

**THE SYLVIA AND DAVID STEINER SPEAKER SERIES** brings creative practitioners who push boundaries, defy definition, and demonstrate excellence in all aspects of the arts, to the campus of Carnegie Mellon University for deep engagement with our students and faculty. The Steiner Speaker Series is administered by the **Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry**, the research laboratory of the CMU College of Fine Arts, with the assistance of an advisory committee comprised of faculty from around the university.

In our first full academic-year of in-person education and programming, we are thrilled to have stewarded and curated over **40 lectures, film screenings, workshops, performances, and readings attended by students, faculty, and staff** from across the CMU community and beyond!

This year also innaugurated the use of the Steiner to support longer-term enrichment of student experiences through a biannual Visiting Artist position, including Nigerian-American Pittsburgh Artist Mikael Owunna known for his ultraviolet photography practice, and Filipino-American Artist and ED of Processing Foundation, Dorothy R. Santos, whose research interrogates the production of race through natural language processing technology. Each artist was paired by a writer-in-residence to produce reflective essays for this book, reflecting on how their stay matches our mission to provide a space for catalytic thinking and making at Carnegie Mellon University at the intersections of arts, science, technology, and culture.

The 2022-2023 Season was invigorated by the STUDIO's Directorship of **Nica Ross** (School of Drama). They have worked to broaden the reach of the Steiner Speaker Series as part of the STUDIO's public programs reaching thousands of audience members, world-wide.

#### **STEINER BY THE NUMBERS**

School of Architecture	<b>7</b> speakers
School of Art	<b>9</b> speakers
School of Design	<b>1</b> speakers
School of Drama	<b>6</b> speakers
School of Music	<b>2</b> speakers
IDeATe	<b>1</b> speaker
Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry	<b>9</b> speakers

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**35** speakers total

## **STEINER SPEAKERS, 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR**

Adam Lowenstein	Film & media scholar with expertise in the Horror genre
Adrian Jones	Pittsburgh-based Creative Technologist
Aki Sasamoto	World renowned sculptor and performance artist
Anna Betbeze	Visual artist specializing in proprioception and touch
Annie B Parson	US-based choreographer and founder of Big Dance Theater
Becky Elquist	Branding consultant specializing in creative digital assets
Brandon Clifford	Architect and fabrication specialist in reused stone
Claire Hentschker	Digital artist and creative technologist.
David Perry	Computational textile artist and creative technologist
Dimitris Papaionnou	Greece-based choreographer and director.
Dorothy R. Santos	Digital media artist and Executive Director of Processing Foundation
Geo Wyex	New York-based artist and educator in music and performance
Huw Messie	Textile artist and digital animator
Ingrid Mayrhofer	Austria-based architectural design and theory educator
Jazmine Butterfly	Pittsburgh-based HIV/AIDS awareness activist and performer
Jules Gill-Peterson	Baltimore-based historian and professor specializing in trans history
Katie Mitchell	UK-based experimental director
Kenya Miles	Natural dye expert and educator for Blue Light Junction
Kyle McDonald	Computational new media artist
Kyle Steinfeld	California-based architect specializing in computational design
LaDonna LaMoore	Hottelville-based drag performer
Liz Jackson	US-based designer and educator with specialization in disability studies
Margarita Jover	Spain-based architect specializing in water and socioecology
Mikael Owunna	Pittsburgh-based photographer and director
Peggy Ahwesh	New York-based filmmaker and former programmer of L Pgh Filmmakers
PLOrk Sideband	Experimental orchestra developing new electronic instruments
Regan Linton	Colorado-based director, actor, and advocate for disability in theater
Sasha Waltz	Germany-based director and choreographer
Shahrbanoo Sadat	Afghanistan-based filmmaker, writer, and producer
Steven Haines	Pittsburgh-based film curator and projectionist
Tara Mateik	New York-based filmmaker and educator
Tatiana Mustakos	Computational textile artist and educator
Timur Si-Qin	Germany-based new media artist and writer.
Tlacacl Esparza	New York-based artist/founder of music technology company Sunhouse

Violet Maimbourg	Cleveland-based fabricator and artist.
Young Joon Kwak	Los Angeles-based artist and musician
Kim Ye	Los Angeles-based filmmaker and musician
Yves	New York-based model and activist



**ADAM LOWENSTEIN** works on issues relating to the cinema as a mode of historical, cultural, and aesthetic confrontation. His teaching and research link these issues to the relays between genre films and art films, cinema and digital media, the politics of spectatorship, and the construction of national cinemas. At CMU, Lowenstein was invited by Inbar Hagai and Rebecca Shapass, MFA students from the School of Art, to host a special screening centering films that cross the genres of horror and documentary as part of their ongoing film series at the STUDIO “Touchstone Cinema.”



**ADRIAN JONES** is a Pittsburgh-based artist, historian, community organizer, and creative technologist. His practice is shaped by a commitment to those living in society’s margins. After earning a Bachelor’s degree in Electrical Engineering from Harvard University, his work in software development led him towards exploring the power of speculative imagination and intergenerational storytelling within digital spaces. Currently he is developing Looking Glass, an app-based archive of Black life in Pittsburgh. At CMU, Jones was invited by the STUDIO to accompany another Steiner supported Visiting Artist, Dorothy R. Santos, to conduct a creative non-fiction workshop at KST Alloy Studios with additional support from Duolingo.



**AKI SASAMOTO** is a New York-based installation and performance artist. Sasamoto works in various media, finding material inspiration in response to the conditions of her site or surroundings. Sasamoto has collaborated with visual artists, musicians, choreographers, dancers, mathematicians and scholars. She is also co-founder of the non-profit interdisciplinary arts organization Culture Push. At CMU, Sasamoto was invited by School of Art Sculpture Professor Isla Hansen to give a lecture on her practice to students of the foundations courses.



**ANNA BETBEZE** is a visual artist whose experimental work involves exploration of haptic sensation, arriving at new forms that combine elements of painting, sculpture, puppetry, performance, and pedagogy. Betbeze considers the ephemerality of lived experience alongside the supposed deathlessness of artistic creation. At CMU, Betbeze was invited by STUDIO Director Nica Ross to conduct her TOUCH Workshop. TOUCH Workshop is a multimodal set of experiments that untangle the ideological orientation of the senses, organized around proprioceptive sensation and arriving at inverted performances. The project builds on the tactile research of Czech polymath Jan Švankmajer which was his response to the censorship of his films in the 1970s. With COVID-19 a pervasive reality, touch has been limited and vision dominates. Betbeze asks how can the tactile imagination respond in the absence of tactile freedom? How do we transfer and transmit feeling, touching those outside of our time-space?



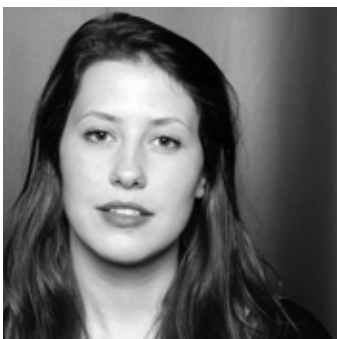
**ANNIE B PARSON** co-founded Big Dance Theater in 1991 with Molly Hickok and Paul Lazar. She has choreographed and co-created over 20 works for the company, ranging from pure dance pieces to adaptations of found text, plays, literature, and original works combining wildly disparate materials. At CMU, Parson was invited by Special Visiting Faculty Ivan Ivan Talijančić to speak to the MFA Director’s Lab Colloquium in the School of Drama’s John Wells Graduate Directing Program.



