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Kim M. Reiff
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THE CARETAKER: BEARING WITNESS IN PUBLIC ART
AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS ADDRESSING THE
EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE WITHIN MICHIGAN COMMUNITIES

Kim M. Reiff

Submitted to the faculty of
The Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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Accepted by the faculty of the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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“It is for us, with all our stumbling, and in the midst of dreadful confusion,
to try to disengage the tangled wing.”

--- Melvin Konner,
*The Tangled Wing: Biological Constraints
on the Human Spirit* (1982)

Dedicated to the artists, activists, and advocates who were caretakers
long before graciously allowing me to write about them.

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ABSTRACT

Kim M. Reiff

THE CARETAKER: BEARING WITNESS IN PUBLIC ART

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS ADDRESSING THE
EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE WITHIN MICHIGAN COMMUNITIES

This paper examines public art and the role of contemporary artists in context of their relational experience in communities effected by environmental injustice. As a Michigan resident or as an out-of-state guest invited into an urban neighborhood, each of the twelve artists in this study participates within community through a unique cultural lens. Informed by historical and sociopolitical complexities, the public art bears witness for artists that care about the effects of a city's water crisis, harm resulting from breached oil pipelines, generational loss of Indigenous traditions, and the inability to breathe unconditionally within certain neighborhood Zip Codes. Engaging in public art in the emerging role of 'caretaker,' the artist addresses evolving social narratives in such a way that the aesthetic form through its visual dialogue, becomes a catalyst for change.

Current discourse on public art and environmental injustice regards a broad range of social contexts whereby the art performs a certain aesthetic or practical function relevant to location, however, the figure of the artist is rarely discussed. This paper focuses on the figure of the artist.

In posing the question, *How does public art bear witness for the artist in the role of caretaker?*, I argue that the artwork reveals the role of caretaker through the artist's 1) aesthetic

practice, 2) gentleness in form, and 3) particular elucidation that personifies ‘caretaker’ as assessed through aspects of *Witness*, *Testimony*, *Shelter*, and *Call*, whereby the four categories become markers within the art for attributing the artist’s relational experience within community. The public art fosters consideration for the viewer to gain new insight through aesthetic form that bears witness for the artist as caretaker and to reflect on one’s own role in an environmentally just community.

Key words: caretaker, public art, witness, testimony, shelter, call, gentleness, community, environmental injustice

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ABBREVIATIONS

- BPF – *Between Past and Future* (2006), Hanna Arendt
- BW – *Basic Writings* (1993), Martin Heidegger (ed David Farrell Krell)
- EJ – *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (2006), Hannah Arendt
- EN – *Entre Nous: (Essays on) Thinking of the Other* (1998), Emmanuel Levinas
- OH – *Of Hospitality* (2000), Anne Dufourmantelle and Jacques Derrida
- OTB – *Otherwise than Being: Or Beyond Essence* (1998), Emmanuel Levinas
- PG – *Power of Gentleness: Meditations on the Risk of Living* (2018), Anne Dufourmantelle
- RIV – *Vulnerability in Resistance* (2016), Judith Butler
- RJ – *Responsibility and Judgement* (2005), Hannah Arendt
- TFN – *The Force of Nonviolence* (2020), Judith Butler
- THC – *The Human Condition* (1998), Hanna Arendt

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines public art and the role of contemporary artists addressing the effects of environmental injustice within communities in the state of Michigan. As a resident or as an out-of-state guest invited into an urban neighborhood, each artist within this study reveals care for community through a unique cultural lens. Informed by historical and sociopolitical complexities, the public art bears witness that the artists care about the effects of a city's water crisis, harm resulting from breached oil pipelines, generational loss of Indigenous traditions, and the inability to breathe unconditionally within certain neighborhood Zip Codes. Engaging in public art in the emerging role of 'caretaker,' the artist addresses evolving social narratives in such a way that the aesthetic form through its visual dialogue becomes a catalyst for change.

Current discourse on public art and environmental injustice regards a broad range of social contexts whereby the art performs a certain aesthetic or practical function¹ relevant to its location, however, the figure of the artist is rarely discussed. This paper focuses on the figure of the artist.

The development of the theme of the artist in the role of 'caretaker' surfaces from German philosopher Martin Heidegger's 1951-52 lectures at the University of Freiburg on 'What is Called Thinking?'. Within this discourse, he states that "What calls on us to think demands for itself that it be tended, cared for, husbanded in its own essential being, by thought" and in part summarizes his multifaceted exploration of the question: "What makes a call upon us that we should think and, by thinking, be who we are?" (BW 390). This inquiry frames the consideration that in creating the artform the artist observes, tends to, and cares for, that which is to be thought about in its making. The artform reveals the artist's care for community as well as, being one who is a caring thinker.

Each of the individuals featured in this study has been personally impacted by the immediate or long-term effects of environmental injustice. As a resident or as an out-of-state guest invited into an urban neighborhood, each of the twelve figures within this study reveals care for community through unique artforms. While their relationship to community through art or advocacy differ in materials and process, they share in common through the layered meaning of public art, the notion of care.

This study examines artworks that embed historical and sociopolitical complexities relevant to the effects on community for the unjust use of natural resources of water, land, and air, the number of communities that the artists are associated with are many. While cultural backgrounds include African American, American Indian (Anishinaabe and Ottawa/Pottawatomi), European, and Latino, the artists are also affiliated with communities through geographic location, professional memberships such as art and academic, as well as church and other local organizations.

The Topic of 'Caretaker' Emerges

In September 2016, during an international art exhibition in Grand Rapids, Michigan, I began to see the artist in the role of caretaker emerge. The art installation titled *PLUMBUM*, on public display in the small art gallery in Fountain Street Church, consisted of two-hundred and thirty distorted glass jars and bottles filled with clear and colored liquid positioned on multilevel wood shelves. Each container featured thermo-printed labels with hand-painted numbers. Published a month earlier by the Virginia Tech Research Team, the numbers represented the lead-in-water-analysis statistics from the tap water in the homes of residents in the nearby city of Flint.

The artist, Mark Bleshenski, a Michigan resident already concerned about industrial chemicals contaminating waterways near his home, had been keeping watch on the

developments of the ‘Flint Water Crisis’ effecting the nearby community, after the city’s water supply source ‘switch’ resulted in lead leaching into residential drinking water for more than a year (“Flint Water Crisis Fast Facts”).² In the midst of this unfolding narrative, Bleshenski responded with artwork that addressed the devastating effects from the city agency’s mismanagement of the natural resource. It was through Bleshenski’s public art installation, *PLUMBUM*, that I reflected on how the art bears witness for the artist and began to examine the role of artist as ‘caretaker.’

It is through aesthetic practice, that I perceive the artist’s relation with community is revealed. While not all artists that deal with environmental injustice would embody the role of ‘caretaker,’ the artists in this study participate in community in such a way that relationships with others continue to expand through experiences related to the public art they are associated with. Although the artists have not self-assigned this role, the depth for which they consider the effects of the environmental injustice on community appears as an attribute of care and extends beyond the limited exhibition run or the permanency of the installation.

ARGUMENT / THESIS

While public art juxtaposes complex historical and sociopolitical narratives that contribute to environmental injustice and the resulting effects within community, this examination considers how aesthetic practice and form bears witness for the artist’s care. In posing the question, *How does public art bear witness for the artist in the role of caretaker?*, I argue that the artwork reveals the role of caretaker through the artist’s 1) aesthetic practice, 2) gentleness in form, and 3) particular elucidation that personifies ‘caretaker’ as assessed through aspects of *Witness*, *Testimony*, *Shelter*, and *Call*, whereby the four categories become markers within the art for attributing the artist’s relational experience within community.

First, in proposing that the artist reveals ‘who we are,’ from the multifaceted exploration of Heidegger’s question: “What makes a call upon us that we should think and, by thinking, be who we are?” (BW 390), I argue that the artist confronts the juxtaposed complexities of the private life with the public realm through contemplation of the materials and the creative aesthetic process that leads to the development of the artform. Entering into the narrative of environmental injustice and its resulting effects on community, the artwork discloses that which is making a call upon the artist to think. The artist’s individual experience through the interpretive form is introduced into the public space. In doing so it bears witness to the artist’s private thinking and reveals ‘who we are’ as not only an individual but as a reflection of ‘who we are’ as a society such that, environmental injustice needs to be thought about.

German American political theorist, Hannah Arendt notes in *The Human Condition* (1998), that the boundaries between the private, public, and social spheres are “blurred” as it relates to family and the activities related to a common life (28). In this context, the artist brings the artwork from the private studio into the blurred space of the contemporary social and political world. As the artwork manifests from private to public appearance, the artist through caring to think about the artwork, resists doubt or personal anguish that may reveal itself through the creative process or precarity inherent within the injustice.

Aesthetic practice leads to the second proposition that the artist’s gentleness becomes evident in the resolution of the artform. I argue that the artist’s interpretative work imbues gentleness and in its silent presence invites viewer reflection. Considering French philosopher Anne Dufourmantelle’s perspective within *Power of Gentleness: Meditations on the Risk of Living*, (2018), wherein she states that the “symbolic force of gentleness as an act of resistance” is perceptual sensibility and intelligence (43), I suggest that the artist in the private space of the

studio creates art as an act of resistance to the effects of environmental injustice. This sensibility and intelligence connect the artist to the evolving narratives wherein the artist contributes uniquely to the dialogue.

As the third point, my argument will articulate four aspects, *Witness*, *Testimony*, *Shelter*, and *Call*, through which the public art in this examination personifies caretaker. The four aspect categories become markers within the art for attributing the artist's relational experience within community. Through personal experience the artist as *witness*, sees the effects of environmental injustice, attests through *testimony*, says the consequential effects exist, *shelters* (protects) thought for reconciliation of past and future through creative expression in the present, and initiates a *call* (invites) for reflection of an imagined future. While the aspects overlap within the artist's broad experience, aesthetic practice, and are multi-present in the artworks, categorizing this examination into four 'aspect' chapters aids in simplifying complexities for the limited scope of this research. (See "TERMS" for further clarification.)

CONSIDERATIONS / QUESTIONS

The role, tasks, and implications of the concept of the artist as 'caretaker' will be considered through the artist's aesthetic practice that includes materials, process, and form all of which embody the artist's thinking. The thought keeper according to German philosopher Martin Heidegger responds with artwork that speaks both *to* and *for* the letting of something "arrive and come to presence" (BW 388). The 'something' coming into presence in this context is the artist's thoughts of care. In the examination of the oil painting, *Shoes* (1886), by Vincent Van Gogh, Heidegger probes where and how art occurs relevant to its relation to the artist. Within the essay, "The Origins of a Work of Art" he states, "From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth" (BW 159). The viewer is invited to consider

the truth of happening in the public art, not as in the correct representation of the shoes, for example, as Heidegger notes, but as the unconcealment of the counterplay of the earth and world that one begins to apprehend through reflection of oneself in the world. This examination considers how the artist's reflection of self, embeds into the artwork to reveal the reciprocal revelation of care. Considerations and questions include the following:

1. *What differentiates the contemporary artist in the role of 'caretaker' as one who creates art for public, not in isolation, but within the context of community?* While the role is one that the artists have not self-assigned, this study will explore how artists consider themselves in context of community as they invite understanding for the layered meanings of the art and the environment with which they engage.
2. This inquiry considers how the artist during the creative process reconciles personal angst or anguish relevant to the origin of the environmental injustice, when confronting historical and sociopolitical complexities that contribute to its contemporary effects that includes posing, *How does the artist resist personal vulnerability when bringing the artwork from the studio to the public space?*
3. In the role of caretaker, this examination will explore how the artist addresses evolving narratives in such a way that the art becomes a catalyst for change through inviting new narratives of justice by asking, *How does the public art invite dialogue for an imagined, environmentally just future?*
4. This examination considers the role of art, not as prescriptive for how the viewer is to respond, but as one that invites the viewer's individual interpretation. While Heidegger conveys the counterplay of the earth and world as seen within Van Gogh's *Shoes*, whereby the artwork is transported into openness of beings, he notes that the more simply

the art transports us into this “openness” it simultaneously transports us “out of the realm of the ordinary” (BW 191). This informs the question *How does the artwork invite viewer to be transported into the extraordinary?*

TERMS

Key terms for this research include *caretaker, public art, witness, testimony, shelter, call, gentleness, environmental injustice, and community*.

1. The term *caretaker* derives from Martin Heidegger’s essay on “What Calls for Thinking.” Accordingly, he claims, “What calls on us to think demands for itself that it be tended, cared for, husbanded in its own essential being, by thought.” (BW 390). From Heidegger’s lecture series, I suggest that the term caretaker for this research is analogous to the gardener (artist) that considers the environmental landscape (community), tends to, cares for, and keeps watch on, and thinks about that which is within the gardener’s (artist’s) field of vision. As a participant, the caretaker regards the community with sensitivity. The artworks do not feature sensationalized experiences of the other, but through gentleness in form, the artworks reveal the caretaker’s relational experience. Through interpretive form, the caretaker safekeeps an imagined future whereby the artwork invites others to think of an imagined just environment within their own field of vision.
2. The term *public art* is informed by German American political theorist, Hannah Arendt’s essay, “The Public Realm: The Common,” in *The Human Condition* (1998). She notes ‘public’ is that which “can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity” whereby the artist’s work is brought from the private to the public space (50).

The art is brought from the studio into the public realm to invite consideration from a larger audience.

3. The terms *Witness*, *Testimony*, *Shelter*, and *Call* are four ‘aspect’ categories assigned to the artists for the purpose of creating focal points for this examination. While the aspects overlap and are revealed in multiple ways within each of the artworks, the distinctions allow emphasis for discussion.

The term *Witness* is defined in this study as one who sees an event and has first-hand knowledge from personal observation and experience. This is not done as a disengaged bystander but as one who has proximity. Within *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, (1998), French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas examines “Here I am” through his discourse on proximity and responsibility. In this he considers one’s nearness to the other and one’s responsibility to the other in the course of putting oneself in place of the other without knowing who the other is (146). The artist sees the effects of environmental injustice within community and creates public art that addresses through interpretive form the nearness of that which has been observed and experienced. The art provides the presence for the other that the artist is standing in for.

Testimony provides evidence of the experience as a correlative action through the artform’s public recounting. The artwork gives voice as attestation to the artist’s relational experience within community. Evidentiary materials (artifacts) are utilized that derive from natural resources provide visual relevance. While the artist witnesses the events, this aspect considers how the artist gives voice through activism, educational means, or scientific research that visually affirms the effects on community.

