; there were also many works that were more event-based, and so this one, and then there was also a still of a performance Trajal Harrell was giving. (01:20:15) And those are your, like, a documentarian, sort of maybe and you did light editing afterwards, for the organization with Artist Space, like a title card, and credits, but –

Hirata: Hmm.

McArthur: -- those were kind of like a full experience documentation as, as a videographer, and then, and in other cases there were artworks that [switching through slides you were kind of following in some ways more kind of artistic briefs of like, how a particular auteur or author wanted the final artwork to happen.

Hirata: Yeah.

McArthur: I don't know if that's an important distinction here.

Hirata: Well that's, I think I should read the, like, um, press release for the show then, cause that was kinda something that I found the exhibition helped me explain, in a way, what was going on, that, like, this is an artwork, this is a video made by an artist that I helped do. And then, but [switches slide] and this is also an artwork that is a video. [switches slide] This is a video of an artwork that was a performance.

McArthur: Yeah.

Hirata: So, what I said for the exhibition was that 'Sometimes 80WSE hires me to help out when the art they'll be showing has complicated video requirements. I do this kind of work for other galleries, too, and I also produce videos. This exhibition is made up of six videos I

worked on. Half of the pieces here are video art. The other half are performances that were documented on video. While these documents are not artworks themselves, they do represent artworks, and they convey an experience of that work without being the work. In a similar way, the art on view here, which is not mine, represents my occupation as an artist, and conveys an experience very literally of my work.' Both, you know, the tools I use to make my own work, and the work I do to support my own work with a capital W. 'Making work in this way is something that I've been pursuing for a little over a year' – at the time. 'To a great extent than my previous shows, this exhibition is structured, is a structured viewing of the artworks. The proposition is that you are in an exhibition by Jason Hirata, with no artworks by Jason Hirata.'

McArthur: Yeah, the by being a kind of piv, like a really open, um, someone who knows grammar better than I do, what that word is – the by being like, kind of, you know, we might think of –

Hirata: Like an action verb sort of?

McArthur: -- yeah, by being typically –

Hirata: But also –

McArthur: -- one about authorship, but by, by side, or, what's another –

Hirata: Preposition.

McArthur: Yeah. That it's a kind of action or practice –

Hirata: But adjacent meaning it's done, it's performed through me, as an action I've done, it's done by me, and it's by me, like beside me, also something –

McArthur: And not yours –

Hirata: Yeah.

McArthur: Right.

Hirata: Which I think, you know, I just thought really what happened for me at the time was that I was going to museums, and spending a lot of time in artists' studios, and on sets and stuff, and in, and work, filming in institutions, and like, having really meaningful experiences, and I could feel, like, emotionally, that my practice was expanding by doing these things. But they, but, you know, they weren't, that expansion wasn't happening in my studio, like, if you wanna call it, if you wanna think of the studio as a geographical location, or like as a form of real estate occupancy or something. So I rath, you know, I think the, the, um call to, or the, the, one popular coping strategy for doing alienated labor, meaning like, something for pay, is that you just treat it like a job and it's not, like, important to you. And that's really awesome, but {laughter} unfortunately these things were important to me, so I

started to think, well, maybe they're actually also my artwork. Yeah. It's kind of the same way that, like, a painting comes out of a studio practice, and it's like, it's like part of something, it's not, it's not like it just got, like a button just got pushed and it shot out, although, of course, that, you can literally do that, and it can be, and it can still be part of something like, part of a living process. (01:25:15) And I was identifying that there were things coming out of my living process that were artworks that were meaningful to me that way artworks are that you make, and I tried to propose that as like a form of practice here.

Audience member #5: Two maybe little questions. Um, one I wanted to see if you both had something to say about, uh, I think it was the jester's privilege? It came up in the piece of writing that you, Park, and Constantina had written. Um, and then the second question was how do you think through or resist the fetish of the art object?

McArthur: Okay so the first one is the ges, um privilege of the gesture.

Audience member #5: Jester. Like the court jester.

McArthur: Oh, the court jester.

Hirata: Oh yeah.

McArthur: Oh gosh, okay, just get ready, Ilya is coming to town. {Hirata laughs} They're gonna, they're gonna explain it all.