**BECKY ELQUIST** is a branding consultant with more than ten years of experience developing meaningful concepts and impactful brands from ideation to launch for established organizations, individuals, and start-ups. Elquist is practiced in the strategic execution of all aspects of public relations, communications, and marketing campaigns, as well as the development of creative and digital assets. At CMU, Elquist was invited by Miller ICA Director and School of Art instructor Elizabeth Chodos to speak to the students of her “Entering the Art World: Mapping a Career Path in an Uncharted Artworld” class.



**BRANDON CLIFFORD** develops creative approaches to the world’s most pressing problems. He identifies contemporary blind-spots by mining ancient knowledge that holds resonance with topics of today. He is best known for bringing megalithic sculptures to life to perform tasks. Brandon is the director and co-founder of Matter Design. At CMU, Clifford was invited to share his research into cannabilistic techniques for stone reuse, collaborating with Quarra Stone, one of the world’s leading stone fabricators, and discuss how the lost practice of cyclopean masonry has been reinterpreted through this research.



**CLAIRE HENTSCHKER** is a senior producer in the Digital Experience Laboratory at Rockwell Group, a design studio that creates memorable and evocative experiences by merging story, architecture, and technology. Claire is an alum of the STUDIO, the CMU School of Art, and the CMU School of Architecture. A world-expert in the creative use of photogrammetry, her career was launched when her Shining360° project from CMU’s Experimental Capture course was singled out by Björk as one of the most influential VR artworks of 2016. At CMU, Hentschker was invited by Profs. Golan Levin and Nica Ross to share her photogrammetry expertise with the students of the co-taught interdisciplinary course in the STUDIO, “Experimental Capture.”



**DAVID PERRY** is an artist and designer working with DeepLocal custom machines in Pittsburgh, PA. Perry is also a CMU alumni and worked as part of the team of artists and programmers developing a body of work around open-source embroidery software with particular attention to three-dimensional applications of threadbased design. At CMU, Perry was invited along with Tatyana Mustakos and Huw Messie to lead a university-wide workshop to train students faculty and staff on using the STUDIO born code-library, PEmbroider, to create computational embroidery artworks.



**DIMITRIS PAPAIOANNOU** gained early recognition as a painter and a comic-book artist. He then turned to the performing arts as a director, choreographer, performer, and designer of sets, costumes, and lighting. His work on creating the opening ceremony for the Athens Olympics in 2004 brought him international renown. Since 1986, his personal work has been a hybrid exploration of experimental dance: a blend of physical theatre, motion art, and performance, in which he interrogates creation, identity, and the legacy of our Western cultural memory. At CMU, Papaioannou was invited by John Wells Directing Special Visiting Faculty Ivan Talijančić to give a screening and discussion of his work “The Great Tamer.”



**DOROTHY R. SANTOS** is a Filipino-American storyteller, poet, artist, and scholar whose academic and research interests include feminist media histories, critical medical anthropology, computational media, technology, race, and ethics. She is a Ph.D. candidate in Film and Digital Media at the University of California, Santa Cruz as a Eugene V. Cota-Robles fellow. At CMU, Santos was invited for a 2 week residency for their creative research for towards her project, “Cyborg’s Prose” analyzing the race and class connotations of emergency services workers, AI-powered accent removal, diasporic cultural work, and race construction. She also partnered with local artist Adrian Jones and Duolingo to teach creative non-fiction storytelling practices at East Liberty’s KST Alloy Studios.



**GEO WYEX** is an artist and educator originally from NYC who works in music, performance, poetry and sound. His most recent record, ATM FM (2020), was released through Muck Studies Dept. – a constellational narrative framework and imaginary city agent that surveys the bottom of low-lying water areas, “looking for stars out of what stinks.” Wyex has presented work at MoMA PSI, New Museum, Stedelijk Museum, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Dutch National Opera, L’Arsenic, Joe’s Pub and many other venues. He was a resident at the Rijksakademie in 2015-2016. At CMU, Wyex was invited by STUDIO Director Nica Ross and the School of Art to conduct studio visits with the MFA candidates and give a lecture style performance from his current work.





**HUW MESSIE** is a digital media and textile artist with a concentration in human-computer interaction and time-based new media. His research into and execution of computational embroidery-based animation caught the attention and support of luxury goods brand Hermès resulting in a contract to create custom work for their online campaigns. At CMU, Messie spoke as a guest lecturer during the Spring Computational Embroidery workshop led by his former cohort members Tatyana Mustakos and David Perry.



**INGRID MAYRHOFER** teaches architectural design and theory at Universität Innsbruck. Her research and design practice focus on spatial and temporal epistemologies at the intersection of architecture, urban design, technology, and science. At CMU, Mayrhofer was invited by Professor of Architecture Dana Cupkova to speak to the students of the Imagine Deep: / Imagine architectural design studio.



**JAZMINE BUTTERFLY** is a black trans elder, human rights advocate, and HIV/AIDS awareness activist in Pittsburgh. She has been at work as an organizer and performer in Pittsburgh since the early 1990s. At CMU, Butterfly was invited as part of the MS89 screening series produced by STUDIO Associate Director, Dr. Harrison Apple, with the Pittsburgh Queer History Project. “MS 89” is a live & in-person only series of LGBTQ nightclub archives screening events with compensated community guest hosts who speak to the origin of the archival materials and their ongoing lives. These events are designed to enable new intergenerational friendships over the gaps left by systemic oppression, via our shared desire for a shared past.



**JULES GILL-PETERSON** is Associate Professor of History at Johns Hopkins University. She earned her PhD from Rutgers University and has held fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Kinsey Institute. At CMU, Gill-Peterson was invited by Professor of Architecture Mary-Lou Arscott to speak to the students of her advanced Synthesis Studio, following a special screening of “Framing Agnes.” The experimental documentary features her heavily as a historian and narrator of obscured trans histories intersecting with mid-century University Hospital-based gender clinics and their records.



**KATIE MITCHELL** is a British theatre director whose unique style and uncompromising methods have divided both critics and audiences. Though sometimes causing controversy, her productions have been innovative and groundbreaking, and have established her as one of the world's leading names in contemporary performance. At CMU, Mitchell was invited by Special Visiting Faculty Ivan Talijančić from the CMU Drama John Wells Directing Graduate Program to speak following a screening of her contemporary reimagining of the 19th century play, *Fraulein Julie*.



**KENYA MILES** is an expert natural dye artist and runs a community dye studio called Blue Light Junction in Baltimore, MD. Miles teaches natural dyeing all over the US. Blue Light Junction is a dye studio but it is also a small farm where members grow and process indigo and where Miles works and teaches dye processing and history in an anti-oppression frame work. At CMU, Miles was invited by Professor Olivia Robinson of IDEATE to discuss her role as a community dye educator for the Culture of Color class, co-taught with Professor of Chemistry, Dr. Gloria Silva.