Shelter in this context derives from Heidegger's notion of safekeeping of thought, whereby, that which calls for thinking does not mean to give orders "but to commend, entrust, give into safekeeping, to shelter" (BW 387). This allows for reconciliation of future and past, through creative expression in the present. The creative process through community collaboration protects individual thought for interpretation.

Whereas *Call* considers the invitation through the artwork that fosters an imagined future. Derived from Heidegger's reference to the New Testament, Matthew 8:18, wherein he examines the meaning of the word 'call,' "And when Jesus saw many people around him, he called them to go over across the sea" (The Bible King James Version). He clarifies that Jesus did not give a command or issue an order, but that the Greek term *keleuthos*, means more of "a letting reach" and notes that the same word in Sanskrit (ancient language in Hinduism) has the meaning "to invite." (Heidegger BW 387).

4. Anne Dufourmantelle elucidates that when conveyed as nonviolent resistance "the symbolic force of gentleness is an authority" (PG 43). She imparts that gentleness is embedded in the gesture of craftsmanship and is "joined" with the material; and that the values that agree with gentleness are "sometimes grueling" and require "keeping watch" (Dufourmantelle, PG 22). As each artist keeps watch on the unfolding narrative, each confront challenging or difficult personal responses in the persistent forward motion embedded in the development of form.
5. *Community* in the context of this study, refers to the multifaceted relationship between humans and natural environment that each artist has common association with. This correlation includes people groups connected by for example, geographic location,

profession, or heritage that allow for common social and environmental experiences.

Berlin-based philosopher Andreas Weber, author of *Enlivenment: Toward a Poetics for the Anthropocene* (2019), uses the terms *commons* and *commune* as he proposes a reweaving of relationships with nature in context of our relationship with the biosphere. Weber conveys that when we have an opportunity to recultivate our relationship with self and the other whether humans or nature, communion is part of a principled ordering of “how we perceive, think, and act,” and that we can develop our cultural life differently wherein theory and social practice are intertwined (14, 15). This study considers Weber’s notion that our relationship to natural resources of water, land, and air, determine how we are “entangled” with each other (172). The artists in this study consider the effects on community through decisions made relevant to the environment.

6. The term *environmental injustice* is informed by the writing of American Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*, (1962). A marine biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Carson is credited for launching the environmental movement that established the US government Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1970. In her examination of wildlife loss from the use of pesticides, she writes that “the credibility of the witness is of first importance” and claims that the “control men” in state and federal government and the chemical manufacturers who deny facts reported by biologists as it relates to evidence of harm to wildlife and humans are “like the priest and the Levite in the biblical story, they choose to pass by on the other side and to see nothing” (86).

The terms “environmental justice” and “environmental health justice,” are used in the 2010 collaborative research report by Juliana Astrud Maantay, PhD, for the EPA titled, *Proximity to Environmental Hazards: Environmental Justice and Adverse Health*

Outcomes. Her study summarizes the direct correlation between proximity to environmental hazards and adverse health risks that includes poor air quality, poor enforcement of environmental regulations, and quality-of-life impacts such as housing and parks (“Proximity to Environmental Hazards”). In correlation, *Environmental Health News* (June 2020) reports in “Environmental Injustice” by Gwen Ranniger, that in examining racial disparities and communities of color for disproportionate burdens of the effects of environmental injustices, “... Today, zip code is still the most potent predictor of an individual’s health and well-being” (“Environmental Health News”).

INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Through an intertextual analysis this paper will examine public art and the artists that provide context for the examination of the role of caretaker in addressing the effects of environmental injustice within select Michigan communities. Each artist’s relationship to the community will be integral to the discussion. Contributing to the discourse will be an introduction of certain continental philosophers that provide additional frames of reference for contextual analysis.

This investigation examines the public art and art advocacy of twelve individuals. Ten reside in or near the urban areas of Ann Arbor, Bay City, Detroit, Flint, and Grand Rapids in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula. Two artists who reside outside of the state of Michigan, through invitation created public art in the communities of Flint and Lansing. The artworks featured in this examination were created primarily between 2015 through the time of this writing in 2022. Select outdoor installations, however, have been undergoing modifications prior to 2015.

This intertextual analysis will consider a variety of insights from philosophers that will contribute to this exploration of the artist as caretaker in the context of community. German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s insight on thinking intersects with American cultural critic

Donna J. Haraway's investigation into knowing and doing as an ecology of practice. Within his lecture on "What Calls for Thinking," Heidegger conveys that the craft of the hand is rooted in thinking, whereas Haraway conveys that attachment or detachment of thinking is the cultivation of response-ability (Heidegger BW 380; Haraway 34).

Converging dialogue includes French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas' examination of proximity, responsibility, and resistance within *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, (1998), wherein he considers one's nearness to the other and one's responsibility to the other in the course of putting oneself in place of the other without knowing who the other is (146). American Judith Butler's essay "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance," in *Vulnerability in Resistance* (2016), examines "forms of nonviolent resistance that mobilize vulnerability for the purposes of asserting existence" and states that "under certain conditions, continuing to exist, move, and to breathe are forms of resistance" (26).

Injustice will be considered through Bulgarian French philosopher Julia Kristeva's 1982 *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, wherein she discusses that debt and inequity is sin "set forth as constitutive of man, coming to him from the depth of his heart," and notes that it recalls the original sin of Adam, and conveys that sin, as "breach of duty or injustice," is an act within man's "responsibility" (121).

The complexities of environmental justice and how ecological relations intersect with human relationships include, in addition to Andrew Weber, Andrew Brown, *Art & Ecology Now*, (2014) and Art historian, T.J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, (2016). Brown examines artists activities that confront "urgent social, political, economic, scientific, technological, and ethical issues facing humankind today," (7), whereas Demos claims that environmental matters are "inextricable from social, political, and economical forces" (7). While various elements of the

interrelated ecological and human relations will be introduced in context of the artworks, an in-depth examination of the origins and issues surrounding the environmental injustices relevant to the public art in this study are beyond the scope of this paper.

Further listings on key philosophers presented in this study will be introduced in the following section titled “STRUCTURE OF CHAPTERS AND OVERVIEW.”

STRUCTURE OF CHAPTERS AND OVERVIEW

The following provides a brief overview of the artists in this study along with brief introductions for the philosophic lenses through which the artists and the artworks are analyzed. The four chapters are divided in context of four ‘aspect’ categories in which the artworks reveal attributes for role of caretaker, *Witness*, *Testimony*, *Shelter*, and *Call*. Each artist has personal experiences of witnessing the effects of environmental injustice, giving voice for, protecting thought for reconciliation of future and past, through present expressive form, as well as inviting an imagined future. However, the aspect categories are assigned in this research for the purpose of focusing discussion on the selected artists and artworks.

Each of four aspect chapters feature three figures and each figure within the chapter is assigned the natural resource category of ‘WATER,’ ‘AIR,’ or ‘LAND’ as a method for organizing the environmental focus for the artworks selected. The US government agencies that oversee the natural resource categories of water, land, and air, include the EPA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Forest Service). Artists recognize that a just environment embeds policy at the local, state, or federal level.

For ease of the reader’s consideration, the artists are realigned in this paragraph to provide at-a-glance the natural resource categories in which I have connected them. Within the category of WATER, Michigan residents Mark Bleshenski and Desiree Duell, Chicago-based

Jan Tichy, and New York-based Magda Love, create public art in response to the Flint Water Crisis. In context of LAND, Michigan residents Brenda Miller, Kelly Church (Ottawa/Pottawatomi), Cherish Parrish (Ottawa/Pottawatomi), and Jason Quigno (Anishinaabe) highlight our relationship to eco-systems and forward knowledge of Indigenous traditions. In the category of AIR: Michigan residents Tyree Guyton, Leslie Sobel, Teresa Moon, and Elton Monroy Durán consider cultural understanding, scientific inquiry, and the promotion of unity in neighborhoods where one breathes.

CHAPTER ONE. WITNESS – THE CARETAKER SEES

WATER: *PLUMBUM*. Adding to Mark Bleshenski's expanding concern about ongoing issues of contaminants in waterways near his home, he watches as the nightly news continues coverage for months about the Water Crisis in the nearby community of Flint. The artist begins to create a series of artworks that addresses the ongoing developments. Installed in a church lobby in 2016 at an international art event in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the wood shelves hold distorted glass bottles and containers filled with clear, colorful, and murky liquids. Materializing as a stain glass menagerie in the sacred setting, the distorted glass containers appear anguished.

The view of Anne Dufourmantelle that gentleness is a performative act combines with the notion of George Didi-Huberman that the artist is a 'firefly' manifests within the artwork as an invitation to the illumination of thought. German philosopher Martin Heidegger's examination of the term '*technē*' derived from the Greek, considers this name for the activities and skills of the craftsman and for the arts of the mind and fine arts (BW 318). Bleshenski's artform invites the viewer to consider not only the artist's skill, but the relationship between the artist, the artwork, and how the aesthetic form in its appearance of anguish sheds light on the artist's care for a community in crisis.

LAND: *BRIDGE 5 LINE 5*. Brenda Miller's artwork, created from vintage maps, cartographic flourishes, and newspaper headlines, addresses the historical breaches of Canadian oil pipeline, 'Line 5.' The aging pipeline that traverses the Straits of Mackinac threaten the land and water passageways of largest freshwater system on Earth. Having special affinity for the land referred to as 'Turtle Island' by First Nations People, her two-dimensional art is rooted in personal experiences of care that began with early childhood visits to this northern Michigan location. Working on Mackinac Island as a teenager, memories include hundreds of crossings over the Mackinac Bridge. As witness to the fragility of the natural ecosystems that unite Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsulas, she feels deep grief as she witnesses continued land-use decision making, that leads to harm of Michigan eco-systems.

This analysis considers how German philosopher Martin Heidegger and American scholar, Donna J. Haraway align in perspectives that craft and creativity of the hand is rooted in thinking. Their lenses provide insight into Miller's aesthetic thinking through the silent gesture of her hand as she carefully considers the paper fragments and creates landscapes upon which she can invite others to consider future terrains free from ecological harm.

AIR: *48207. BREATHING IN A DETROIT ZIP CODE*. Detroit artist, Tyree Guyton, known for his artwork that includes discarded grocery carts and bird cages, continues his art practice in the location of his childhood home on Heidelberg Street. Addressing historical and sociopolitical environmental injustices that he has witnessed, his care includes neighborhood blight and racism. His signature symbol the painted 'dot,' reveals the power of gentleness that Anne Dufourmantelle speaks of (PG 43). Guyton steadfastly resists erasure of the Heidelberg Project that has survived thirteen arson fires and destruction by mayoral directives in efforts to rid the community of his public art.

The intertextual analysis considers the location in which one breathes as witness to living. M. H. Miller's report for the *New York Times* in 2019, that as an assertion of life, Guyton's work announces, "I'm still here," (M. H. Miller "Tyree Guyton Turned a Detroit Street"). In this context, French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas' examination of *Here I am*, that considers witness and its relevance to the neighbor as one emerges from the shadow (OTB 150), intersects with German philosopher and cultural theorist Peter Sloterdijk's elucidation of how we live and breathe with others.

CHAPTER 2. TESTIMONY – THE CARETAKER SAYS

WATER: *A BODY OF WATER*. Flint artist Desiree Duell, sick from drinking toxic water and experiencing personal trauma and vulnerability, continues in her resistance of environmental injustice as she creates *A Body of Water*. As a collaborative series, the outdoor art installation made from hundreds of LED lighted plastic water bottles filled with Flint River water, addresses the intersection of a government agency's mismanagement of the natural resource of water and the human body as a body of water. She resists the actions of Flint city officials as she exposes herself to public scrutiny for her art activism at the time city officials are claiming the water is safe to drink.³

Providing insight into the artist's response include, American philosopher Judith Butler, through her argument that "vulnerability, understood as a deliberate exposure to power, is part of the very meaning of political resistance as an embodied enactment" (VIR 22). French philosopher, Catherine Malabou, suggests that transformation from trauma, through courage and determination, takes place as understood through the morphing powers of the mythological Greek Goddess Metis, whereas French philosopher, Anne Dufourmantelle describes how healing takes place with gentleness as a condition of the reconstruction from trauma's intrusion. This

examination considers how Duell's art testifies for her resistance to wrongful actions toward her community as evidenced in her adaptation to the difficult and changing circumstances that became for her an experience of trauma.

LAND: *IN CASE OF CULTURAL EMERGENCY BREAK GLASS*. Kelly Church (Ottawa/Pottawatomi), the mother of daughter and collaborator Cherish Parrish (Ottawa/Pottawatomi), enters into thought about aesthetic form while creating woven basketry that gives voice to a community that includes Indigenous traditions. Church's artworks reveal care for the environment through natural materials and processes that speak to the importance of the loss of Black Ash trees and their use in the cultural traditions. She also addresses contemporary issues derived from the complexities of governmental injustices that have generational effects on Indigenous communities in the use of natural resources.

Points of convergence relate Author T.J. Demos thoughts on the environment with *The Third Knowledge Space* by editor, Nancy Marie Mithlo. Demos notes that environmental concerns that embed historical and sociopolitical forces include "political effects, cultural translations, and artistic mobilizations" (8), whereas Mithlo discusses Native American perspective of Indigenous academic thought. Within the publication, *Making History: IALA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts*, she conveys that *Western Science Knowledge* combines with *Tribal Knowledge* to allow for multiplicity of knowledge systems and world views (Mithlo 164-167). German American political theorist, Hannah Arendt expresses in *Between Past and Future* (2006), the notion that performing art has a strong affinity with politics in its need for an audience (152). Through this lens, Church's work invites action on the part of the viewer, whereby the response may result in new insights that reveal contemporary Indigenous community relationships that include the natural environment.

AIR: 48235. *BREATHING IN DETROIT DATA*. A Detroit district map, environmental temperature statistics, and graphics depicting COVID-19 (global virus) ‘hotspots’ become a work of art titled, *Detroit Data* by environmental artist Leslie Sobel. In the form of a two-dimensional collage, fragmented layers obscure various statistical details, yet the art is transparent in its depiction of a contemporary crisis within Detroit communities. Revealing through the map’s designated Zip Codes, locales of deforestation become relevant ‘hotspots’ that define areas of increased respiratory disease. Through the presence and absence of data points, the viewer is invited to consider the relationship between historical governmental discriminatory environmental practices that juxtapose contemporary populations adversely affected by a contemporary pandemic.