And I'm gonna do a very short prelude to that. Asynchronous, but I'll try to do my best. Um, um, there are, in, we were pulling from a certain practice in, like, um, French and British high courts, and Spanish, where the entertainment of the patriarch king was a space both of saying truths that no one else of the court could say, in jest, and offer critique that way, and were also basically incarcerated inside of the, um, court, or the kingdom, like, as many people were. And so you could, the role of the jester could both say the truth that no one else could say, but by being a fool, was discounted completely of that truth. And there's a distinction that is made between natural fools and, um, wait, natural fool? There was a fool and a natural fool, which was a kind of play or duality between whether someone's disability and in some case, neurodiversity or cognitive disability was apparent, or made visible to the non-disabled, the apparently non-disabled king, although I'm sure, how can we say that there, that the king or queen or whomever was also not disabled? So, we were thinking through – and this is, this is not like original research or something, so we're tapping into ways in which thinking through ruling and rule is, um – hm, let me start again. So we're, we're kind of, we're wanting to think about how both, um, disability is something kind of to be proven to an outward, um, arbiter, whether that's like Social Security to get, to be on SSI or SSBI, or, you know, accommodation or access in an institutional setting often requires doctors' notes and physical and mental evaluation unto yourself, and there has to be a kind of like provability, and, um, there has to be some type of expert to witness, to witness that. And so we were thinking about these fools, and the ways in which they're kind of, um, veracity to either disability or jokes and fooldom might be both historically, um, unverifiable, like, as for us now, but also at the time, might have not been verifiable. And,

um, and, um, and the role that, that humor and, and disability being often the kind of, you know, kind of horror show or like the butt of the joke or like the way in which that, um, is a kind of invitation, actually, to kind of think through the grounds of humor as like what crip or disabled laughter, or enjoyment, or laughing at might also be – sorry, that was a really, mm, kind of shaky answer, but I would love to, um, I would love for you to ask that again when Ilya's here, or maybe we can be on the phone and like all talk about it or something. (01:31:13) Because they're gonna probably write a PhD or something about it, and also wrote a really amazing, um, shared a text piece that was about, about that and connecting it to current, like, New York City mayor laws of removing people off of the street based on what is perceived as, um, disability, and this is just raising up like black codes, ugly laws 2.0., like right now. And maybe Tina will talk about a poster that they made called, um, the title – I'll describe it, it's like black text on, I mean, sorry, red text on a black background, and it says 'Crazy people are the public.' And I don't think you can say it better than that.

And then the second question – did you want to bring up the Goya?

Hirata: Well, well, I guess just also, to, I wanted to bring up this institution, this cultural custom that, um, was part of, like, um, places that had been, that were either where, like, Catholicism developed, and also where it colonized. That was, um, the karneval, or, in German, it's called fasching, and it was just a yearly kind of period of celebration of, like, excess, that could just be a place to indulge in anything you want to. Where like, you were free to kind of, like, uh, you were, you were free of sin no matter what you did, whatever that meant, whatever you thought sin to mean. Um, but what it, what was extremely popular in the pastime was to, was for all of the social kind of, um, stations to become interchangeable, where, you know, people who didn't have access to money could act like they did have access to money, and like, could go to shops and buy things with coins that weren't real. Like, the lowest, basically it's like the lowest station could parade themselves around as the highest station. And the highest station was also thought of as this, like, free space to put on, like, whatever kind of, like, the king could pretend to be a commoner, was the point, and you could, like, just push him around, and that was like this, um, like, regular yearly momentary release of, from the class dynamic.

McArthur: But what happened the day after? {laughter}

Hirata: Yeah, exactly, and what happened the day after kept growing and growing until it kind of became the entire year was just, like, the effects that had been brought into the world through this freedom, this freedom from class. So then it was banned in 1795, and that was a time, Pluto, like astrologically, Constantina told me that Pluto was in the space in the sky at that time that it's at now. And this is the first time it's come back to that position. (01:34:53)

McArthur: I thought we're, okay, you thought, okay, cool. I was just worried that the space of tomorrow was a kind of delayed punishment for the ways in which –

Hirata: Well, that's – I mean, it started out being like, no, it's not punishable. And then, and then –

McArthur: Whoa.

Hirata: -- it became that, wait, people are going, you know, basically it was just like, you know, actually, like, the power of the, of the, where power was stationed in the class system was actually at risk of losing it, and then they, that's why it was banned. It became that, like, what the people actually wanted was release from that system. [switches slide] So, I made this poster that was an artwork – and this was one version of it, was like, it might have had this Goya painting called *The Burial of the Sardine*, which was like the ritual, the last thing you would do in fasching, or in Karneval, that, once you get down to the last tiny little morsel of food that might just be one small sardine, you hold, like, a giant burial for it. But the way that I ended up actually making the artwork was to show this [switches slide], um, contraption that is the switch that's used – cause this was to be shown in Basel, like in public space, so I kinda wanted to commemorate this moment at 3:59 AM on February 18 in 2012 when the person who turns the switch that turns the power off in the whole town, like, forgot. And the power - sorry – they did it an hour early, and Fasching started like an hour early, and they actually created like real chaos, and a real kind of, like, release, because it was unplanned.

McArthur: That was 2002.

Hirata: Yeah. Did I say 2? I say --

McArthur: '12.

Hirata: Oh, I said '12. Yeah.