**KIM YE** is a Chinese American interdisciplinary artist whose research-based practice encompasses performance, sculpture, video, installation, text, and community organizing. They received their MFA from UCLA, BA from Pomona College, and have worked as a professional dominatrix in Los Angeles since 2011. Their work engages gendered constructions around power, taboo, and privacy by activating the artist/viewer dynamic to create situations of intimacy and exchange. At CMU, Ye was invited along with their performance partner Young Joon Kwak by School of Art professors Scott Andrew and Angela Washko as special guests of the FailSafe: Los Angeles x Pittsburgh performance series with CMU students at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater in East Liberty.



**KYLE MCDONALD** is one of the world's foremost computational new media artists with a deep and broad research practice spanning machine learning, experimental capture techniques, and open-source software development. At CMU, McDonald was invited by School of Art and Drama professors Golan Levin and Nica Ross to speak to the students of their co-taught interdisciplinary course "Experimental Capture" Course, taught in the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry.





**KYLE STEINFELD** is an architect who works with code and lives in Oakland. Through his unique hybrid practice of creative work, scholarly research, and software development, he seeks to reveal certain overlooked capacities of computational design. He finds no disharmony between the rational and whimsical, the analytical and uncanny, the lucid and bizarre. His work cuts across media, and is expressed through a combination of visual, formal, and spatial material. At CMU, Steinfeld was invited by Professor of Architecture Dana Cupkova to speak to the students of the Imagine Deep: /Imagine architectural design studio.



**LADONNA LAMOORE** is a Hottelville-based drag performer and participant in the Pittsburgh Queer History Project. Her experience as a performer and employee in Pittsburgh's LGBTQ nightlife scene have made her an excellent individual for bridging gaps in generational knowledge about subcultural LGBTQ community formation in Pittsburgh. At CMU, LaDonna was invited by STUDIO Associate Director Harrison Apple to speak at the opening screening for the MS89 Series. "MS 89" is a live & in-person only series of LGBTQ nightclub archives screening events with compensated community guest hosts who speak to the origin of the archival materials and their ongoing lives. These events are designed to enable new intergenerational friendships over the gaps left by systemic oppression, via our shared desire for a shared past.



**LIZ JACKSON** is equally the frontrunner for developing new theories on ways to design as she is a convener of critical design theorists and practitioners who are committed to shifting the design paradigm. She and cohort strive to make critical disability studies a central component in the industry's approach to design. Liz's commitment to the difficult work of reframing, disrupting, and convening is reflected in the depth and breadth of her work, most prominently in her thoughtful approach to craft and thought-provoking translations of theory to praxis. At CMU, Jackson was invited by Transition Design PhD Candidate Esther K. Kang to speak to the students of her Design "Cultures" Studio.



**MARGARITA JOVER** received a Master of Architecture degree from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia in 1995. Together with Iñaki Alday, she founded the internationally awarded firm aldayjover architecture and landscape in 1996 in Barcelona, Spain. The multidisciplinary, research-based practice focuses on innovation. They are renowned for leadership in a new approach to the relation between cities and rivers, in which the natural dynamics of flooding become part of the public space. At CMU, Jover was invited by Visiting Professor Zaid Kashef Alghata as part of the School of Architecture's "Ecological Restructring" seminar.



**MIKAEL OWUNNA** is a Pittsburgh-based Nigerian-American multimedia artist, filmmaker, and engineer. Exploring the intersections of technology, art, and African cosmologies, his work seeks to elucidate an emancipatory vision of possibility that revives traditional African knowledge systems and pushes people beyond all boundaries, restrictions, and frontiers. At CMU, Owunna was invited by the STUDIO Director Nica Ross and former co-director Golan Levin. As a Fall Semester Visiting Artist, Owunna was given the chance to enhance his new work in experimental photography and sculpture while also engaging with the CMU students through the “Experimental Capture” course taught in the STUDIO by Ross and Levin.



**PEGGY AHWESH** has produced one of the most heterogeneous bodies of work in the field of experimental film and video. A true bricoleur, her tools include narrative and documentary styles, improvised performance and scripted dialogue, synch-sound film, found footage, digital animation, and crude Pixelvision video. Using this range of approaches, she has extended the project initiated by 1960s and ‘70s American avant-garde film, and has augmented that tradition with an investigation of cultural identity and the role of the subject. At CMU, Ahwesh was invited by School of Art MFA Candidates Rebecca Shapass and Inbar Hagai as part of their Touchstone Cinema series focused on rust-belt regional and punk experimental film.



**PLORk Sideband** aka the Princeton Laptop Orchestra takes the traditional model of the orchestra and reinvents it for the 21st century. Each laptopist performs with a laptop and custom designed hemispherical speaker that emulates the way traditional orchestral instruments cast their sound in space. Wireless networking and video augment the familiar role of the conductor, suggesting unprecedented ways of organizing large ensembles. At CMU, PLOrk Sideband was invited by Professor of Music Freida Abtan to visit the students of the School of Music’s Electronic Music major.



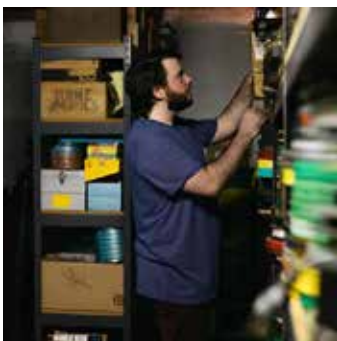
**REGAN LINTON** is an award-winning actor, director, filmmaker, writer, voiceover artist, educator, and internationally-recognized leader in inclusive practices in the arts. She has been a trailblazer as a theatre artist on wheels, performing at top theatres from Broadway to Osaka. She is co-director of the award-winning documentary “imperfect” (2021) about disabled theatre actors, and she spent 5 years as Artistic Director of the preeminent disability-affirmative Phamaly Theatre Company in Denver. Regan is a regular featured columnist for New Mobility Magazine covering topics such as body image, sexuality, and self-actualization. At CMU, Linton was invited by School of Drama Stage Management professor Miso Wei to engage with her students on developing a profession informed by disability activism.



**SASHA WALTZ** is a choreographer, dancer, and director. After her first studies at the School of New Dance Development in Amsterdam, she joined the postmodern oriented New York City dance scene that worked in interdisciplinary exchange with the other arts. Together with Jochen Sandig she founded the dance company Sasha Waltz & Guests in 1993 and in 1996 the Sophiensaele as a venue for dance and more, nowadays a center of the independent dance and theatre scene for artists internationally. At CMU, Waltz was invited by Special Visiting Faculty Ivan Talijančić from the School of Drama John Wells Graduate Directing Program, to speak with MFA students following a screening of her work, *Körper*.



**SHAHRBANOOSADAT** is an Afghan filmmaker, writer, and producer based in Kabul. Her debut film, *Wolf and Sheep*, won the top award in 2016 Quinzaine des Réalisateurs at Cannes. She premiered her second feature, *The Orphanage*, in the same section at Cannes in 2019. Sadat studied documentary filmmaking at the Kabul workshop of Ateliers Varan in 2009. In 2013, she started her own production company Wolf Pictures in Kabul. Both *Wolf and Sheep* and *The Orphanage* are part of her pentalogy project (five feature films) based on Anwar Hashimi's autobiographical text of 800 pages. Her film *Kabul Jan* has received support from the Hubert Bals Fund. At CMU, Sadat was invited by School of Drama Writing Professor Wendy Arons to screen her work with the CMU Center for the Arts in Society and the CMU International Film Festival.