German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk’s consideration of atmoterrorism, within his 2009 book *Terror from the Air*, provides relevance regarding unseen air forces used in conflict, that coincide, with the notion that COVID-19 travels in clandestine ways through air and data points that may go unnoticed. Framed through the lens of American author, Donna J. Haraway, whereby she notes the interrelated connectivity in human and nonhuman ecologies, one sees this disclosed within Sobel’s art. Where one lives in proximity to industrial pollutants or deforested areas is a matter of living in context of community without equitable access to environmental justice.

CHAPTER 3. SHELTER – THE CARETAKER PROTECTS

WATER: *BEYOND STREAMING: A SOUND MURAL FOR FLINT*. Subsequent to the Flint Water Crisis, Chicago-based artist Jan Tichy is invited by Steven L. Bridges, Assistant Curator, MSU Broad Museum of Art, Lansing, Michigan, to facilitate an educational collaborative art endeavor with teachers and students from the communities of Flint and Lansing. The artist’s care

is evident as he facilitates a way for students to reconcile future and past, through interpretive expression in the present as they create drawings, writings, and audio recordings depicting their encounter with the Water Crisis. Working with Chicago area youth effected by violence and other trauma, through art collaborations, Tichy is sensitive to understanding communities in distress. Bridges' own role as that of a caretaker surfaces, through his essay titled, "Some Notes on Caring," written for the exhibition catalog, wherein he conveys a sense of responsibility to address the Flint Water Crisis. Tichy and Bridges enter the safekeeping of thought for students to expressively create within the protective framework of community, sheltered by educational and art institutions.

Cultural critic Santiago Zabala's provides context through his insight that Martin Luther's importance in hermeneutics stems from the belief that scripture was best understood through individual interpretation. This view intersects with German political theorist Hannah Arendt's thought that conduct toward others depends on one's conduct toward self. This analysis considers that Tichy, as a unique interpreter, through his conduct invites others to interpret individual experiences through the creative collaboration of community.

LAND: *THE NEXT GENERATION*. When the viewer engages with the maternity basket titled, *The Next Generation* by Cherish Parrish (Ottawa/Pottawatomi), the form allows the viewer to consider individual vulnerability relevant to the basket's ability to protect. While the maternal form is a visual allusion to pregnancy, the hand-crafted form made from Black Ash strips, appears passive, without sense-ability to protect the unborn child. Without any of the five senses, the form cannot perceive danger nor can offer any defense at all. The basket relies on the maker, Parrish, for the protection of sheltered thought for the next generation, and therefore the future of community.

This inquiry considers that French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's notion of the sense converges with biologist and philosopher, Andreas Weber's thoughts on human and non-human relationships. Levinas examines how the senses engage one with the other and how through the senses one navigates life, whereas Weber proposes that we can develop a cultural practice whereby, living as theory and practice are intertwined. Parrish's basketry art combines theory and practice in aesthetic form as it reveals the relationship between human communities and our natural environment.

AIR: 48221. BREATHING IN MOON'S LIGHT. Standing at the Birwood Wall on a crisp November day, Detroit resident, artist, and advocate Teresa Moon states that "the griot is the person who holds the story and passes it on and on..." (Moon). Featured above large multicolor summer sandals are the words "Judge him not until u walk the block in his flip flops." Painted by hundreds of community members in 2006, the smaller flip-flops lead north toward depictions of Civil Rights activists and bungalow-style houses with diagonal baselines that ascend and descend along the Wall.

Moon describes the 'redlining' that occurred in the 1940s that divided the community between Blacks and Whites. As an African American, she was raised on the Birwood (street) side of the Wall in the childhood home where she still resides. Her stories include memories of hopping the Wall to play with the "Mendota (street) kids" on the other side. While the current neighborhood consists of mostly residents with African American heritage, Moon conveys that we all live in a contemporary global neighborhood where for many, breathing free is still conditional. (Moon)

This study considers German author, Peter Sloterdijk's examination of air space within *Terror from the Air*, (2009), wherein he conveys that a controlled (aromatic) atmosphere is used

as marketing tool for shopping. Applicable to the historical intersection with Birwood Wall, it is relevant that the real estate developer's intent for compartmentalizing a societal-zoned air space in 1940, appears as a marketing tool for the purchase of land by White shoppers.

Within *The Human Condition* (1998), German American author, Hannah Arendt's expression that a small act or deed or that one word can "change every constellation" (190), is a lens through which the act of redlining by marking small color codes on paper, becomes the change in constellation for generations of Detroit families. Teresa Moon's small deed of sharing her words as the griot that reveals the complexities of living conditionally in a Detroit neighborhood, I suggest, changes every constellation for those who meet her.

CHAPTER 4. CALL – THE CARETAKER INVITES

WATER: *LANDSCAPE OF LOVE IN FLINT*. Magda Love, an Argentinean born New York-based artist is invited by the community of Flint, to design and paint three murals in the urban city through a public mural initiative, after Flint's Water Crisis. Against the backdrop of a neighborhood that embraces her, she in turn invites the community to paint with her. The flourishing imagined landscape designated as *Mural #35*, features blue water, green hillsides, blossoming flowers, and bright-eyed multiracial children. The gentle scene embeds symbols of the historical sociopolitical context where hands push up from stones in the foreground and red-line borders break apart to allow growth to segue into the surrounding environment. The landscape adorns the side of the fifty-foot-long metal transportation container parked indefinitely in the church parking lot; it serves as the community bottled-water distribution center.

Through the lens of Martin Heidegger's examination of the meaning of the word 'call' as implied "to commend, entrust, give into safekeeping, to shelter" (BW 387), one considers how the term term coincides with Berlin-based author Andreas Weber's exploration of the notion that

our wellbeing in the biosphere is a matter of the heart. The landscapes that Love paints include the human heart as a central focal point for inviting imagined environments. In a comparative analysis, to the Modern painting, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergere* (1881-2) by Edouard Manet, French philosopher Michel Foucault notes that it disorients the viewer due to its break from the Renaissance perspective. There is no set vanishing point for orienting the viewer relative to the woman's position at the bar. Magda Love's landscape painted on fabricated metal also breaks from classical tradition, however, the viewer is not disoriented by the illusion. The painted children remain in the imagined landscape within the church parking lot in the community of Flint.

LAND: *NIKNOII KINAA (ALL MY RELATIONS)*. Carved by Michigan artist Anishinaabe Jason Quigno, the Canadian black granite tower, *All My Relations*, stands over sixteen feet tall. Commissioned to create a sculpture for the community, the art is installed on the land of the city's Visitor Center at the edge of Lake Muskegon, the inland waterway that flows into Lake Michigan nearby. The four-sided stone carving becomes an invitation for the community to reflect on the artist's Anishinaabe heritage that includes the Seven Grandfather Teachings. This public art invites consideration of traditional "Anishinaabe knowledge that collectively represents the core values of what is needed for community" (Installation plaque 2018).

Through the lens of German American author, Hannah Arendt's *Between Past and Future* (2006), this examination considers how this artwork "is meant to outlast the life-span of mortals, the coming and going of the generations" (205). *All My Relations* appears as a call that will offer tribute and honor to the heritage of the Anishinaabe people for the next several thousand years. Quigno invites an imagined future through learning and teaching Indigenous knowledge and while his work alludes to historical sociopolitical injustices, his focus is on

considering community in the present and future.

AIR: 48216. *BREATHING IN THE GOOD*. Mexican American artist, Elton Monroy Durán, addresses the loss of culture in his Detroit neighborhood. The environmental landscape known as the Latino district or Mexicantown in Southwest Detroit, is divided by a complex network of Interstate highways. The bisected community endures heavy traffic, noise, and environmental pollution. While Durán's mural paintings inspire cultural unity, the artist believes "when you are doing good things, they are beautiful" and invites others into relationships with the community through the viewing of his artwork (Durán Personal Interview 20 Nov. 2021). While Durán leads visitors on tours to the locations of his murals, personal greetings and introductions with local residents, as well as shared stories of his relocation from Mexico to Detroit, create an atmosphere of understanding for this historically marginalized community.

Contradicting the notion of the easel and believing that art should be for the people, Mexican artist, Diego Rivera states that "[a]rt is a social creation" and conveys that "the painter who is truly an artist" must take a position in accordance with the "revolutionary development" of his time (Rivera 422). Converging in the notion of revolution, Anne Dufourmantelle's perspective that a "gentle revolution" as an effect of "extreme gentleness," is a spiral that leads to an "elevation that creates a need for air," and further notes that the gentleness, as return to self, allows us to reach out to a stranger (103, 104). This examination considers how Durán's outreach through mural art envisions a reunited community and contributes significantly as a catalyst for dialogue in his Mexicantown neighborhood.

LIMITATIONS / BOUNDARIES

This examination focus is limited to public art and the role of contemporary artists in relation to the effects of environmental injustice occurring in communities within the state of

Michigan. Each artist engaging in public art in this context cares for community through a unique cultural lens as a resident of the Midwestern state or as an out-of-state guest invited into its urban neighborhood. Each of the twelve individuals featured in this study has been personally impacted by the effects of environmental injustice that include a variety of historical and sociopolitical complexities that inform their public art and advocacy.

Through individual aesthetic practice, the artworks reveal differing materials and processes, however this inquiry is framed by the consideration that the artwork discloses the artist as one who cares in context of community. This examination is bound by the common theme of ‘caretaker’ in that the artwork personifies the artist through markers or ‘aspects’ of *Witness, Testimony, Shelter, and Call*.

The public art in this study was created primarily between 2015-2020 with select artworks exhibited through 2022. Initially painted in 2006, the Birwood Wall has periodically undergone modifications since. The writing for this research began in 2019, just prior to the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic (2019-2022). I have however, traveled to see artwork first-hand and conducted in-person interviews when circumstances allowed, and it was safe to do so. I have been able to visit Flint, Detroit, and Lansing, and Grand Rapids, Michigan to see and experience all but two of the artworks firsthand. Two installations, *Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint* by Jan Tichy and *A Body of Water*, by Desiree Duell, were exhibited and deinstalled prior to being selected for this research. In these cases, the artists were interviewed and have graciously given permission for the use of their photos for this research.

Additionally, I have been able to meet, interview, and/or spend time with, in-person (or virtually) all but one artist, Cherish Parrish (Ottawa/Pottawatomi). However, I was able to view

her work in person on two occasions during the *An Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church & Cherish Parrish* exhibition at the Grand Rapids Art Museum in 2021.

Engaging since the inception of this research which continued during the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed for additional insight into the extent of the artist in the role of caretaker beyond focus on artforms relevant to addressing the effects of environmental injustice. Artists revealed other personal roles such as ‘caregiver’ relevant to families suffering loss and grief in relation to sickness and death from the virus. The artists keep creating form and as witness to life events, continue giving voice for what the artist and others in the community have experienced. The extent of care that each have contributed individually is beyond the scope of this writing, but it is important to acknowledge the depth of care for others in the various communities was evidenced through interviews and visual work not included in this study.

While revealing associated historical and sociopolitical underpinnings of a variety of environmental injustices that inform the artwork, this inquiry is limited in bounds to art that is informed by its effects. Brief overviews of the complexities that have contributed to the effects provide context, however, in-depth analysis on the origins of the injustice is beyond the scope of this paper.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

This investigation contributes to the field by recognizing that the artist in the emerging role of caretaker continues to create art as a way forward from the effects of environmental injustice, not in isolation, but in the context of community. By keeping watch on the unfolding narrative and by thinking creatively about the aesthetic form and how to bring the form into appearance through the materials and process, the artist addresses thought for a just environment. The public art becomes a catalyst for change through the invitation to reflect on the aesthetic form that

discloses the injustice. The artist invites the viewer through the public art to consider a way forward for self as part of community.

Public art invites an opportunity for the viewer to find individual meaning within the work. By thinking, the artist and others prevent themselves from becoming, as German American author, Hannah Arendt conveys, in *Responsibility and Judgment* (2005), a “cog” in the system of bureaucracy wherein one does not think for himself (31). If the viewer sees oneself as a significant part of a system in which one is capable of thinking, one can feel empowered to consider one’s own role in community. The public art shelters thought that fosters thinking about how, as Dufourmatelle mentions, to reconcile future and past in the present. The art invites one to consider within the unfolding narratives, shared experiences for an envisioned future.

Research specific to the artist in the role of caretaker, to my knowledge, is limited. There are current studies that exist on public art relevant to environmental injustice and art developed for urban reclamation or renewal. Studies in areas of ‘aesthetic justice’ or ‘aesthetic welfare’ focus on environmental aesthetics relevant to the social wellbeing in the complexities of a community’s urban design that intersect with public health and politics.¹

IMPLICATIONS / QUESTIONS

Implications include the possibilities that the role of caretaker is one, that may be assumed that the artist assigns to self whereby the art becomes prescriptive rather than an invitation to consider the artist’s interpretation of the subject. While positive reception to the public art may include thoughtful contemplation on the aesthetic form with a new understanding of the effects of environmental injustice, the art may be misunderstood as intended as a curative for the artist. The artist may encounter personal conflict between the public display of the art and the private

process. Additionally, it could be incorrectly implied that all artists are caretakers or artists that create art about environmental injustice, however, not all artists embody this role.

While credibility for knowledge about the injustice may affirm the artist's interpretative aesthetic efforts, the artist may experience personal doubt, angst, or anguish in the undertaking of bringing the art from the private to the public realm. Additionally, within the public sphere the visibility of the artwork may be limited or there may be physical and psychical risks to the artist, relevant to certain agencies or agents within the community where injustice persists.

Additional questions in this examination will consider the role of art and what is at stake for the artist in addressing the effects of environmental injustice. *How is the artwork and artist viewed by the community?* This will explore how the artwork and artist is received for those living in the state of Michigan and those out-of-state invited into the communities. The duration of the art will be examined through the questions *Does the public art have the potential to outlive the effects of injustice?*, as well as, *Who is responsible for archiving the records of the public art?* While most of the artworks in this study are displayed in protected spaces, such as private or public institutions, galleries, or city-protected spaces, some have undergone intentional destruction which poses the question, *How does the artist continue forward if the public art is not allowed to become part of community?*

In creative process, the artist observes, tends to, and cares for, that which is to be thought about in the artmaking. While the artwork reveals for the viewer that the artist in the role of caretaker is one who chooses not to walk on the other side and see nothing, this examination considers the question, *How is it that these artists choose to stop and see?*

CHAPTER ONE

Witness – The Caretaker Sees

The values that agree with gentleness are sometimes grueling, they require an etiquette above and beyond what is encouraged as a mere sweetener to our lives. They require keeping watch.
Anne Dufourmantelle (22).