McArthur: I saw someone else's hand up and then I, maybe we can return to the fetish of the art object, and then I'm also, like, very aware that we're keeping you beyond the time, and if, maybe instead of screening a video I can just send it to you, cause I wanted to share, um, like, an artwork that is kind of – maybe, well that kind of is my answer to the kind of fetish of the art object, where –

Hirata: Mmmhmm.

McArthur: -- there's some kind of intractable ways in which art is, um, circulated, and that is fetishistic, and that's what it is, and there are also ways that the role of the artist, in sharing, in practice, methodology, thought, like, is always in a resistant relationship to the thing that kind of coalesces around an art object. And I also believe art objects, whether they're made now, or like, a long time ago, kind of exceed their own circulation, and we don't also always know what, um, effects they have for us in our witness to them, or our sharing, even whether that's verbally or as a recounting of what those things are, you know, that kind of exceed the bounded space of their own materiality.

So, we don't know, I don't know. But they're, yeah, so, does that seem like an okay plan? And then we should, well, I'll just leave it up to you, like, what should we do next? Like –

Audience member #6: I, I have a question. Can, should I ask it? I think maybe it's kind of a redundant question, because it's already so abundant in your, uh, your work, and in this talk, but I wondered if you could maybe speak more directly about how, um, coalition and collectivity, interdependence, and care, how these things, um, show up for you as artists, what they mean to you as artists, um, why they're important, or not.

McArthur: Mm. Okay. I think my two words are survival and joy. Maybe gotta go back to Candida, like, those things are, um, you know, I'm gonna, yeah, those two things are intimately bound, and I think we're not gonna, we can't, we're not gonna do it on our own, and we're gonna try to find ways to have fun together while we're, while we're dealing with real shit, you know? Yeah.

What do you think about that? (01:39:51)

Hirata: Um, I think dependency is emancipatory [video starts playing] – meaning that – you can keep it playing. It's not, the audio's not on.

McArthur: Oh.

Hirata: I was like gonna maybe share this text that I wrote, that is called, like, something like that. It's called, um --

McArthur: “An Emancipatory Theory of Need.”

Hirata: Yeah.

McArthur: That's what Jason's working on.

Hirata: Which, uh, it was kind of asking just the question, a pretty basic question that is what would happen if need and, like, action or production were directly linked. Because as it is now, they're not, you know, they always have to go through mediators, which might be economic mediators, or they might be a mediator of kind of, um, like an organizational one of like, there's an idea that we don't have enough of everything, and so it has to be distributed somehow. Which is, you know, I guess, uh, probably scientifically false --

McArthur: Fascistic.

Hirata: -- in the modern world, like, that we actually do have enough of everything. Like, more than enough. So if need were what, if say, like, you had – I would be curious to think of need as production, to say like, my needing something is what causes it to exist. Rather than saying, like, the thing exists, and then I figure out how I could use it, or how to profit from it. Um, and that's one, that's like one level that's just this like personal level, but

another is to recognize other people's needs that they haven't even asked to have, um, like fulfilled, or –

McArthur: Like advocated for, or something.

Hirata: Yeah, and to help them do that. Like, if you see someone needs tissues, to give it to them. Could be, like, a better place, you know? Or you just see that someone needs, whatever it is that they need. They need, like, the door to be opened for them, or they need, like, you know, {laughing} housing or healthcare –

McArthur: And then you have to be ready for them to be like, fuck you, I don't need that, get out of my way, you know? Just kidding.

Hirata: Yeah, and you're just like, cool.

McArthur: Yeah.

Hirata: And then they journal about it when they get home.

McArthur: That's, that's me. {laughter} Self-portrait as an artist, right there.

Hirata: But you could send this around, and I could send that around, they both take about the same amount of time to –

McArthur: That's cool. That'd be good.

Hirata: -- take in. Mine's like a PDF, and this is a video. {laughs}

McArthur: And maybe you can attach some CLR James, or some other, Jason's gonna – yeah, okay.

Hirata: There's one more.

McArthur: Ryan. Ash. I don't know.

Audience member #6: I think I'm, my first comment, I was really interested, I believe, Jason, you said socially made, when talking about some of the materiality, and I just really like that idea of socially made instead of just like a readymade, something that's got, like, indented with some sort of cultural or like, some sort of background imbued within it. But I've seen the connection between the two projects you guys have both shown, with the thesis and then *Sometimes You're Both*, of like the socially made facilitation. Like, something that's, that facilitates the wheelchair, in your thesis piece, but then also facilitates you, Jason, in working, as well –

Hirata: Mmhmm.

Audience member #6: -- and so like you're kind of embedded in both of those pieces. So I guess the question is more based around how, how do you guys collaborate, or how do you guys see each other's works kind of inspire one another?