**STEVEN HAINES** is a multidisciplinary artist whose work moves between fine art photography, painting, and analog film curation. His affinity for historic footage and community focus draw meaningful connections between the Steel Valley's industrial legacy and a new vision for the community through creative placemaking. He is the co-creator behind Pittsburgh Sound and Image and a previous organizer of the Out of the Archives Pittsburgh community film series. At CMU, Haines was invited by School of Art MFA candidates Rebeccah Shapass and Inbar Hagai to screen an original film print of Hollice Frampton's renowned abstract work "Winter Solstice," and moderate a Pittsburgh Filmmaker's panel during Touchstone Cinema's Final program "Rustbelt Renegades."



**TARA MATEIK** is a New York-based multimedia performance artist and videomaker with an extensive background in education and community activism. His creative work and pedagogy are driven by his interdisciplinary practice, drawing on a range of fields including media activism, performance studies, video art, queer theory and history, arts education, and media archeology. At CMU, Mateik was invited by STUDIO Director Nica Ross to work with Associate Director Harrison Apple and the Pittsburgh Queer History Project to create a double billed lecture on his practice, live-video editing techniques, archival screenings with the creators of Pittsburgh's community access program "Gay Cable Network", and a special screening of his work *Toilet Training: Law and Order* about transphobic bathroom bills.



**TATYANA MUSTAKOS** is a multidisciplinary artist working with computers, art and tech. Tatyana's practice also includes watercolor, casein, and sculpture. Mustakos grew up in Southern California, then went to college and stayed in Pittsburgh for 10 years before resettling in Brooklyn, NY. At CMU, Mustakos was invited along with David Perry to lead a computational embroidery workshop based on her contributions to the development of PEmbroider, an open-source Processing based embroidery library.



**TIMUR SI-QIN** is an artist who weaves their interests in the evolution of culture, the dynamics of cognition, and contemporary philosophy together to create a new kind of environmental art. Taking form through diverse media, installations of 3D printed sculptures, light-boxes, websites, texts, and virtual reality, Si-Qin's work often challenges common notions of the organic vs the synthetic, the natural vs the cultural, the human vs non-human, and other dualisms at the heart of western consciousness. At CMU, Si-Qin was invited by School of Art Professor of Critical Theory Cash Ragona to speak to the students of the Critical Theory in Art IV course during a special section on digital interventions.



**TLACAEEL ESPARZA** is CTO and Co-founder of music technology company Sunhouse where he leads product development. As a musician, technologist and programmer, Tlacaél specializes in uniting mathematics and music to develop technology based on human intuition. A professional drummer with over fourteen years of experience, Mr. Esparza has toured, performed and recorded with acclaimed artists Nicolas Jaar, The Dave Harrington Group, ARMS, and Friend Roulette. At CMU, Esparza was invited by School of Music Professor Annie Hui-Hsin Hsieh to give a live demo of his Sensory Percussion kit and an artist talk for the students of the Electronic Music Seminar.



**VIOLET MAIMBOURG** is an artist working in sculpture, photography, and prosthetics whose work explores areas of body modification, fantasy, and psychology. She is a fabricator and educator at the Cleveland Institute of Art. At CMU, Violet was invited by School of Art professor Scott Andrew to join his Activated Animorphs class by giving a guest lecture in the STUDIO and leading a two-day prosthetics and casting lesson with CMU students.





**YOUNG JOON KWAK** is a LA-based multidisciplinary artist and educator whose work spans sculpture, performance, music, video, and community-based collaborations. Their work is generating new forms of queer and trans intimacy and utopian futurity. They aim to bridge communities across a wide variety of socio-cultural, institutional, and alternative art contexts. [At CMU, Kwak was invited, along with their performance partner Kim Ye, by School of Art professors Scott Andrew and Angela Washko as special guests of the FailSafe: Los Angeles x Pittsburgh performance series with CMU students at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater in East Liberty.](#)



**YVES** is an internationally known LGBTQ activist, speaker, and community organizer. Outside of his full-time career as a model and musician, Yves volunteers his time in LGBTQ runaway centers, senior facilities, and homeless shelters. [At CMU, Yves was invited by School of Art Professor Suzie Silver as a guest lecturer to the students of Electronic and Time Based Media as well as a guest performer for the annual TransQ LIVE! performance featuring CMU students at the nearby Carnegie Meuseum of Art Sculpture Garden.](#)



# ultraviolet blackness

**In Fall 2022**, Nica Ross, Director of the Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, invited **Mikael Owunna** for an artist residency supported by the Sylvia and David Steiner Speaker Series. Owunna creates dazzling portraits and experimental dance films that infuse engineering with visual art, draw inspiration from African cosmologies, and bring them to life. The Pittsburgh native was born to Igbo Nigerian parents and studied biomedical engineering at Duke University. He began making artwork in college as a creative and emotional outlet due to the “friction between [his] sexuality and [his] African identity” and built a practice based in both the scientific method and the knowledge systems of pre-colonial Africa.

Before he came to the STUDIO, Owunna moved back to Pittsburgh to start work on Infinite Essence, a photo series inspired by traditional West African creation myths and notions of the soul. The Black figures in Owunna’s portraits whirl through space, their bodies luminous with uncharted stars—primordial forces in the timeless dark. The graceful forms in his work excavate and build



**Mikael Owunna**  
Fall 2022 Visiting Artist



**Anna Mirzayan (Author)**  
Fall 2022 Visiting Writer





on pre-colonial expressions of the androgynous Creator, who plays a central role in many of these systems. Infinite Essence also expresses the artist's attempts to look beyond the spectrum of visible light for an expanded notion of Blackness beyond contemporary racism and dehumanization, a Blackness described in many African cosmological traditions as the divine source that creates all life. This marked the inception of his signature visual style of incandescent Black bodies that shimmer and glow. To achieve this effect, Owunna engineered his own camera flash that only transmits ultraviolet light, paints his models' bodies with ultraviolet reactive paints, and then photographs them in total darkness. When the UV light flashes on their bodies, the paint fluoresces and leaves an image of the Black body adorned in galaxies and stars, recreating celestial tableaux sourced from the archive of African diasporic myth.

In 2021, Owunna turned to film as an additional vehicle for preserving and reviving traditional African knowledge systems. *Obi Mbu (The Primordial House)*, co-directed with Marques

Redd, is a 30-minute experimental dance film recounting the tragic Igbo tale of the primordial feminine Deity Eke-Nnechukwu and Her masculine counterpart Chukwu. In the film, two performers from Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre are adorned in fluorescent paint that glows as they flow across the stage. By using advanced technology and spectral imaging techniques to depict pre-colonial cosmological traditions, Owunna dispels the separation between science and art, contemporary discoveries and African traditional knowledge. This integration of the technological with his artistic practice is what brought Owunna to the attention of Nica Ross, whose own work as an artist and educator brings focus to visual system building, theater, and critical approaches to identity and power at Carnegie Mellon University.