This examination explores how public art bears witness to the interconnectedness between the artist, the public art, and the community that the artist cares about. The art created by Michigan artists Mark Bleshenski, Brenda Miller, and Tyree Guyton, includes an installation of over 250 heat-distorted glass jars and bottles filled with colorful liquid, a series of paper collages hand-cut from vintage maps, and an art environment of repurposed found objects that adorn several city blocks of a blighted neighborhood on Detroit's southeast side. The artists address the effects of environmental injustice derived from a city's decisions regarding the sourcing of drinking water, aging and compromised underground oil pipelines, and racially related inequities within an urban Zip Code.

The development of the theme 'caretaker' surfaces from German philosopher Martin Heidegger's lectures at the University of Freiburg, 1951-52. From his essay on "What Calls for Thinking?" he states, "What calls on us to think demands for itself that it be tended, cared for, husbanded in its own essential being, by thought" and in part summarizes his multifaceted exploration of the question "What makes a call upon us that we should think and, by thinking, be who we are?" (BW 390). From this context, the artist, in creating the artform, continues to observe, tend to, and care for that which is to be thought about in the making. Introduced into the public space, the artwork as manifested interpretive form, reveals what has called the artist into thinking. In context the art reveals who the artist is, as well as 'who we are' as a society such that, the effects of environmental injustice needs to be thought about at all.

Adding to Mark Bleshenski's expanding concern about ongoing issues of contaminants in waterways near his home, he watches the nightly news coverage for months about the Water Crisis in the nearby community of Flint. The artist begins to create a series of artworks to address the ongoing developments. *PLUMBUM* is installed in a church lobby in 2016, during the international art event held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The art, materializing as a stain glass menagerie in the sacred setting, invites the viewer through distorted glass containers, to consider the anguish of families in Flint.

As the aging Canadian oil pipeline, 'Line 5,' traverses land and water passages known as the Straits of Mackinac, the largest freshwater system on Earth, Brenda Miller's intricate *Bridge 5 Line 5*, addresses the environmental injustice that underlies corporate and state land use decision making. As witness since childhood to the fragility of Michigan's natural ecosystems, she feels deep grief in the notion of continued harm to the human and nonhuman community. Miller's aesthetic thinking is revealed through the silent gesture of her hand as she carefully creates paper landscapes, in which she invites others to consider an imagined terrain free from ecological harm.

Internationally known, Tyree Guyton, continues his art practice in the location of his childhood home. His signature symbol the painted 'dot,' reveals the power of gentleness as he steadfastly resists erasure of his outdoor art installations. The Heidelberg Project has survived thirteen arsonist fires and mayoral-directed destruction in efforts to rid the neighborhood of his public art. The outdoor installation bears witness to the artist's experience as an African American in this urban community and invites the viewer to Heidelberg street to consider the layered meaning embedded within the assembled forms.

WATER: *PLUMBUM*

Positioned on eighteen hand-built wood shelves, more than two hundred distorted glass jars and bottles of various shapes and sizes passively writhe in place. The shelves standing askew in their ten-foot vertical height support the colorful glass menagerie. Filled with water-based liquid, multiple glass containers glimmer with transparent hues that appear as a spectrum of rainbow infused Kool-Aid^{® 1} while others reveal murky sediment. The three-dimensional art installation titled *PLUMBUM*, on public display in the art gallery of Fountain Street Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan² has been selected for the eighth annual, 2016 international art competition called *ArtPrize*. The artwork by Michigan artist Mark Bleshenski is assigned entry number 63156.

The artwork reveals a prism of complexity as the liquid refracts the gallery lights for the more than 10,000 visitors that enter the Keeler Gallery of the non-denominational church. “Art to Change the World, Inspiring Social Justice” asserts the venue theme during the nineteen-day art event. Each glass container within the installation bears witness to the story of environmental injustice derived from decisions made concerning a city’s water supply source.

In the community of Flint, Michigan, the water crisis (Flint ‘Water Crisis’) began in April 2014 when the city government mandated for economic reasons that the city’s water supply source switch from Lake Huron (via Detroit) to the Flint River. Corrective (anti-corrosive) treatment measures were not used to prevent the infrastructure of supply pipes from corroding, which resulted in lead and other toxic contaminants leaching into the city’s drinking water.

In considering the relationship of the artist to the art and community, Martin Heidegger’s university lecture on “The Question Concerning Technology,” provides a lens for analysis of technology that contributed to the Water Crisis as well as the skill of the artist in its public

address. Heidegger notes that “[q]uestioning builds a way” and that “[t]he way is one of thinking” (BW 311). He positions the examination on the question of thinking in context of its relationship to technology and explains that technology is not just a means to an end as in modern technology that depends on our ability to master it (BW 313). Heidegger forwards the notion that technology, as it stems from the Greek word *technikon*, “means that which belongs to *technē* ... is not only the name for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts” (BW 318).

In this Heidegger clarifies that it is not a manufacturing process, nor just the artistic bringing into appearance, but that the object that comes forth as an irruption becomes something other than just the object itself. *PLUMBUM* brings forth something other than the object of a distorted glass container, that includes the story of families, a city’s sociopolitical history, and an artist that cares about community.

Positioned at eye level, the warped apple cider jug bears witness for the contemporary narrative for which the artist has been caring to think about. Two thermo-printed labels differentiate the front of the container from back. On the front, below the label-heading within the three-tiered rectangular outline, uppercase *Candida BT* font lists category names: *SAMPLE NO.*, *WARD* and *LEAD*. In the right corner, lowercase letters *ppb* (parts per billion) indicate measure for trace contaminants. Red hand-painted numbers descend in order as *34*, *1*, and *20.41*. In the natural and artificial light of the gallery, the numbers shift between ruby red and crimson. On the backside, a common warning that disclaims hazardous chemicals contained in a package. Written in both English and Spanish: “WARNING – this product contains a chemical known to the State of Michigan to cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm” (see figs. 1.1, 1.2).



Fig. 1.1. Mark Bleshenski, *PLUMBUM VIII*, 2019. Mixed glass containers with altered water. Artwork installation Grace College, 2019 similar to display in Keeler Gallery, Fountain Street Church, Artprize 2016, Grand Rapids, MI. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 1.2. (right). Detail, *PLUMBUM VIII*. Label depicts Sample No, Ward, and lead level derived from tap water testing in Flint. Photo author's collection.

The altered liquid in the undulating glass container becomes an invitation for the viewer to experience the visual allure of a fugitive rainbow or the repulsion of perceived toxicity. The warped contour of the thick glass is a lens through which the diffusion of emerald-green discloses the name of a city more than 100 miles away. Revealed in the negative space of the label's uppercase letters - the word FLINT. The public art installation with its labeled glass containers and modified water bears witness for a contemporary narrative in which the artist has been keeping watch.

Keeping Watch. After discovering elevated blood lead-levels in the children of Flint, pediatrician Mona Hanna-Attisha, MD, author of *What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance, and*

Hope in an American City (2019), became the face of public advocacy for justice, while simultaneously facing numerous obstacles from county and state officials that denied there was lead in the water.³ Her efforts led to the water supply ‘switchback’ that took place in October 2015 more than eighteen months after the original water supply source switch and a month after the tap water lead levels had been made public by the Virginia Tech Research Team. The lead-in-water-analysis findings were published on the *FlintWaterStudy.org* website, September 2015 (“Our sampling of 252 homes”).⁴ It was later revealed that lead had leached into the tap water of Flint residents for more than a year.

The artwork *PLUMBUM* bears witness for a contemporary narrative of the effects of environmental injustice. Mark Bleshenski, as a Michigan resident living less than an hour north of Flint, responded to the daily news of the water crisis that he witnessed for more than a year. After the implementation of Flint’s water supply source switch, he asked, “How could this happen?” and “What if this were happening to my child?” Keeping watch each night on *News Channel 5*, Bleshenski noticed that he counted the days with the news anchors. “It is day number 23 of the Flint Water Crisis” . . . “It is day number 78 of the Flint Water Crisis” . . . “It is day number 117 of the Flint Water Crisis (Bleshenski Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2019).

In the midst of the unfolding narrative, Bleshenski responded by making a work of art. Derived from processes and tools of ancient technology, his flame-working and glass fusing methods addressed the injustice of contemporary technological mismanagement. Because water, although a natural resource, was a health hazard for families in Flint, Bleshenski created an installation of more than 250 heat-distorted glass containers labeled with the recorded results of tap water testing. The hand-written numbers on the imprinted labels were the documented

Sample and *Ward* numbers and *Lead* levels of the first draw from those tests (Bleshenski Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2019).

Heidegger explains that it is like the blossom that bursts into bloom as a way of revealing or of bringing forth from “concealment” into “unconcealment” (BW 318). In this context of *technē*’ as the skills of the craftsman and the arts of the mind may be considered as the thinking of the creative arts processes and the unconcealment or emerging of the artwork from raw materials to the finished form. This is accomplished by Bleshenski through his understanding of the history of using tools and materials, he is purposeful in developing a process for creating and for envisioning the final artform. The fire and heat is used to fashion the final artwork as he shapes and fuses the glass containers, letting new forms emerge that represent the truth of the ambiguity of distortion of the actual events taking place.

Bleshenski’s use of familiar household containers provides a correctness of representation in common for residents, the artist, and viewer. Glass as a container for liquid can be identified easily as jars and bottles from their own home that bear a familiar brand name or product. Colorful liquid contained in the warped glass may be perceived positively if considering a summer drink, while murky liquid may be perceived with dismay. The implications, subtleties, and connotation become representation for the distribution of contaminated water.

Altered Liquid. When entering the Fountain Street Church Keeler Gallery, one sees a display of warped glass containers located on two large vertical wood shelving units in the center of the lobby. Positioned on two sides of the square vertical support column, the multi-level wood shelves appear inconsistent and askew, but solidly constructed. Parallel to the two sides of the column, smaller planks of wood bridge the two larger units. A variety of glass containers appear in stationary motion. As the viewer moves around the installation, the natural and artificial light

draws one's attention to the labels affixed to the surface of the glass containers, while the colored liquid refracts in the light's passing.

The infused colors in the water-filled containers recall the stained-glass rose window in the Fountain Street Church's Italian Romanesque façade. Within the centrally located gallery, the artificial light from the ceiling's canned spotlights becomes harsh as one looks upward toward the top shelves. Simultaneously, the viewer feels the warmth from the natural light softly filtering in from the north side window. An open doorway on the left leads to the sanctuary.

Glass vessels once mass-produced for homemade canned fruits and vegetables twist in conformity next to those formerly assigned to hold pasta, sauces, or jam. One-gallon jugs emptied of apple cider are warped as if conforming to an unseen force. Curiously, one considers how the long-neck bottle that once held Italian oil or vinegar contains its liquid through deteriorating cork. A tall, fluted soda bottle missing its crown cap appears to retreat sideways in anguish.

Informed by the manufactured shape and brand name, the memory of a jelly jar that became a penny jar fades, as the viewer reads the label. The public art installation informs the viewer of a different event that has been witnessed. One glass vessel is visible through another. *FLINT* becomes magnified in the deviation of refracted light as one leans in for a closer look. Numbers and letters distort in kinetic circularity from the curve of the forward jar and the shifting of the viewer's stance. The containers succumb to the weight of the effects of a city agency's decisions.

Heavy Metal. As Bleshenski continues his sketched drawings and notations, written in his uniquely designed calligraphic style, the process reveals the exploration of a range of concepts from literal to the abstract in two-and three-dimensional form. The title *PLUMBUM*, embeds the

Latin word for the element lead (*Pb*), one of the oldest heavy metals known since Antiquity.

With a background as a stained-glass artisan, Bleshenski would have known about the technology of manufacturing glass utilized by Egyptian artisans and considered the Gothic era's mystery of light created by glaziers. Varying shapes of colored glass created new harmonies of fusion. As a stained-glass artist, Bleshenski would have thought about how to work the ancient heavy metal into strips (comes) to support the colored glass that provides inspiration from the sun's transmitted light.

Within Dufourmantelle's essay "Sensory Celebration (I)" in the *Power of Gentleness* (2018), she suggests that in craftsmanship "[g]entleness seems to be inlaid with the gesture, joined to it within the material" (21); that "[t]he values that agree with gentleness are sometimes grueling," and require "keeping watch" (Dufourmantelle 22). As the artist in the role of caretaker keeps watch on the unfolding narrative of injustice, he confronts his own response to the Water Crisis. The grueling effort toward retaining gentleness is embedded within the process of making that includes confronting physical, mental, and spiritual exhaustion. As an art of the senses, the public art bears witness for the artist's gesture of making.

Bleshenski's art may be considered through Heidegger's lecture on the complex "contrivances" of technology (as a means to an end and a human activity) that forefronts his inquiry on instrumentality through the example of the chalice and the silversmith allows (BW 312). Attributing to Aristotle's fourfold *causality*, Heidegger examines materials, form, matter, and the silversmith in his example of a silver chalice for how technology discloses itself as a means.

Through this he conveys: 1) *causa materialis*, the material; 2) *causa formalis*, form; 3) *causa finalis*, the end product's relationship to form and matter; 4) the *causa efficiens*, the artisan

that brings about the artwork (BW 313, 314). In *PLUMBUM*, Bleshenski considers the form and creates the artwork through the means of technology and fabrication processes using tools, kilns and other types of instruments; in the selection of materials and envisioning the form, it appears that “gentleness is inlaid” in his gesture of making that Duforumantelle speaks of (21). While the form is started on its way to arrival by thought according to Heidegger, the product is concealed until the artist unconceals the artform through its making and bringing-forth. In this way the artist as witness is revealed through the artist’s gesture in the selection of the material, form, and final product.

Considering the artist Mark Bleshenski and the artwork *PLUMBUM* in the role of caretaker as *witness*, the fourfold co-responsibility to the material, form, product, and the artist himself indicates responsibility for and indebtedness to the other, beyond just the artform. As witness, Bleshenski watches the unfolding of the narrative of the injustice that allows the artwork to unconceal the narrative as a revealing. Without anticipation or projection, Bleshenski stands in for the other, as he interprets the unfolding events. The artwork unconceals the narrative that the artist cares to bear responsibility for the other.