Hirata: It's like having an, like another brain, or something. {laughter} Or like, I mean –

McArthur: For me, another heart, you know. {cooing}

Hirata: Yeah. {laughter}

McArthur: Oh god, sorry, that was really loud, I just meant to like - Wizard of Oz, I'm just like a basic bitch, and Jason {laughter} – be like, and, but what if you thought about it that way?

Hirata: Well no, it's like having another practice, I mean, you don't even have to know the person in order for that to work for you. You could just follow what someone does and have it be – follow them closely, maybe not even that closely, and like, you can develop yourself by doing that. Um, yeah, so like I feel like I have a privilege of, like, being able to think through the contexts of how, you know, like life and art are done in something expanded. (01:45:05) And it's like, just also muscle memory or training to do that with Park, to like then have the kind of skills, or like the, like, um, proclivity, or like, have the, have the line to go get into other people's practices.

McArthur: I mean, this piece that's on silent right now, but is, it has sound, Jason made the sound of it, but from an even product –

Hirata: But I didn't – it was a collective making of the sound.

McArthur: Yeah, but you, you scored it and then produced the sound, and, but, you know, I was trying to think about going to the beach with friends that I've not and don't know when we will, and I also was trying to do it under the invitation of giving a talk, or a keynote, for, um, a conference on access, and I just like didn't know what else to offer about access or inaccess that just amazing people hadn't already said, and that it felt like we were struggling to come up with, um, also just thinking in real time with what we're living through, and trying to have language around that felt difficult, so I just wanted to make a description of going to the beach, and also not, and also, like, describing it again, but as a memory or a dream when we're too sick to go to that beach. And so Jason, in, I gave Jason a long text, and he's like, well, you know, it's like, how do you feel when the sand's in your hair? Or what about that feeling when you've been at the beach way too long and you know you should have gone home, and you know it's gonna be a really long way back but you're like still there, and gonna leave, what about all that? So, I think, um, you know, then I went back and kind of like thought through and edited that language, but it's like having that person to help you go deeper into something that you're already trying to explore. Um, and having someone help guide you there, is what it feels like to me, you know?

Hirata: Also, the description. I mean, you call it a description, but it's also an invitation, and like, it probably seized on something that art does, that like as it reproduces things, it kind of invites you to those things. Or to that space, that reproductive space, or that, definitely to that memory.

McArthur: I feel like I saw Alexander take the mic –

Audience member #7: Hi.

McArthur: -- but I don't really know.

Audience member #7: Steve, back here. Hi.

McArthur: Hi. It's me.

Audience member #7: How are you?

McArthur: Hi, it's me.

Audience member #7: This was such a wonderful, amazing talk. I just want to say Jason, thank you, you built me a bridge so that I could get to my studio –

McArthur: It's Steve.

Hirata: Oh, yeah!

Audience member #7: And this is the thing, right? The socially created object. And, to me, it's an artwork, and it's access, and it's freedom. And, I want to say, in defense of the aura, and the fetish, of the object, I would pay a million dollars for that. {laughter}

Hirata: Alright!

Audience member #7: Not just because it works, but its function, but that you made it.

Hirata: Well, I was --

Audience member #7: I don't wanna, I just don't wanna denigrate the idea that your touch, for the two of you, your touch, your presence, your ideas, the beauty of the way that you move through the world together, that's worth something. That is, it's worth something, that's everything. Because you've given us something that we don't have on our own. So, like, to call it a fetish is to call it some sort of, um, um, um, transitional tool, right? It's not a fetish. It's only a fetish to people who don't understand it.

McArthur: Hm!

Audience member #7: Like, and I think that, um, {laughter} and I think that the other thing I wanna say is that in this country, we had minstrelsy to replace the fool.

Hirata: Mmhmm.

Audience member #7: And that kind of, um, negotiation of who gets to tell the truth –

McArthur: Mm.

Audience member #7: -- and what the punishment is for the truth is still born out, and it's um, it's born out on people who are differently abled, because you're not here to make my life better, you're not here to educate me about the world, and yet, we demand that you do that. Um, and we demand that you build a practice around it.

The first time I saw your work, Park, it made me reconsider my entire body. Right?

McArthur: Hm.

Audience member #7: That was the thing. And, like, you know, I didn't, I didn't ask for that. (01:49:55) But you gave me that, right? And because I was aware enough to pay attention, you know, that's why I got the benefit of it. So, I, um, I, I stumble where you stride, is the best way I can put it. And it was such a great talk. Thanks.

McArthur: Thanks, Steve. {applause}

Hirata: Well, and the stumbling is really cool, too. Like stumbling where you stride yourself. Oh, okay. [turns on sound for video, plays 01:50:50 – 01:52:41] {applause, cheering}

McArthur: Good talk!

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