Ross intentionally invited Owunna to visit the popular bi-yearly course “Experimental Capture,” which was being co-taught by Ross and former long-time STUDIO director Golan Levin. The course focuses on using the latest technology to find new modes of capturing and modeling people, places, and events, which was ideal for Owunna’s practice. He came in excited to learn about different experimental capture modalities that are happening within the fine arts and new media space. His own thinking was enriched through sitting in on lectures and seeing the wide-ranging visualization techniques in use across many fields, such as X-rays, CT scans, and projection mapping modalities. All of these techniques present new methodologies for storytelling.

Having a professional artist in discourse with student work was a core value of this residency. Owunna was officially asked to spend 20 hours in the STUDIO in contact with students, and he engaged enthusiastically, attending multiple classes and offering critiques and advice on student projects. As a professional artist, Owunna understands






the value of mentorship, especially for young creatives, and stresses the importance of collaborating with people from different backgrounds in one's practice. He was able to be a roving mentor whose role existed vitally outside traditional academic power dynamics. According to Ross, this external position allowed Owunna to treat the students as collaborators in learning and expanding their skills. Owunna's rigor and the seriousness with which he takes himself and his practice provided a model for what it actually takes to pursue art as a career.

Ross stresses that the visiting artist residency is only the beginning of a relationship. Next semester, Owunna will be collaborating with the Entertainment Technology Center (ETC) on utilizing projection mapping in live performance to retell African myths. This collaboration came out of his experience at the STUDIO, where he learned about new technologies and visualization techniques and was introduced to other faculty and students in the greater CMU network. Owunna recounted experiences at other residencies that encouraged participation only in discreet times and spaces. By contrast, he felt integrated into the life of the STUDIO and the community. Rather than being extractive, this experience was generative, and the STUDIO facilitated articulating one's practice with a whole suite of tools. According to Owunna, many Black artists don't have access to cutting-edge technologies. He hopes to now use some of them for Black diasporic storytelling. New uses of technology challenge assumptions and implied perspectives, which pushes both technological development and individual work to new conceptual spaces. It also validates perspectives that have historically been ignored or denied.

Because of its experimental spirit, failure is a core part of the STUDIO. As one student, whose final project began as a duet with a movement-tracking robotic arm and ended



Mikael demonstrates his UV Flash technique during a lecture to the students of Experimental Capture in the STUDIO

up being an emotional testament to the gap in human-machine relations, can attest, things fall apart. The center cannot hold. Artists need a space to embrace failure as a part of learning. The STUDIO is one of the only places that offers a truly experimental space for artists to be able to generate new ideas. Under Ross' direction, the STUDIO empowers its students, staff, and visitors with the resources to explore, rather than creating under the pressure to produce. Whether through offering workshops so a larger public can witness the experimental process, or inviting artists like Owunna to interface with students, the STUDIO's communal approach also calls into question the notion that art and technology cannot work in tandem for common enrichment.

The STUDIO isn't formulaic. It values agility, flexibility, and community. Future artists will be different each time, and they will provide and require their own unique set of circumstances. The needs-based philosophy of the STUDIO allows it to adapt. Unlike Owunna, the next visiting artist is familiar with the STUDIO and academic culture, but new to Pittsburgh. Ross intends to bring this artist into conversation with the city at large, beyond the university campus. "I'm really excited about matchmaking without specific goals or expectations" says Ross. The Sylvia and David Steiner visiting speaker series at the STUDIO is a study in possibility. Unique faculty and visiting artists bring fresh perspectives, an interdisciplinary spirit, and an eagerness to collaborate.





*Title: The Martyrdom  
of Eke-Nnechukwu*



The Frank-Ratchye  
STUDIO

# Dorothy Sant to *Sound Like*

*“It’s un-American to say this, but there’s no winning the game.”*

*“You’re going to get garbled, mangled, cut off and cut up.”*

*“Your voice won’t be your own by the time it echoes back to you.”*

Those might be some of the messages you hear in the medium-resistant practice of Dorothy R. Santos, artist in residence in the Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, with support from The Sylvia and David Steiner Speaker Series, March 1st-18th. From web-based games to cartomancy, from writing to interactive installations, Dorothy engages the chance of language at every turn.

Dorothy accents language, moves and shifts the stresses of production and reception around to find breaking points. The accent is the most aleatory level of language. Everyone has an opinion on what an accent is, which accents are ‘beautiful,’ and how much of an accent they possess. The science of accents (linguistically-speaking, ‘language variants’) is a noisy realm, too. An ‘accent’ might be a vowel configuration, like Pittsburgh’s iconic ‘ahrn,’ or the downward sway of intonation at the end of a question. It might be the duration of a word, the word chosen,



**Dorothy R. Santos**  
Spring 2023 Visiting Artist




**Dani Lamorte (Author)**  
Spring 2023 Visiting Writer





# os is Learning *Nobody Else*



or the times a speaker chooses to go silent. An accent might not be inside the sounds of language at all, but instead the dream possession of a group who wishes to belong to one another.

Consider the Tower of Babel: Following the great flood of Genesis, the people of Babel sought to build a tower and thereby make a name for themselves. Though the Tower of Babel is often grouped with wax wings and other objects of hubris, Yael Doron argues that the story of Babel is actually one of massification. Massification refers to a social configuration which responds to a shared historic trauma. In massification, “the group turns into an inseparable and indistinguishable mass and everyone is supposedly the same.” It’s a defense mechanism. Remember that the people of Babel were said to speak one language, to be of one tongue. In this unification, Doron argues, there was no room for dissent, for diverging voices. All conflict was synonymous with disaster—historical and potential. As a sublimating project, the Tower was the elimination of internal conflict; a response to a great cataclysm that had threatened to destroy everything. One name and one language and nothing else. In Doron’s view, the

Tower of Babel is a story of mercy from heaven. God sees that, with the Tower in place, the babblers will be so unified that any dissent will be punished brutally by the masses. He strikes down the tower, maybe to prevent cruelty or maybe to hide from humans (for a while) their capacity to hate. The Tower was the fear of hearing someone speak with an accent.

I haven't seen God lately but I did see Dorothy Santos a few weeks ago. And I bet the next place you'll find them is next to that famed Tower, striking it down once more. Dorothy Santos insists on the noisiness of language, brilliantly, because the noise is what we need. Dorothy is reattuning us to the accent of noise. Like any reattunement, engaging with Dorothy's work can be painful and unsettling. Reattunement is a discipline and there are punishments for failing to learn, rewards for conforming.


Dorothy's latest work-in-progress is a game, *The Cyborg's Prosody*. Drawing on the form of language-learning software, *The Cyborg's Prosody* teaches players to mimic (i.e. acquire) Dorothy's mother's speech. Confronted with the game's mechanisms and ethos, conventional ways of describing her speech become unconvincing. Maybe it's best to say that Dorothy's mother, Dulce, speaks with a voice that transmits the noise of both Tagalog and English; a voice that learned a dynamic schedule for speaking both languages in multicultural San Francisco; a voice that can soothe a child and tell stories of exclusion which crack a listening ear. In *The Cyborg's Prosody*, you learn to speak like Dulce, the way Dulce learned to speak like an imagined American you: through mimicry. You are many people and nobody; the synthesis of real speakers filled with real racisms but ripped apart and whipped back together into a sort-of generic but terribly specific 'you.' I am you at times, not you at times. You or I have been heard to say: "You, Dulce, a Filipino woman of dialects and accents, do not belong here, in this America of shining pure Englishes."