French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas writes in *Otherwise than Being* (1998) that “[r]esponsibility for the other, is human fraternity itself” (116). The caretaker feels a sense of responsibility to put self in place of the other to bring forth the art. In the examination of responsibility, Levinas states, “To communicate is indeed to open oneself, but the openness is not complete if it is on the watch for recognition. It is complete not in opening to the spectacle of or the recognition of the other, but in becoming a responsibility for him wherein the ‘openness is responsibility for the other to the point of substitution’” (OTB 119). In this way, if one has a pre-conceived notion about the other in order to assume responsibility, that it is not an unconditional

responsibility. Levinas conveys that when one is willing to stand in place of the other without condition that it is considered responsibility for the other. In the making of the artform, the artist stands in for the other experiencing the Water Crisis, without knowing or recognizing the other.

What Hast Thou Done? Posing questions relevant to concern for the other, Levinas asks “Am I my brother’s keeper?” which he notes has meaning only if one has already supposed that the ego is concerned only with itself” (OTB 117). According to the biblical narrative, Genesis, Cain, is a tiller of the ground and the son of Adam and Eve. He kills his brother Abel in the field and later the Lord asks Cain, “Where is Abel thy brother?” to which Cain replies “I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?”; and the Lord says “What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground”; in response to the curse of Cain’s becoming a fugitive and vagabond ... Cain responds that from the “thy face shall I be hid” (KJV Genesis 4:9-16). Cain then leaves from the presence of the Lord, and dwells in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

Levinas notes that to be oneself is to have one degree of responsibility more, the responsibility for the responsibility for the other (OTB 117). In this way, one allows self to totally bear the other unconditionally as one would oneself. The artist as caretaker is compelled within one’s identity to watch over the other. It is as though when one is watching over a child, the responsibility embeds the desire or knowledge that there is a responsibility to provide clarity, guidance, or assistance in the child’s way in finding a particular decision. One participates as a knowing observer in such a way that the responsibility becomes part of the observer’s own identity as self.

Considering Cain’s expulsion from the garden, according to German American political theorist, Hannah Arendt, within her essay “Labor” in the 1958 text, *The Human Condition*, explains that man was not expelled from Paradise to punish him, but that, “[a]ccording to

Genesis, man (*adam*) had been created to take care and watch over the soil (*adamah*), as even his name, the masculine form of “soil,” indicates (see Gen 2:5, 15). ... He, God, took Adam and put him into the garden of Eden to till and to watch it” (Arendt THC 107). Arendt clarifies that the word for “tilling” which later becomes the word for laboring in Hebrew, *leawod*, has the connotation of “to serve” (Arendt THC 107). The artist in the role of caretaker watches over the ‘garden’ in such a way that there is awareness of the symbiotic relationship between the earth, and humans, and nonhumans. Artists observe the garden, but as caretakers of the garden, serve the garden (community, environment) through the tilling, planting, and cultivating in order for the wellbeing of the garden.

In The Light. In this context the artist observes and through analysis, begins the creative process wherein, the work of art that invites viewing by the broader community. Bleshenski has been thinking about the occurrence of environmental injustice and considers how best to think about the artform. His preliminary sketches depict adults and children near lead-filled bottled water service stands, Italian arched stand-alone shelving units, shadow box displays, small stackable tables, and cross-braced shelving units with inconsistent verticality and diagonal rather than corner supports.

His in-process sketches include thin lines of blue, green, and purple that indicate contoured, and color filled glass bottles and jars stacked on multi-level shelves. Thin marker lines of color hint of the fragility and durability of not only the stained-glass but the fragility of the sketched figures standing nearby. Upon receiving confirmation email that his artwork *PLUMBUM* was accepted to exhibit in the Grand Rapids Fountain Street Church during ArtPrize, Bleshenski wrote the following: “There is going to be a stained-glass quality to this. I

hope the effect of the glass, colors, writings, message, is one of contemplation. Time to light this candle” (Bleshenski Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2019); (see figs. 1.3, 1.4).

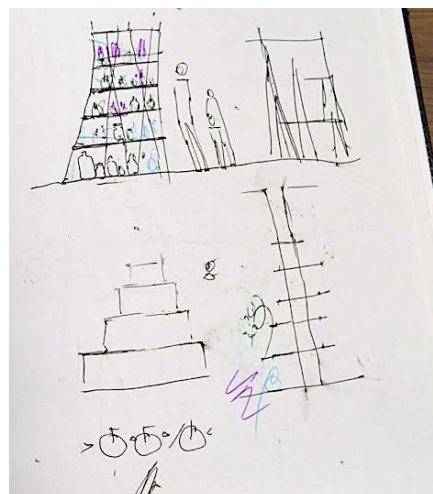
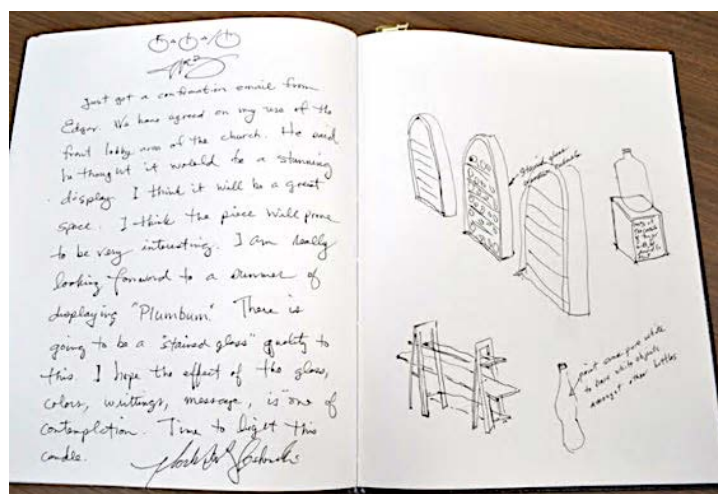


Fig. 1.3. Mark Bleshenski, *PLUMBUM* sketches, 2016. Concepts include reflections of “I think, I am, and I hope” in context of the artwork evoking contemplation. Photo author’s collection.

Fig. 1.4 (right). *PLUMBUM* sketches, 2016. Depicts shelving with glass as well as the artist’s personal calligraphic style. Photo author’s collection.

Bleshenski’s sketched words referencing lighting the candle intersect with words from the book of Matthew and writings on gentleness by Anne Duformantelle. Matthew conveys, “[ne]ither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light shine so before men” (KJV 5:15-16). Dufourmantelle notes gentleness as a performative act, “[i]t aligns with the present and concerns all the possibilities of the human. From animality it takes instinct; from childhood, enigma; from prayer, calming; from light, light” (Dufourmantelle PG 47). The artist, as caretaker, creates public art that offers light on the narrative of a water crisis that he bears witness to (Bleshenski Personal Interview, 10 Oct. 2019).

French philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman notes in his 2018 writing, *Survival of the Fireflies* that “[w]e can understand, then, how an *inner experience*, the most ‘subjective,’ the most ‘obscure’ there is, may appear as a *flash for another*, from the moment that it finds the right form of its construction, its narration, its transmission” (72). In lighting the candle, the artist in the role of caretaker not only keeps watch on the unfolding narrative of the injustice but, holds the light as illumination for others in the community to see the families and children of Flint. Didi-Huberman’s community of desire speaks to Levinas’s notion of responsibility through communication with the other that also is an act of openness for the other (Levinas, OTB 119).

While the narratives that surround the Water Crisis inform Bleshenski’s aesthetic work, during the process of watching the events unfold, the artist makes an effort to, as Didi-Huberman notes above, transmit the light for others (72). Bleshenski experiences anger, outrage, empathy, and sadness when considering that children in Flint may have consumed lead-laced Kool-Aid made with tap water from their own homes. Bleshenski is aware that, according to pediatrician and author Hanna-Attisha, because city officials had manipulated the lead findings in order to not have to report the findings publicly per federal regulations, the extent to which the water was poisoned may never be known (285, 286).

Heidegger notes that in Ancient Greece when art “illuminated the presences of the gods,” that which was art bore the modest name of *technē* because it was a revealing that brought forth and made present, and therefore belonged within *poiēsis* and that revealing which holds sway in all the fine arts and in poetry (BW 339). In this way the art is not only production, but the artist’s thinking and concept for the production that allows the art to come to fruition as a work of art.

Within the sacred space of the church gallery, an undulating expressive menagerie of glass jars and bottles brings the theology of light into new dialogue. The sunlight projecting into

the interior through stained-glass windows recalls the historical account of Abbot Suger (ca. 1081-1151), wherein he writes of the “wonderful and uninterrupted light” (or *lux nova*, “new light”), that comes through the “most luminous windows” in the French royal abbey church at Saint-Denis (Kleiner 375). At the end of the thirteenth century, William Durandus (ca. 1237-1296), Bishop of Mende (Southern France) expresses that the glass windows “expel ... all things hurtful” (Kleiner 384).

Bleshenski envisions how light transmitted through altered water of the glass containers could reveal new light. Each container becomes a form of stained-glass refracting or diverging the surrounding light rays. The injustice that occurred with the residents of Flint could be apprehended through the light of the distorted glass. While not expelling the hurtful, through the refracted light the viewer is invited to be transported to understanding the narrative in a new way.

Heidegger conveys that in the unfolding of technology man ponders its rising and watches over it. Through the aspect of witness, dignity, according to Heidegger, “lies in keeping watch over the unconcealment – and with it, from the first, the concealment – of all essential unfolding on this earth” (BW 337). According to Heidegger, this rising, reveals that man beholds “the constellation and the stellar course of the mystery in which ‘revealing and concealing’ and the ‘unfolding of the truth’ occurs (BW 338). Within the unfolding narrative of injustice, the artist in the role of caretaker enters into keeping watch over the unconcealment of the visual form that addresses the Water Crisis, as well as the creative process of bringing-forth the art.

In this way, the artist pays attention to the community as well as remaining thoughtful about the choice of materials and process that allow devastation to be understood through the artform. Often the artist will trust the process of the making to allow the work to find its way

through the material's interaction or reaction to chemicals for example, or in Bleshenki's art, using flame results in glass evolving into unexpected shapes. In attempting to understand the events, Bleshenski considers the technology of his craft and that which he intends to produce as he confronts his own vulnerability and resistance through the melting or shattering of glass containers.

The artist of *PLUMBUM* reveals his own sense of exposure, responsibility, and vulnerability through the material's composition, or damaged and broken pieces. While the glass containers remain durable as household use-items, the strength is defined by the ability of the glass to resist breakage or damage from sudden impact or contact with other materials such as metal, environments of extreme cold or heat, or succumbing to repurposing or modification through the use of cutting blades or torches. In order to maintain openness to the other, the caretaker must find personal reconciliation that allows for one to go beyond Dufourmantelle's grueling etiquette of gentleness. When creating the aesthetic work, the revealing that makes present the "keeping of thought" that, in accordance with Heidegger, is the essence of *technē* and *poiēsis* (BW 390). If the artist has surrendered responsibility or care, he will become incapable of bearing witness to the unfolding of the artform or the effects of the environmental injustice for which it represents (BW 341).

Distorted Truth. Heidegger notes in his discussion on responsibility as the Greek's thought it, that it is "starting something on its way to arrival" (BW 316). From the context of the co-responsibility between the material, form, the vessel's relative intent, and the artisan, that Heidegger speaks of, the artwork starts on its way to arrival into the public sphere.

The viewer who responds to the public art shares responsibility with the artist, if each recognizes that the response to the art is not, according to philosopher and cultural critic Santiago

Zabala, author of *Why Only Art Can Save Us* (2017) from cultural norms, but that the response is “ontological” (113). In this way the response would not be conditional on specific cultural contexts, but rather as a response from the position of being human. Embedded in the artwork are historical and sociopolitical complexities that include the loss of lives and well-being for the Flint community. The artwork slowly reveals the Water Crisis through form and content. The response to public art is beyond a specific culture that encompasses the artist’s questioning of “How could this crisis be?”

At the time Flint residents were experiencing toxic contaminants streaming from water faucets into their homes, they were being told by city officials that the water was safe. The visual familiarity for the association of the manufacturer’s credibility embedded in Bleshenski’s containers remains as the contortion and twisting of the glass allows one to perceive that the distortion is a symptom of something beyond the present. The containers appear as distortions of the glass that recall responses by city officials that were later revealed as distortions of truth. The glass containers with recognizable brand names and familiar shapes bear witness to a new narrative beyond the manufacturer’s original intent.

In her discussion on credible witness relevant to environmental harm, Rachel Carson, explains in *Silent Spring*, (1962), that when considering wildlife loss that results from hazardous chemicals, “the credibility of the witness is of first importance” (86). Carson is credited for initiating the establishment of the US government Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1970. She conveys that the credible witnesses are the ones that are on the scene interpreting the effects of the hazardous chemicals and further notes that the “control men” (in state and federal government and the chemical manufacturers that deny evidence of harm) are “like the Priest and

the Levite in the biblical story, they choose to pass by on the other side and to see nothing” (Carson 86).⁵

In the studio Bleshenski cares about the existing experiences of the residents of Flint. Through the force of gentleness, the aesthetic form, material, and process become resistance to the events. *PLUMBUM* bears witness to the fact that the artist sees the injustice and addresses its effects. The distorted glass discloses the ambiguity of truths that occurred around the Water Crisis. The fragility and strength of the residents of Flint through the glass containers. Through gentleness Bleshenski’s public art bears silent witness in the lobby of a sacred place.

The Timeline. As Bleshenski was keeping watch on the nightly news in 2015, the facts unfolded that the Flint water crisis had begun on March 22, 2012, when Genesee County announced that a new pipeline was being designed to deliver water from Lake Huron (via Detroit) to Flint in order to reduce costs. According to CNN “Flint Water Crisis Fast Facts Timeline,” the water supply source ‘switch’ occurred April 25, 2014 and four months later, the city announced that fecal coliform bacteria had been detected. After boil advisories had been issued, by the following October the local General Motors plant stopped using the city’s water due to corrosion of engine parts and switched back to sourcing from Lake Huron.

By February 2015, the EPA made public the dangerous levels of lead in the home of a Flint resident. In March, Flint City Council members voted to stop using the Flint River water and reconnect to Detroit, the vote, however, was overruled by the state-appointed Emergency Manager. In June, 2015 an EPA manger issued a warning that corrosion control treatment was not being provided by the city to mitigate the presence of lead, and that testing by scientists at Virginia Tech found tap water from a household to contain an amount of lead classified by the EPA as hazardous waste. After one and one-half years on October 16, 2015, the city switched

back to sourcing water from Lake Huron via Detroit. A series of investigations were undertaken, lawsuits filed, and Congressional testimonies ensued. Criminal charges were filed against city government employees and are still ongoing at this writing (“Flint Water Crisis Fast Facts”).

PLUMBUM found its way into public view by mid-2015. Bleshenski had been collecting glass bottles, jars, and various unusual glass containers for several years. He began experimenting with new processes of heat and kiln firing as he considered the stories of the glass. Each carries its own narrative from the manufacturer and the story of the household it was placed within. Fingerprints, residue, and spills provide a glimpse into the glassware’s discarded grace, while the surface reveals marks, scratches, or chips that depict the imperfect care of the container on its journey, it also tells that of the artist’s journey. The forms provide witness to the existence of his care for community.

LAND: *BRIDGE 5 LINE 5*

Within the two-dimensional vertically framed composition, a collage of intricately patterned vintage printed papers reveals the dynamic 5-mile span of a Modern suspension bridge. The perspective orients the viewer as standing near the shore beneath the bridge as it rises overhead. The near end of the structure thrusts upward and passes beyond the edge of the upper right frame and its length recedes into the lower left quadrant where it anchors to land hidden behind turbulent waves. Situated between the Upper and Lower Peninsulas of Michigan, the waterway, known as the Straits of Mackinac, connects Lake Michigan and Lake Huron of the system of Great Lakes in the Midwestern United States. The Mackinac Bridge, the longest suspension bridge in the Western Hemisphere, has since 1957, allowed the traversing of the waterway that is part of the largest freshwater system on Earth.

Brenda Miller explains that her art, *Bridge 5 Line 5*, derives from her personal experiences of connecting with land and waterways in northern Michigan. She recalls experiences of camping in St. Ignace on the north end of the Bridge and seeing the morning and evening light reflect on the steel. Viewing from the south as well, she has crossed hundreds of times and as a seventeen-year-old, worked on Mackinac Island for the summer (Miller, Personal Interview, 13 Nov. 2020). Referencing *Bridge 5 Line 5*, Miller states that the *Bridge* series “really is first aesthetic before it is political” (B. Miller, Personal Interview, 13 Nov 2020).

The aesthetic draws the viewer closer to apprehending her care for Michigan’s ecosystems. Through her artwork intended for public viewing, Miller provides insight as she keeps watch on the circumstances that are contributing to environmental injustice in the Michigan community. The Straits of Mackinac and its fragile ecosystem as part of the Great Lakes system continually faces endangerment from a twenty-inch diameter aging oil pipeline

known as ‘Line 5’ that lies under the water’s surface one and one-half miles west of the Mackinac Bridge. The pipeline has a history of oil spills and is operating on an expired license. (B. Miller, Personal Interview, 13 Nov 2020).

This intertextual examination considers the gesture of Miller’s artmaking through German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s insight within his lecture on “What Calls for Thinking,” wherein he conveys that the craft of the hand is rooted in thinking (BW 380). The notion intersects with American philosopher Donna J. Haraway’s investigation into knowing and doing as an ecology of practice, as she conveys that attachment or detachment of thinking is the cultivation of response-ability (34). Additionally French Caribbean author Édouard Glissant’s thoughts on root and relation identity will be included for the consideration of how one identifies with one’s homeland or territory as root and relation as the assimilation or contacts of cultures.

Miller’s care for the Straits of Mackinac continues as one wanting to have beautiful images of the Bridge “showing how much I love it and how much I love the process of going across” (B. Miller, Personal Interview, 13 Nov. 2020). As she focuses on the aesthetic, she relives her experiences of crossing the Mackinac Bridge. Located on the east side of the Bridge in Lake Huron, the Mackinac Island is accessible only by water ferry and is known for its unique geological formations, state park hiking trails, and historic Victorian architecture. Miller states that while she has fond memories of her summer spent on the Island as a teenager, her connection to the beauty of the land and water passage has remained throughout her adulthood (B. Miller, Personal Interview, 13 Nov. 2020).

The landscape collage, created from precision-cut fragments of imprinted papers that derive from vintage cartography maps, art history textbooks, and newspaper clippings resides in a 13 ½ inches wide x 10 inches tall frame. Images, letterforms, and boundary lines marked in faded tones of pink, red, and yellow provide context for the visual texture. Muted blues and violets that reflect in the waves and allude to the underside of the steel structure complement the subtle warm tones that hint of an afternoon sun as the light reflects from the bridge's frame. With the placement of each piece of cut paper, the artist integrates the man-made crossing with its natural environment as she considers water, land, and sky, and this bridge in the unfolding narrative of the fragile ecosystem. (see figs. 1.5, 1.6).



Fig. 1.5. Brenda Miller, *Bridge 5 Line 5*. 'Line 5' pipeline installed by the Canadian corporation Enbridge, runs under the Straits of Mackinac in Northern Michigan. This image is one of the *Bridge* series. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 1.6 (right). Detail, *Bridge 5 Line 5*.

Miller notes that it is remarkable that the "change of caretaking" is "prompted by a lack of caretaking" as she considers policy decisions made for Michigan's land and waterways (B.

Miller, Personal Interview, 13 Nov. 2020). Evident in the complexities of her artwork are considerations for something other than layered pieces of paper. Experiencing the wonder of nature's ecosystems and man's engineering success, Miller addresses the complexities of man's role in protecting and endangering the environment as she considers land use, safe drinking water, environmental justice, corporate responsibility, environmental activism, and responsibilities of local, state and federal governments (B. Miller, Personal Interview, 13 Nov 2020).

Martin Heidegger notes in his lecture titled the "Origin of the Work of Art" from his 1936 lecture that "[t]he work makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; it is an allegory. In the work of art something other is brought together with the thing that is made. To bring together is, in Greek, *symbolleîn*. The work is a symbol" (BW 145). In this context, the art that is made by the artist, has meaning beyond that which describes it. The symbol that the work references is always in context of that which surrounds its making, such as the materials from the environment, as well as the conditions under which the artist makes it. Within Miller's multi-layered work, something "other" is manifested. The other that is manifested may be the artist or the other part of the narrative that becomes its condition of making.

Aesthetics and Politics. Designated as 'Line 5,' the pipeline was installed in 1953. The Canadian company Enbridge signed a fifty-year contract with Michigan; however, it continues to operate despite an expired contract. *Oil & Water Don't Mix* (OWDM) reports that ongoing issues include the pipeline's integrity of the pipeline, lack of corporate transparency in its maintenance, its history of thirty-three oil spills (1.1 million gallons) since 1968, and the continued prospect for disaster within the Great Lakes system ("The Problem with the Line 5"). While environmental

activism, protests, and political controversy within various governmental agencies, litigation between the state and Enbridge continue. In November 2020, the Governor of Michigan ordered the company to shut down the pipeline by May 12, 2021 (House & Oosting, “Whitmer Orders Line 5 Shutdown”). Risk to the ecosystem’s fragility includes the fact that twenty-three million gallons of crude and natural gas liquids flow daily through the pipelines (Schwab, “Worst Case Oil Spill Straits of Mackinac”). The risk is what concerns Miller.

Something Other. Within Brenda Miller’s artwork titled, *Bridge 5 Line 5*, the viewer may apprehend comfort from the texture reminiscent as a patchwork quilt that gives way to the unfolding narrative witnessed through the rolling waves and ominous sky. Carefully fabricated, the tower on the near side appears as the paper remains of an Ancient Eastern landscape. The hint of Ancient narratives, reveal flowers and foliage that interweave with equestrian regalia and lattice-work. A rosette eye, centered at the top of the forward tower appears to observe the garden caretakers laboring in the tower shafts below. The water bearer standing on the left in constrained symmetry looks across the open space to the fisherman standing on the right. Both bear witness to the environment that surrounds them.

Heidegger references the origin of the work of art using the terms “allegory” and the term symbol and the notion of something “other” than that which is manifested (BW 143). He considers Vincent Van Gogh’s painting of peasant shoes. As an artwork, he notes that one understands that the image of shoes is recognized as a type of footwear; he posits however, that as one looks closely at a work of art, that one is “suddenly somewhere else than where” one usually tends to be (Heidegger BW 161). While the artist and work are two components, the third is the art. The public art is a public symbol for something more than just the artwork itself.

Brenda Miller's artwork allows for the consideration of something other than where we are in the present, while viewing her work. We examine the allegory of the Miller's *Bridge 5 Line 5*, and the collage becomes something other than what it is – the actual pieces of paper assembled and glued together. It becomes an extraordinary narrative of a fragile ecosystem, the allegory of what is in our world or hidden evidence of environmental circumstances that are relevant to nature as well as politics or governmental action or inaction. The embellishments and flourishes of vintage maps allow us to be somewhere other than, or see something other than, what we are in the presence of.

The vintage maps represent cartographers' traces, journeys, history, and illustrative work. Technology of print and media production provide visual indicators for land masses, waterways, and societal boundaries and borders. *Bridge 5 Line 5* represents a crossing from one side to the other for those who in other circumstances may not have walked a path or roadway together. The bridge becomes as the peasant shoes, the truth or representation for something other than just the Bridge. The images of flowers, towers, and the bridge itself encompasses seasons or passages of life, as well as loss, joy, or grief. The paper pieces are simply glued together but become something more than the technique of making. Represented in this image are visual bridges that lead us to ancient art, artisans, and the history of printmaking, as well as to the contemporary narrative.

Heidegger notes that "[c]reation is such a bringing forth. As such a bringing, it is rather a receiving and a removing within the relation to unconcealment" (BW 187). Brenda Miller's work is a bringing forth. Her ability to create the layered work of the hand-crafted bridge scenes and beautiful layered pieces aligns with Heidegger's notion of receiving and removing to unconceal the work as a work of art. The artist receives thoughts and impressions regarding the artform as

she removes layers from vintage atlases and adds layers to her collage. When layers are covered the imagery is removed again. As she builds layers the artwork takes form and begins to come forth as a work of art. As each step of the process continues the artwork advances in its disclosure toward the final composition.

The origin of the thoughts of the artist is revealed in the bringing forth. Miller as an artist in the role of caretaker is one who creates artwork that reveals what is taking place within her world. Heidegger forwards the idea of bringing forth or creating the work of art, as he references the peasant shoes, that “unconcealment of a being has happened here” and that “it happens here for the first time; that such a work *is* at all rather than is not” (BW 190). Miller’s *Bridge* becomes a ‘bridge’ to reveal the other in her work. Visually crossing the bridge over the body of water, one must visually cross to the other side recognizing that the oil pipeline remains under the water. Miller brings forth the Bridge for the viewer making her presence a bridge to the viewer’s presence. She invites the viewer to cross the bridge.

The Hand. In his lecture “What Calls for Thinking,” Heidegger discusses the notion of handi-craft in his lecture explaining that the hand is rooted in thinking (BW 380). He mentions the peculiarity of the hand as part of our body, but “the hand’s essence can never be determined or explained by its being an organ that can grasp” (BW 380). According to Heidegger, the hand’s ability to create art is more than its ability to shake, reach, extend, receive, or welcome someone else (BW 81). Considering Miller’s hand, through the lens of Heidegger, her gesture becomes that which “runs everywhere through language,” in “perfect purity precisely when man speaks by being silent” (BW 381).

As an artist, Miller’s aesthetic thinking is evident through gestural silence of creating and making. Her hand mixes pigments, digitally composes, draws, feels the textured cover of the

bound antique atlas, cuts into the page, and carefully pieces together the printed fragments. As a mother, her hand gestures thinking through touch – rocking a baby, wiping her daughter’s tears, holding her finger to her lips to shush her child’s voice to a whisper, tying hair bows, or feeling her daughter’s forehead for fever. As a friend, her hand gestures compassion in the touch of silence. In the natural environment she dips her hand into the water of Lake Michigan, lifts a shell from the sand, and holds melting snow in the January cold. The hand gestures her thinking, her creativity, her memories, and love for the world around her. The work of her hand is rooted in thinking.

Symbols within the vintage paper reveal a place of beauty, protected by the gentleness that surrounds it. It appears as the Ancient site of an extraordinary ecosystem. With the etiquette of gentleness, the artwork reveals a meticulously exhausting process that bears witness to the artist’s care for the natural environmental resources in her home state of Michigan. The artist reconstructs the landscape, waterway, and the steel-forged Bridge. The viewer perceives through the careful arrangement, gentleness that French philosopher Anne Duformantelle speaks of and on what environment that the artist had been keeping watch (PG 22).

Rooted Thinking. Heidegger notes that “thinking itself is man’s simplest, and for that reason hardest, handiwork” (BW 381). In this context, the artist considers the placement of each fragment prior to its placement as she considers the aesthetics of its potential position. As the thinking conveys the direction, the hand completes the task for the thought. Miller thinks with her hand as she gestures with precise application in the knowledge of the aesthetics. She recalls the Bridge’s metal, its span, height, and the sounds of her crossings.

As she cuts the paper and carefully positions the layers, she considers the technology of the Bridge’s construction in the Modern era. Her thoughts are informed by muscle memory from

her countless trips over the Mackinac Bridge. She considers the Mackinac Bridge as an aesthetic work of architecture that evokes memories of her roots within the state of Michigan and how she “feels” the openness and the “protection” of the ancient land in the Upper Peninsula where areas still remain protected (B. Miller Personal Interview, 13 Nov. 2020). Thinking of the aesthetic options for each printed paper, she selects, studies, and shapes the forms. Her memory touches the natural landscape as she walks within its presence. The Michigan shoreline, wildflowers, and geological formations layer themselves into the patchwork of treasured memories within the two-dimensional frame. Her thoughts focus on Enbridge Line 5 and the pipeline’s potential for failure and the possibility for catastrophic damage to an ecosystem evokes sorrow and apprehension for Miller (B. Miller Personal Interview, 6 Jan. 2021).

Crossing Memories. Although Miller is rooted in her own identity and in the remembrance of the natural environment, her cut flowers carefully affixed to the waves within the creative frame are without roots. French Caribbean author Édouard Glissant, examines relationships and their interdependence in his discourse on the root identity. He suggests that identity can be viewed through the notion of the root’s capacity for variation rather than permanence (Glissant 141). In his examination of relation identity, Glissant notes that “root identity therefore rooted the thought of self and of territory and set in motion the thought of the other and of voyage” (144). When one is rooted in identity relative to territory, the thought of distinctiveness for one’s existence is tied to a specific place or familial line. There is uniformity in how one perceives existence through self and the other that appears similar to oneself. In this context, Miller, while not in Glissant’s community setting of claiming “entitlement to the possession of a land” that becomes a territory, her identity is rooted in thoughts of self and of territory within the complexities of relationships found through thought “of the other and of the voyage” that Glissant speaks of (44).