This is what we repeat in the game, but all the while learning to speak as Dulce speaks. As the game progresses, a successful player speaks more Tagalog and less English. Translations are not provided along the way, so you don't quite know what you're saying or why, or where it all goes. You only learn what you've been saying in Tagalog if you get to the end of the game. Dorothy doesn't expect you to get that far. What they anticipate is what every language learner encounters: frustration, disappointment, confusion, boredom, shame. They anticipate that you will fail.

The Cyborg's Prosody doesn't directly address speakers outside of the imagined "you." Dorothy's intense focus on the rapport between American anglophones and her Filipino Tagalogophone mother leaves the complex experiences of Arabic, Ainu, or Wounaan speakers playing *The Cyborg's Prosody* un-surveilled. Dorothy isn't ignorant of these configurations. Instead, they use the elision of these speakers in the design of the game to highlight the design of language—which is to say the construction and enforcement of language—at the level of both the everyday and the programmatic. Some speakers of some languages are, in 'real life,' largely unimagined by those who design games and language policies. *The Cyborg's Prosody* repeats this reality to us with no cracks in its voice. By design, there are no apps to teach you to sound Tejano when you're from Toronto, or to speak like you came from Delhi when you're actually from Denver. Language can move in many directions but that does not mean that all those directions are encouraged. It's no accident that Dulce learned English; no accident that you, imagined you, never learned Tagalog. Slipping between the too-charged terms of 'exclusion' and 'representation,' *The Cyborg's Prosody* tells one single story over and over again, attending to what changes in the retelling. Dorothy calls you in to rework what they've seen. This is the repetition and force of memory.



Dorothy leads a docupoetics exercise based on the Rider-Waite Tarot Card deck.



The Cyborg's Prosody echoes earlier works by Dorothy, like *Press 1 to be Connected* (2019). In this text-based game, a player navigates the decisions involved in having their DNA cached for future generations. By the time the game's narrative has begun, technology has brought you to this precipice of bio-archival imperatives. It's a profoundly anti-queer future in which you must be reproduced, and so the best you can do is select the storage medium that offends you least: magnetic tape, silicon chip, psychoactive plant. No time for questions like: Why is my DNA being cached? Do I want that? How do I say 'no'? How do I articulate the consonant and vowel pair? How do I intone 'no' so as to have my intentions heard? Dorothy's work consistently says 'no' and rips the word from our teeth. They tell us 'no,' set a hard limit, and insist we work inside of it.

The Cyborg's Prosody and *Press 1 to be Connected* demonstrate that game design does not form channels for the flow of possibility but, instead, something like a mesh. Possibility is what leaks out from around all the decisions we're making. Dorothy's work as an educator and tarot card reader demonstrates this clearly. Though the decisive fantasy of Miss Cleo's prognostication lingers long, Dorothy's approach to cartomancy relies less on ancient predestination and more the fluctuating present. Dorothy pulls a card and says what comes to mind for them, then asks what you think. It's surveying meanings and messages in the room with us, rather than signals from other realms. It's tracing out well-designed symbols and the spots where they leak. Maybe Dorothy will lay out some cards for you, ask you to pick one. Maybe you'll pick the Tower-card number sixteen in the major arcana of the standardized Western tarot deck. An online guide tells me that The Tower stands for cataclysm upcoming, but I've never thought that. What comes to mind for me is an obstacle. Something to move around. Could that be a dance? To see the Tower is to ask yourself for a dance. That's what I see in the card, Dorothy.



And then, I see two women fighting over a chair. This is docupoetics: “a modality within poetry [which ranges] along a continuum from the first person auto-ethnographic mode of inscription to a more objective third person documentarian tendency.” Borrowing from poetry’s non-literal capacity and documentary’s reportage, docupoetics is a risky writing strategy. It simultaneously grips the listener with authority, while telling a story that might only be true inside the speaker. In Dorothy’s docupoetics workshop, co-facilitated by Adrian Jones and co-presented by the Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry and the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater with funding from Duolingo, I did see those two women fighting over a chair, but it never happened except in response to Dorothy’s prompting: “Choose two tarot cards. Map those tarot cards to people. Tell the story of those two people in conflict. Tell the story of their conflict over an object.”

“...or don’t.” Every instruction in Dorothy’s workshop is negated as it is offered. What is presented is a series of decisions you must make: Will you use the tarot cards or not? Will you write about two people or not? Whatever you choose, you have chosen and you will learn something about what you want through those choices.

The directness, perhaps the brutality, of Dorothy’s practice is not one of indifference but rather impassioned concern. Dorothy is concerned for so many of us who are shepherded into technological decisions wherein the technologists are as ill-informed about us as we are about the decisions we are asked to make. Language is a technology, too. Across her works, Dorothy asks us to stitch ourselves into the scenes they have researched, to place ourselves within these negative arrangements, these echoes of ‘no,’ and think through what we are hearing. We survive the imagining because it is imagining. Dorothy cannot guarantee our survival in the ‘real world,’ but they offer opportunities to understand how survival might work and whether or not we might want it.

You come back from the work of Dorothy Santos ready to tell a story. And doesn’t that necessitate someone else? You come back from the work of Dorothy Santos, looking for someone else. You try out new sounds in your mouth. They come back to your



Workshop participants share their writing with one another





**The Kelly-Strayhorn Theater**

partnered with **The Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry** to present writer, artist and educator **Dorothy R. Santos** in collaboration with artist, historian, community organizer, and technologist **Adrian Jones**, for a workshop that explores writing creative non-fiction through the lens of the documentarian and archivist. The workshop is rooted in docu-poetics, a way of writing that honors oral traditions through poetry and experimental prose. Jones and Santos will work through various approaches of recording, documenting, and archiving stories for participants interested in contributing to a community-centered archive.