While her own roots orient her as to family heritage, cultural traditions, and her own relationship to the natural environment, it is Glissant's relation identity that allows her the "conscious and contradictory experience of contacts among cultures" as well as thinking of land as "a place where one gives-on-and-with rather than grasps" (144). In the role of caretaker she approaches other cultures as a member of an historical community with the desire to protect the environment. It is not for personal gain or power that Glissant references, in his writing relevant to Colonialism, but for Miller it is the relational interdependence of land and people. Miller recognizes that while Enbridge is in litigation for territorial entitlement to breach a fragile ecosystem, the state of Michigan is in litigation to maintain its relationship to the land.

The rootless flowers further address the notion that German American political theorist, Hannah Arendt conveys in her discussion on thinking and remembering. Within her inquiry "Some Questions on Moral Philosophy" in *Responsibility and Judgment* (2005), Arendt speaks of remembrance as it relates to the nature of evil, that "the greatest evil doers are those who don't remember because they have never given thought to the matter, and, without remembrance, nothing can hold them back" (95). Miller recalls the company's responsibility in the largest inland oil spill in the United States that took place in Michigan's Kalamazoo River in 2010 and that the cleanup is still ongoing (B. Miller, Personal Interview, 13 Nov. 2020).

Arendt further discusses that one who lives with oneself for the decisions made, derive from one's own remembrances or thinking (RJ 101). If one has experienced joy or grief, the human condition is understood within those boundaries. Miller's boundaries define her thoughts and remembrances for how she is creating within the boundaries of the human condition that are evident in the compositional arrangement within the rectangular frame. Layered pieces become the plurality of views for those who are engaged in the narrative of the bridge. The pieced

fragments represent historical and sociopolitical constructs have become injustices for people and land.

Miller's creativity is an exploration similar to the cartographer's from which she is drawing her inspiration. As a cartographer she is documenting her journey and the creation of self as she continues making art through the gesture of hand. The silent gesture reveals thinking that becomes exposure for the artist. The artist exposes thought through the gesture of making in the artform's development. Miller remembers the importance of protecting and caring for the fragile ecosystem, and she creates complex ecological-based works of art and retains her sense of self in the creative process.

The Suspension. Standing in front of Brenda Miller's *Bridge 5 Line 5*, the viewer has a heightened sense of space and expansion of place in the visual dynamics of the bridge that spans the watery divide. As the eye follows the bridge's contours and edges to the horizon, one confronts a personal crossing. The suspension bridge suspends both present and past. The viewer contemplates and recollects in the looking. Stepping again into the imaginary land, the viewer orients self in the narrative of the created image.

On the constructed bridge, the words "London Fields" within the vintage map provide aesthetic support as structural steel. The method for crossing itself begins a crossing into another era: the late Victorian. An English social researcher, Charles Booth, documented the working social class of London in the late 1800s. Through the depiction of color-coded maps, Booth categorized seven classes of social income that later came to be known as poverty maps. The map depicts through its lined markings select areas of color that represent the poorest in the community. Districts of London became identified as socio-economic desirable or undesirable by the color codes. The viewer senses the relevance to lines on a map revealing other kinds of

geographical or demographic information that may be used or misused with socio-economic ramifications that may include marginalization of the environment and/or people groups. (“Who was Charles Booth?”)

Fragments of Meaning. The Bridge allows the viewer to mentally cross beyond and back again. While thinking of the artist’s care for the environment, personal memories may recall moments when flowers were released into the wind or scattered on the ground. Joy and sorrow converge when viewing this artwork that addresses that which Brenda Miller is witness to. The flowers remind one of those that are tossed over the shoulder by a bride or those tossed into a grave. Metaphorically, the bridge symbolizes building, uniting, or crossing, while the cliché ‘burning a bridge’ marks a volatile end to a relationship. Bridges become targets of war to be compromised or breached. The absence of the bridge as a lifespan, may convey the absence of a reach in life.

The flowers floating in the waves appear feminine against the bridge’s steel construction. Rootless blossoms casting about on the waves become allegorical images of decision makers that disregard the fragility of the ecosystem. The blossoming flowers are intentionally placed by the artist as a reminder of the renewal of spring and regeneration, or of environmental loss. Warm tones with subtle moments of violet and blue reveal thoughts for the future. Birds flying in the distant light appear as small elements of the natural world. Water erodes the landscape over time. Under the waves, Line 5 remains.

Miller considers the “potentialities of action” that Arendt addresses, for events that have already occurred with ecosystems, as well as potential harm to humans and nonhumans that would derive from future decisions made by those with the capacity to act (BPF 63). Arendt’s concern is for action that is in the realm of danger. Yet, Miller maintains a capacity for wonder in her reflection as witness and acts in the capacity for the continued creation of art.

American cultural theorist, Judith Butler forwards in *Vulnerability in Resistance* (2016), the relationship between the human body and infrastructure in acts of resistance. Within her essay “Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance,” Butler examines the concept of embodiment as “performative and relational” and notes that relationality includes dependency on infrastructural conditions wherein the discourse is contingent on the institutional power that one lives within (VIR 21). Butler conveys that the human body’s dependency on infrastructure, that it is “understood complexly as environment, social relations, and networks of support and sustenance” and suggests that humans are not “divided from the animal or from the technical world” and that when one is vulnerable to decimated infrastructure, economic support, and predictable labor, the vulnerability is “foregrounded” (Butler, VIR 21). In this way one who is vulnerable is already exposed within the societal infrastructure and as one resists the infrastructure, the susceptibility to risk or endangerment increases exponentially. Miller as a resident of Michigan is vulnerable to the infrastructure of Michigan, and through creating art that not only resists political decision-making but invites political commentary is a kind of exposure that already exists.

Infrastructures. The complex natural ecosystem that is not divided from humans or the technical world in its vulnerability to disappearance is revealed in *Turtle Island*. The segmented background of blue is informed by 83 counties of the state of Michigan. Topographical textures depict riverways, lakes, and streams. Layered over the top of the county waterways, newspaper clippings reveal what the artist is witness to. Affixed as horizontal water currents in the picture plane, headlines read as visible undertow.

The reader is pulled into the riptide effects of the state of Michigan’s collaboration between man and environment that juxtaposes lead, water, pesticides, climate, and industry.

“*WHAT’S THE FUTURE FOR FLINT’S KIDS?*” declares one, and others include, “*AFTER 40 YEARS, EFFECT OF MICHIGAN’S PBB CRISIS STILL NOT FULLY KNOWN*”; “*LAKE SUPERIOR SHRINKING, WARMING*”; “*VANISHING LAKE MICHIGAN SAND DUNES: THREATS FROM MINING*” (see figs. 1.7, 1.8).” Sentence fragments expose the powers in the darkness that, as Butler observes, decimate the infrastructure. Reports show that chemicals have been found in the shallow groundwater in Ann Arbor Park, near Miller, and that the effects of the oil spill in the Kalamazoo River are still in need of long-term studies, and that nuclear waste in Lake Huron is now a disaster waiting to happen.

The large turtle shape dominates the central picture plane. The viewer considers the curvilinear shapes and from where the vintage paper originates. The shape of a mittened hand that forms the Turtle’s domed shell is recognized by those in the Midwest as the state of Michigan. Pointing to one’s raised palm orients one to the location or destination. Michigan’s interior boundaries define counties in faded pastel colors. The jointed shell allows the viewer to begin a journey of reflection with imagined exploration of shorelines.

The Great Lakes topographical segments on the Turtle’s shell allow the viewer to perceive the familiar and historical. The species of turtle native to the Midwest region is called ‘Northern Map Turtle.’ Inhabiting lakes, ponds, and river-bottoms, it is named for its intricate system of lines that resemble a topographical map. Miller captures both its yellow and olive-green markings (Partymiller, “Common Map Turtle”). The artwork invites the viewer into one’s own environmental journey of contemporary local, national, and global conditions.

Through this work, the viewer is invited to reflect on that in one’s vulnerability, similar to the turtle, there is power to resist through perseverance. One may continue as Miller’s *Turtle Island* depicts that if one perseveres, the motion will always be forward. One may conceal fear of

vulnerability to pursue a dialogue about the fragility of the ecosystems and the relationship between humans and the environment in order to promote change.

Bridging Turtle Island. The continent of North America, called ‘Turtle Island’ by some Indigenous people, is one of various origin stories. The “turtle is said to support the world and is an icon of life itself” while “Turtle Island” speaks to various creation myths and “for some, the turtle is a marker of identity, culture, autonomy and a deeply-held respect for the environment” (Robinson, “Turtle Island” and Newcomb, ““Canada and the United States”). From the creation myths, one may envision the landmass rising from the turtle’s shell; however, in Miller’s artwork, the turtle appears in stasis. Waters from the past are implicated in the backdrop of blue-green, as the Turtle is caught in isolation between the waves of headlined messages that become currents on the surface nearby.

The illusion of the scallop shells, recall Sandro Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*, painted c 1485, on display in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy (“Birth of Venus”).⁶ Arriving at the water’s edge, Venus is supported by the shell that many believe is representative of Saint James and of the pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago. The scallop shell is found on the coast of Galicia, Spain and as a symbol for “courage, hope, and strength,” the lines represent the routes that pilgrims traveled to reach the tomb of the Apostle Saint James, whereby travelers carried the shell for portions of food they were given along their journey (“Significance of the Scallop Shell”).

According to Judith Butler, “Not only are we then vulnerable to one another – and invariable feature of social relations - but, in addition, this vulnerability indicates a broader condition of dependency and inter-dependency that challenges the dominant ontological understanding of the embodied subject” (VIR 21). Miller creates the image that visually depicts

the interconnectedness and interdependency that animals have with the land and the further connection that humans have to both. Like the pilgrim on a journey, the Turtle is vulnerable in its own resistance as it navigates steadily forward. It moves through the complexities of the landscape while attempting to get to water while collecting (as residue) that which it is navigating on its journey.

Surrounded by traces of human decision-making, the Turtle's outer shell provides protective strength, while it remains vulnerable in its attempt to navigate through toxins that threaten its environment and therefore its existence. The flourishes on the Turtle's cartographic-infused domed shell embed the story of the need for collaboration with human navigators that co-exist as travelers across the shared space of water and land.

Donna Haraway explains in her 2006, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, the concept of the interrelatedness of cosmologies and forwards the notion that "everything is connected to something, and nothing is connected to everything" (31). She notes that thinking as practice and storytelling interrelate to our act of living and that the interconnectedness that has to do with mourning and with dwelling and loss, wherein, "[g]rief is a path to understanding entangled shared living and dying; human beings must grieve *with*, because we are in and of this fabric of undoing" (Haraway 39).

We see in *Turtle Island* that Haraway's notion of Earth's history has been told through fantasy, works, or weapons and that there is a variety of artifacts that continue to tell stories about who we are in this relationship (39). This aligns with Butler's discussion that embodiment is both performative and relational (VIR 21). The connection can be seen through the symbiotic relationship among life, loss, and grief of loss as experienced in multispecies. This becomes a relational performance of our being or of our presence within the world. This author suggests

that Miller's interconnectedness of how a caretaker in the world is thinking or becoming *with* in the world as she incorporates into the complexities of the world into the ecology collages.

How we are embodied by the powers around us by our societal conditions according to Butler merges with Haraway's thought that we are subjected to this interrelation through *sympoeisis*. Haraway uses the term *sympoiesis* as connotative of a simple word that means 'making-with' and further notes that the meaning has relevance to terms that include "complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, and historical systems" (58). Haraway uses the term "collaborative entanglements" for a variety of humans and nonhuman interconnections that coincides with Butler's discourse on the relationship between the human body and the infrastructure, wherein infrastructure is understood as environment and networks of support (Haraway 69; Butler 21).

Miller's work foregrounds the ways that we are vulnerable to infrastructures that result in environmental injustice within the state of Michigan. The collaborative entanglements within Miller's *Turtle Island* are evidenced within the layers of the collage that reveal news headlines that implicate the state of Michigan's in its role of eco-system entanglements. Miller's integrated landscapes re-creates Turtle Island as a myth – an identity, spirituality, and the memory of ancient people groups. The turtle carries the land on its back from its dive into the ocean to bring up the earth as carried burden. Miller grieves for the loss of ecosystem purity, from oil breaches and toxic pesticides, that juxtaposes Michigan's tourism marketing theme '*Pure Michigan*.'

The paper fragments give voice for one's journey. Miller appears to consider the pilgrim's walk to Santiago as she connects the pieces and assembles them together in a way that they become segments of the story or as sediment in the terrain. *Turtle Island* as an artwork from her own *Pure Michigan* series, gives voice to creation myths, heritage, and Michigan's themed

vehicle license plates. Headlines that reference declining sand dunes or toxins in local parks become trenches in the landscape of daily news.

In the 1960s land artists shifted large amounts of earth and minerals to fashion monumental site-specific forms in attempt to respond to the environmental concerns of the day, whereas Miller utilizes elements of the earth and pigments on printed papers to respond to her environment. Where land art resulted in the physical (gestural) moving tons of earth, Miller's art results in shifting of paper fragments. Miller replicates, restores, or reclaims the environment as she incises a flower from its printed garden and replants it to another location so that it may grow in its new aesthetic journey. When the viewer sees the text 'Monsanto or 'Dow' one may associate pesticides and toxins with the pristine Michigan waterways and sand dunes. While Miller cannot physically remove the toxins from a children's park, she can excise the toxins from media headlines and relocate to her collage environment so that the viewer may be invited to see. The text in the artwork become the riptide of current events.

Author, T.J. Demos, observations in his text, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (2016) reminds one of Haraway's thoughts on entanglement and Butler's notion of institution and the inherent complexities.

In Andreas Weber's *Enlivenment: Toward a Poetics for the Anthropocene* (2019), he claims that enlivenment is more than sustainability; he notes that "we devour the very biosphere that we are dependent on" (Weber 34). Weber notes that we are not closer to maintaining sustainability of our ecosystems and that it is imperative that we rediscover our link between our inner experience and the "external" natural order (35). Using the term "aliveness" Weber stresses the importance of "our communal life as embodied beings" as a common denominator and contends that policy approaches intensify the technological efficiency and the objectification

of nature (35, 38). The artist Miller, in context, forwards the concept of not objectifying nature, but addresses what happens when we try to increase technology. Miller is creating artwork that would be considered by Weber enlivenment.