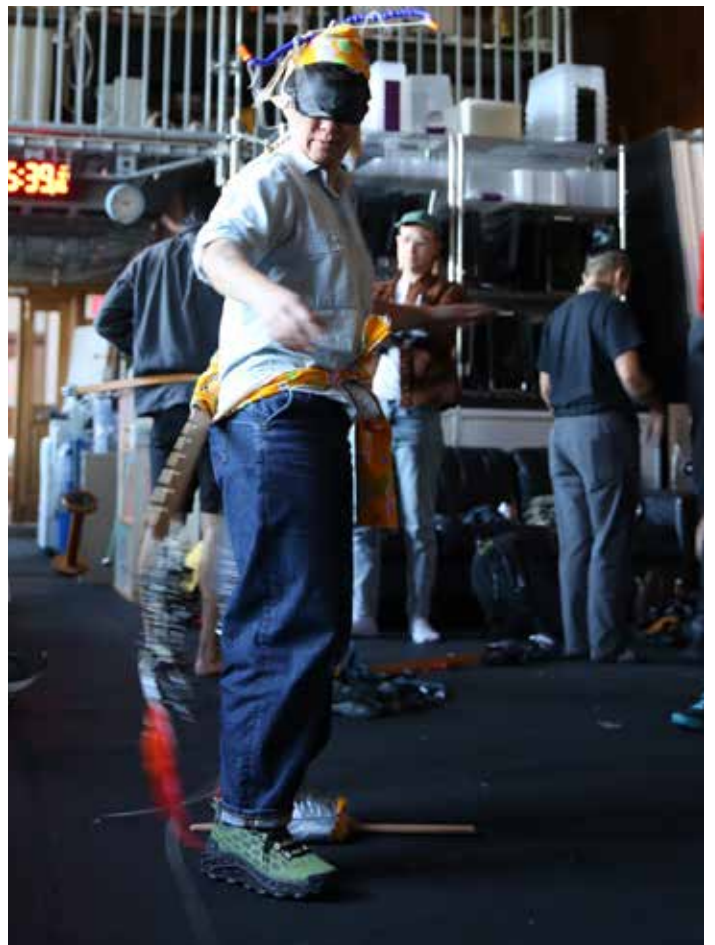


## **TOUCH Workshop w/ Anna Betze**

is a multimodal set of experiments that untangle the ideological orientation of the senses, organized around proprioceptive sensation and arriving at inverted performances. The project builds on the research of Czech polymath **Jan Švankmajer**, responding to the censorship of his work in the 1970s. This workshop asks how we transfer and transmit feeling, touching those outside of our time-space? Anna facilitates activities about how we feel things within our bodies and then extend those feelings into gestures. Over the weekend, students created bodily extensions used to explore the relationship between embodiment and movement with found materials.z





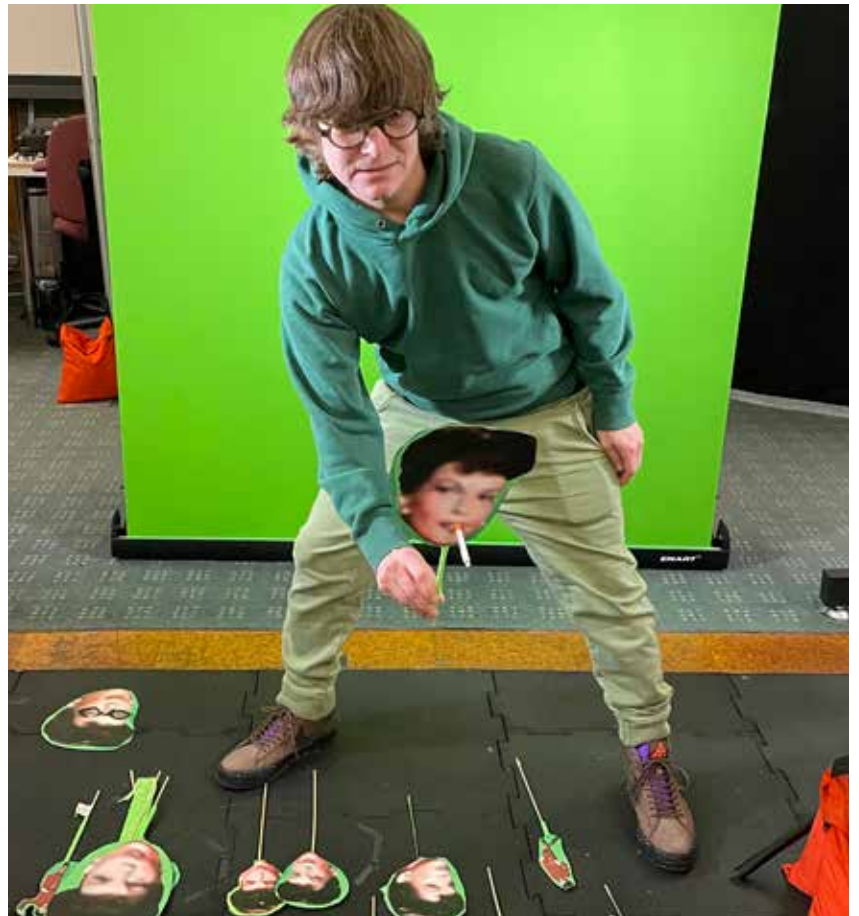




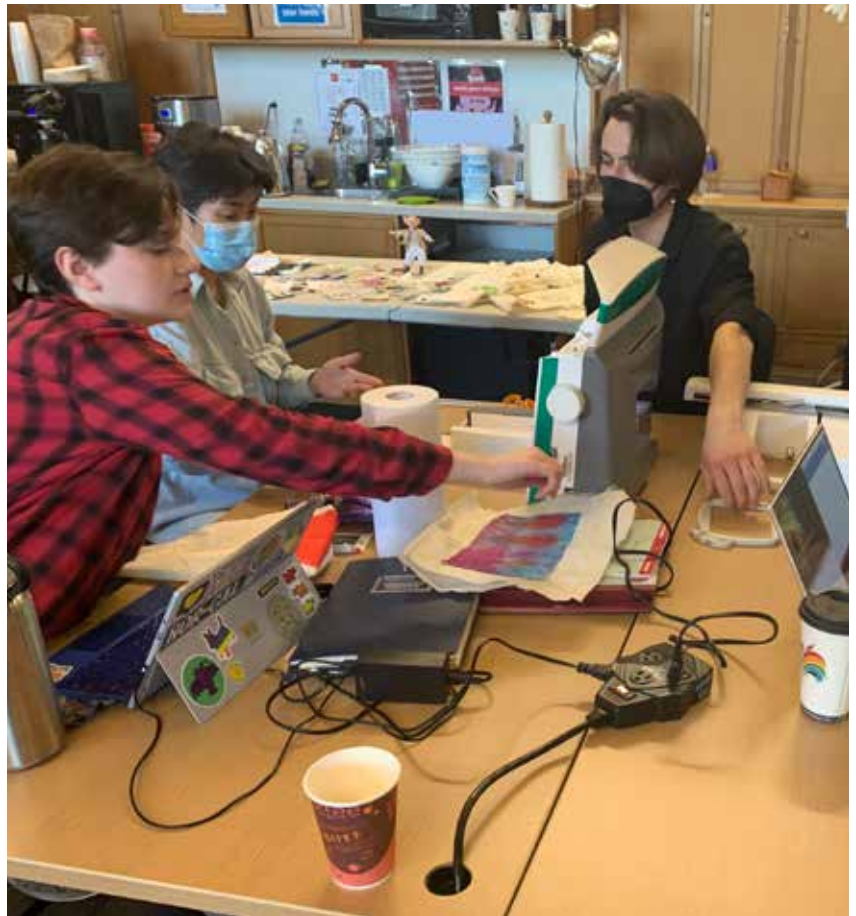




**Tara Mateik** is a New York-based multimedia performance artist, activist, and educator. Mateik visited the STUDIO to build on his practice of reenactments that underscore historical moments of collective transformation. During his visit from he engaged students, faculty, staff, and Pittsburgh community members through an artist talk, film screening, and participatory workshop in collaboration with Assoc. Director **Harrison Apple** and the Pittsburgh Queer History Project. Using accessible video effects and puppetry, participants physically re-insert Judy Garland into the Valley of the Dolls film, followed by a presentation by the creators of the 1980s PCTV Gay Cable Network, **Zed Armstrong** and **Michel Ferruci**.



**David Perry, Tatiana Mustakos, Huw Messie**, experimental textile designers and CMU alumni returned to the STUDIO in the Spring Semester to lead the first open-source Computational Embroidery workshop. Drawing participants from all five schools of the CFA, the workshop used the STUDIO-borne PEmbroider code library to introduce concepts and tools of computational embroidery. Our guest instructors inspired every student make a slew of unique embroidered artifacts. Thanks to enthusiastic co-sponsorship from Lea Albaugh and Jim McCann of the CMU Textiles Lab, we were able to make this workshop a full day event, introducing a new cohort of textile researchers in CFA and across CMU.











**Dimitris Papaioannou and Katie Mitchell**

visited the STUDIO as part of a two-party hybrid event featuring exclusive screenings of their contemporary experimental theater works, *The Great Tamer* and *Fraulein Julie*. Our guests were invited by Special Visiting Faculty in the John Wells Directing Program, **Ivan Talijancic**, who organized intimate panels following each screening with the MFA Directing Fellows from the CMU School of Drama. As part of his larger work as Artistic Director of Contemporary Performance Practices, Ivan's generous use of his network to enrich the scope of contemporary theater created a recurring Sunday afternoon opportunity for the CMU Student community.





**LaDonna LaMoore** and **Jazmine Butterfly** visited the students of the College of Fine Arts to co-host two screenings of the MS89 series presented by STUDIO Associate Director Harrison Apple and the Pittsburgh Queer History Project, a community-based oral history and media preservation initiative focused on working-class LGBTQ histories and the transformation of Pittsburgh through archival traces of after-hours nightclubs. MS89 is a live community watch party pushing back against the tendency to consume archives in solitude. MS 89 presents the PQHP archives as a social event to form new intergenerational friendships via our shared desire for a shared past.









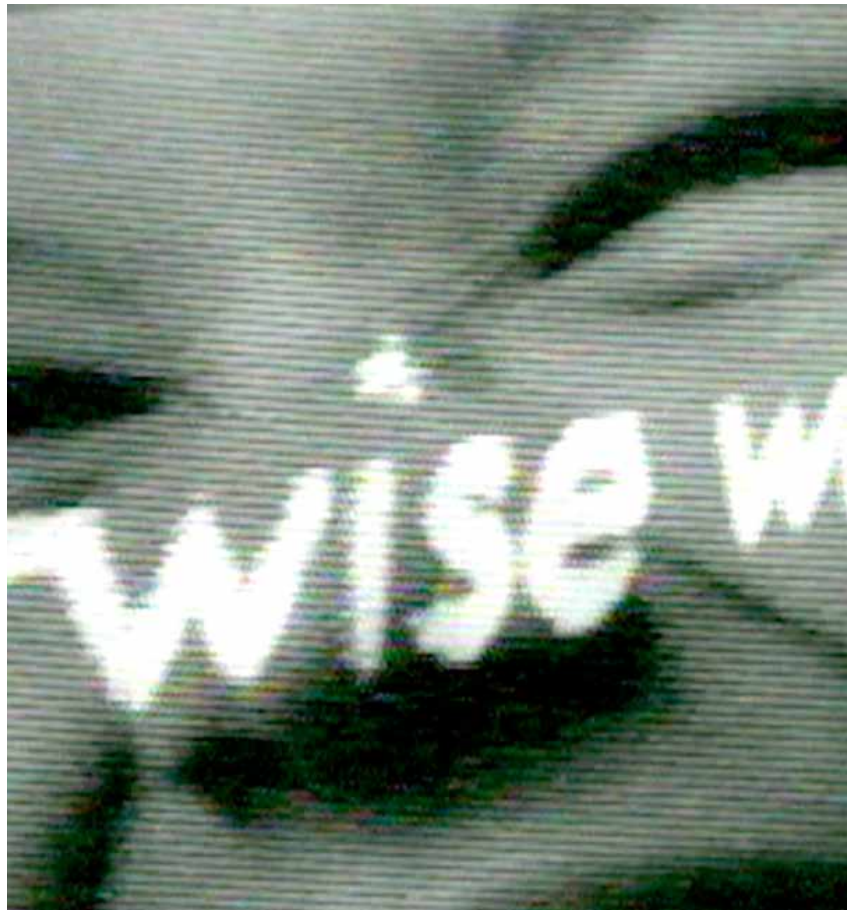


**Geo Wyex**, an artist and educator originally from NYC, visited the STUDIO for a one of a kind lecture and performance for the students of CFA. His recent work is released as the Muck Studies Dept. – a constellational narrative framework and imaginary city agent that surveys the bottom of low-lying water areas, “looking for stars out of what stinks.” Muck Studies Dept. as a project is a Weltenshaaung, with many forms and formats. Inspired by aesthetics and methodologies of black Atlantic poetics, investigative journalism and storytelling theater, the project connects mud, water, gas, ass, rocks, coins, keys, extractive industry, and sensual expression of belonging to that flood.





Touchstone Cinema supported two visiting artist programs including scholar **Adam Lowenstein** speaking on the docu-horror work “Winter Solstice” by Hollis Frampton, and a latter visit from film/video artist **Peggy Ahwesh**. Ahwesh was invited for a screening and artist talk focusing on her role in the formation of the aesthetic movements of Pittsburgh’s punk filmmakers of the early 1980s. This two day event was a collaboration between Touchstone Cinema and Pittsburgh Sound + Image focusing on punk-aesthetic films made by women working at Pittsburgh Filmmakers’ in the 70s-80s including Natalka Voslakov, Christiane Dolores, Elizabeth Nada Seamans, and Stephanie Beroes.





TOUCHSTONE CINEMA PRESENTS

# RUST BELT RENEGADES

Friday, April 28TH @ 7:00 PM  
Peggy Ahwesh  
Screening & Lecture  
@ STUDIO for Creative Inquiry  
College of Fine Arts, Room 111  
Carnegie Mellon University

Saturday, April 29th @ 6:30 PM  
w/ Pittsburgh Sound + Image  
Pittsburgh Filmmakers: 70-80s Punk  
Screening & Panel  
@ Melwood Screening Room  
477 Melwood Ave

TOUCHSTONE CINEMA PRESENTS:

# HORROR OF HERE-NESS

16MM SCREENING OF HOLLIS FRAMPTON'S *WINTER SOLSTICE (SOLARIUMAGELANI)*  
FOLLOWED BY A CONVERSATION (WITH MEDIA!) ON HORROR AND DOCUMENTARY  
WITH HORROR SCHOLAR DR. ADAM LOWENSTEIN (UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH)

The Frank-Ratchye  
**STUDIO**  
for Creative Inquiry

PROJECTIONS BY  
FLEA MARKET FILMS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2ND @ 7PM  
AT THE FRANK-RATCHYE STUDIO  
FOR CREATIVE INQUIRY  
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS, ROOM 111  
CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY



**Thank you again for your generous support of groundbreaking intellectual and artistic work on Carnegie Mellon University's Campus.**

We are already planning ahead for the 2023-2024 season at the Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry including the return of our recurring conference. Keep in touch with use for more information about LIVE! Art && Code and so much more.



**Nica Ross**  
Director



**Dr. Harrison Apple**  
Associate Director



**Bill Rodgers**  
Program Coordinator



**Linda Hager**  
Business Manager



**Carol Hernandez**  
Financial Assistant



**Rich Kawood**  
Technical Coordinator



**Olivia Cunnally**  
Videographer