Weber aligns with Butler's notion of the embodiment of the infrastructure when he is references the infrastructure as it relates to biology and ecology. Weber considers the commons as that which integrates the social and the natural as enlivenment models (112). He examines the notion of *commoners* who negotiate deliberately and plan to meet collective needs. This counters the market economy, whereby the "care work" of the people depend on the resources of land and family (Weber 113). The term "commoning" refers to the practice of common experience; the practice as it relates to economy and ecology that can be integrated for the common good and has everything to do with nature. (Weber 115).

Weber in context, forwards the term "stewards" of resources (123). In this Brenda Miller's work *Turtle Island* integrates resources in ways that reveal stewardship. Rivers, fish, wild animals, forests, and organic iconography become components in her visual ecology that address the complex ecological systems of Earth. She is a steward according to Weber as one who is participating in the abundance of nature as she cultivates relationships with more than just humans (123, 124). Miller points toward sustainable systems, as she reclaims images derived from print-making and other technical processes. In looking at ancient history through a contemporary lens, *Turtle Island* creates a complex, yet sustainable future.

According to Weber, one interprets experiences and the ability to share those experiences (145). In Miller's inquiry from her view through first-person experience she re-creates the fragile ecosystems that are an entanglement of her world and her grieving process for the potential for loss of the natural environment that manifests itself in the making of her layered forms.

Miller creates artwork that with gentleness is carefully and precisely cut. While the small collage pieces appear fragile and delicate, the elements intensify in strength in the layered construction. The artist addresses the power of those that desire to retain Enbridge's Line 5 failing pipeline, those that agree to allow hazardous toxins to filter into groundwater, and those that inadequately harness natural resources that allow for lead to flow into a community's drinking water. Miller continues in an act of resistance to create her art for the public, regardless of those in power who might see.

AIR: 48207. *BREATHING IN A DETROIT ZIP CODE*

A boy's face appears on the surface of a salvaged 1969 Chevy truck hood. Painted in a brushed gestural style, the baby blue skin, small brown eyes, and rose-colored smile take on the contour of the damaged metal. Set within raw umber almond-shaped outlines, brown eyes look to the viewer's left as short black upper lashes segue to thick gray-blue rectangular eyebrows. Through the open lips, teeth materialize as a black and white abstract grid. Painted over the damaged central ridge, the nose, tinted in raw umber and black, takes shape as an uppercase "L." The fabricated ridge leads upward to short, textured hair, finely mottled with black splotches that softly touch transparent curvilinear streaks of brown. In the boy's painted curls, the Chevy 'Bowtie' is still fastened in its central position that provides the identification for the truck's signature year. The boy's complexion is conditional to the oxidized iron that discloses a corrosive history of exposure to air and water.

Painted by Detroit urban environmental artist, Tyree Guyton, the hood art is one of many automotive hoods painted in the outdoor art installation known as the Heidelberg Project. Appearing as a whimsical cliché on the painted ultramarine blue truck part, embedded in the image is the story of change within an urban neighborhood and the relevance of a community bordered by the 48207 Zip Code. Because the community of his youth no longer exists, the urban-based artist, as one who cares for his neighborhood, continues forward by re-purposing discarded consumer products in order to create serious narratives through unconventional public art.

The public art shares in the narrative that Guyton addresses on Detroit's lower east side. While the faces in the hood connect in identity to their superficial ride on salvaged metal, the faces observe, hear, and speak through covered and unprotected alloy to reveal what the artist

bears witness to. The rescued hoods become the backdrop for faces in a community that commemorate Detroit neighborhood's history of racial disparity, economic blight, and the art environment identified by the street named Heidelberg, the location of Guyton's childhood home.

Several automobile hoods rest on the ground behind and to the side of the painted boy as reclaimed narratives for Detroit's automotive industry and the changing neighborhood. *Sophia*, painted in a gestural style, with bright red lips her smile reveals black and white gridded teeth. Cobalt blue eyes with caterpillar lashes look to the viewer's left. Painted directly on the hood's raw metal, the woman's thick hair is styled in curvilinear strokes of red, orange, and black. Rectangular earrings dangle on stems of red. *Sophia*, is one of the faces in the hood that survived an arson attack to make an appearance in the Inner State Gallery SPIRIT Exhibition in 2014 (see figs. 1.9, 1.10).



Fig. 1.9. Tyree Guyton. Boy painted on reclaimed c. 1969-70 Chevy truck hood. Heidelberg Project, Detroit, MI. Chevy 'bow-tie' logo adorns front of hood in boy's hair. Photo author's collection.



Fig. 1.10 (right). Tyree Guyton. *Sophia*, exhibited 2014. Mixed media on reclaimed automobile hood. 59 x 51 x 9 inches. Recovered from the War Room House arson attack on the Heidelberg Project in 2013. Re-worked for Inner State Gallery SPIRIT Exhibition, 2014. © *Sophia*, Tyree Guyton/Heidelberg Project. Image permission of Heidelberg Project.

This intertextual analysis will consider the intersection of thoughts of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas and German cultural theorist, Peter Sloterdijk. Levinas reflects on the proximity of one to the other, whereas Sloterdijk examines the notion of air space as it relates to how one lives and breathes in the air with others. In Sloterdijk's evaluation of the environment, he conveys the notion that air samples are carried from one location to another. This merges with the artist Guyton in the analysis of his remaining in the location of his youth, whereby the atmosphere he lives within is carried with him to other locations, while others bring to the Heidelberg Project the air that they have inhaled elsewhere.

The Heidelberg Project: Located in the Zip Code 48207 on Detroit's lower east side, the Heidelberg Project covers a two-block area of the McDougall-Hunt neighborhood. Since 1986, the indoor/outdoor urban art installation has been the focus of artist Tyree Guyton. As Guyton walks between the sidewalk, curb, and street sweeping and raking leaves, he talks with visitors and guides onlookers to sign the guest book located in the makeshift shed. His voice is jovial, and it appears as if the work of his gloved hands is never ending, as he rearranges, moves, and changes the locations of the art objects that are formed from used plastic products, scrap machine parts, and worn shoes.

The two-story white house, formerly the artist's childhood home, painted with hundreds of large and small multicolored large dots is recognizable from blocks away. Purchased by his great-grandparents, the house bears the iconic symbol of the 'dot' that represents the Heidelberg Project art environment. According to the Heidelberg website, the dot is a symbol for urban revitalization, politics of creativity, urban ecology and environmental justice through public art ("Tyree Guyton"). As an international destination, the Heidelberg Project's location is in the

midst of vacant lots and boarded-up houses. The house covered in dots reassures, much like the visual texture that one can feel when being comforted by the warmth of a patchwork quilt.

M. H. Miller, reporting for the *New York Times* in 2019, writes that Guyton's artistically adorned houses are a reclamation of his lost neighborhood. However, the empty lots that once held the art-adorned buildings now destroyed are under new scrutiny by developers. Miller conveys that "Guyton was one of the first artists anywhere to try to use art to materially improve a community, long before this became a contemporary cliché" and further clarifies that "[t]aken as a whole, the project is a reverse memento mori — an assertion of life, a work that announces, 'I'm still here,' even as everyone else seemed to look away" (M. H. Miller, "Tyree Guyton Turned a Detroit"). Miller's accompanying photo by Damon Caserez shows Tyree Guyton sitting in a chair bundled up in a winter coat, hat and gloves in the middle of Heidelberg Street appearing to casually read a newspaper.

Here I Am: Within Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence, 1998, French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas examines "Here I am" through his discourse on proximity and responsibility. In this he considers one's nearness to the other and one's responsibility to the other in the course of putting oneself in place of the other without knowing who the other is. Within the essay, "Subjectivity and Infinity," Levinas considers witness and its relevance to inspiration, language and prophecy and the notion of "here I am" as a witness of the Infinite. Levinas states that the "Infinite does not appear to him that bears witness to it" but that "[o]n the contrary the witness belongs to the glory of the Infinite." It is by the voice of the witness that the glory of the Infinite is glorified (OTB 146). In the consideration of putting oneself in place of the other, Levinas conveys that it is a substitution whereby the very nature of the substitution of one for the other is without knowing any of the attributes of the other. It is as if one's relation to the other is an

intangible relation so that it may be understood as unending or unfathomable in comprehension as one considers self or the other. The glory of the Infinite becomes an internal experience or according to Levinas an “inward voice” (OTB 147).

In this context Guyton sits in the street as witness. He observes, sees, watches, hears, and listens as part of his living experience, living in the outdoor universe. Through gentleness, he observes the past and present and envisions the future in such a way that his art reveals his intuitive and prophetic thoughts. The artform allows a viewer in proximity to perpetually witness one’s own inward voice in relation to something greater than self.

It is Guyton’s contention that order is needed in the world and that “[e]ven in the smallest molecule or things in this life that we can’t see, we are all bound by this same energy, we are all bound by gravity, and we breathe the same air. I can see the evolution of life in everything, in every minute second. How beautiful it is to witness this process in action” (Tyree Guyton, “Philosophy”). The artist does not see the Infinite just as Levinas proclaims, but as witness to its process. Guyton poses the question of looking beyond space to ask, “Can we look that far into ourselves?” (Tyree Guyton, “Philosophy”).

Guyton’s artwork, the aesthetic representation of his presence, bears witness to the glory of the unseen workings of the universe. The artist tirelessly creates in the midst of his environment and declares “here I am” through his “I’m still here.” In this manner the artist in the role of caretaker remains to provide aesthetic order in his neighborhood. His resistance is insistence toward beauty. Guyton’s creations manifest as responsibility in the face of the other.

The Neighbor. Levinas contends that “[t]he Infinite orders to me the neighbor as a face, without being exposed to me, and does so the more imperiously that proximity narrows” (OTB 150). In this context the term “order” is used as a verb as in a directive or summons. Despite the obstacles

and challenges from arsonists or government-ordered destruction and Guyton's witness of a neighborhood in decline, Guyton continues to not evade but is compelled toward the face of the other. In the face of his neighbors Guyton continues to say the words that Levinas speaks of, "Here I am."

According to Levinas, that while the order is not the cause of a response nor is a question needed to precede it, the order is in one's response itself, which, as a "sign given to the neighbor, as a 'here I am,' brings me out of invisibility, out of the shadow in which my responsibility could have been evaded" (OTB 150). Guyton does not remain in the shadow so that the others cannot see him but remains close in proximity to the other. Out from the shadow in the open, he remains in the city street called Heidelberg. In this way through the face of the other, he may look beyond into himself. Bringing oneself out of invisibility gives voice to one's position, location, or station in life.

Saying "I'm still here" announces to the other that "I am responsible." Guyton's calling to create in his neighborhood bears witness to his response-ability in a community's resistance to blight, poverty, and decay. Seemingly as a force of one, he is the response-able neighbor caring for a space and place that is identified on a Detroit city map as the McDougall-Hunt neighborhood. Levinas proposes that it is a coming of the order that one is "subjected before hearing it" and notes that it is an "obedience preceding the hearing of the order" and that "responsibility prior to commitment" is the other in the same inspiration and prophecy, the passing itself of the Infinite (OTB 150). In this context, the order may be the directional influences of the living (unseen life world) prior to being born.

As witness, the artist, Guyton does not remain in the shadow unseen, but in the light that brings public scrutiny. Without hearing the order that Levinas speaks of, Guyton continues to

observe the place and space of the city blocks that surround him. When he returns to his neighborhood after serving in the military, he begins to paint with the help of his grandfather. Before Guyton was born into his own generation, his grandfather would have known the responsibilities needed for those who were to be born in the future. Guyton would have acquired an assumed (by his grandfather) responsibility before his birth, through that which binds him to others through the pre-existence of his existence. Energy, gravity, and breath pre-existed his birth. Prior to hearing the order to become an artmaker, he already is one. His grandfather knows of Guyton's responsibility prior to Guyton knowing.

Emmanuel Levinas conveys that within the context of the Biblical passage from Isaiah 6:8, Isaiah hears a call from God and responds even as he doubts his own worthiness. In doing so, he begins his prophetic service. Isaiah 6:8 says, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me" (OTB 149). Levinas explains that "As a sign given to the other of this very signification, the 'here I am' signifies me in the name of God, at the service of men that look at me, without having anything to identify myself with, but the sound of my voice or the figure of my gesture – the saying itself" (OTB 149). In this way through the saying or the voice one is recognized. The sound of the words or the saying allows the other to know one is nearby. The recognition includes one's identity and location and the voice itself allows the other to consider Guyton saying "I'm still here" signifies him as being present in his location and at the service of the other within community.

On Heidelberg Street, while provoking seriousness, contemplation, or historical reflection, sculptures as well as the artist, summon humor. A row of portable televisions propped in plastic, metal, and vinyl-covered chairs appear to be on stand-by as hand-painted monitors

announce *Dot News*, *World News*, and *Fake News*. Organized along the sidewalk in front of Dotty Wotty house, plastic Canadian geese rest on top of suitcases while awaiting their next flight. In gestures of gentleness, resilience, and resistance, Guyton sits. For a *New York Times* photo, he sits. For the author's photo he removes a plastic doll from a chair at the curbside, situates the chair in the middle of the sidewalk and sits. He smiles as he pretends to talk into the earpiece of a desk style push-button phone from the 1990s (Personal Interaction 19 Nov. 2021). (see figs. 1.11, 1.12).



Fig. 1.11. The 'Dotty Wotty' House on Heidelberg Street, Detroit, MI is Guyton's boyhood home. Photo author's collection.



Fig. 1.12 (right). Tyree Guyton. Photo author's collection.

Although his sitting for photos may be staged for humor, one may recall memories of others not allowed to sit. The gesture of staying in a place, on a street, in a chair as one wills is a seemingly simple gesture, until one recalls Rosa Parks. Not allowed to remain seated on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955, her resistance sparked a bus boycott and Civil Right movement (Norwood, "Rosa Parks"). Choosing to sit in a casual style for conversation, to chat with visitors, or for a moment of rest is a gesture of gentleness, resistance and resilience in this Detroit

outdoor art environment. And yet, the identity in the sound of his voice and in the figure of his gesture results in the gesture of the other (city officials and arsonists) that bulldozed and burnt his art houses. The gestures of city officials and arsonists signify an intent to remove the significance of the artist altogether.

Levinas poses the following questions, “Does a face abide both in representation and in proximity; is it community and difference?” and “What meaning can community take on in difference without reducing difference?” (OTB 154). In this context one considers the other as one sees the other or the face through self. On the one hand, a face of the other may be near, but the face will not abide in the other if one does not see the semblance of self. If one is in proximity without representation of self or community, the face is perceived to be different and therefore not in proximity regardless of how close the other is. If the face is perceived as representation, the proximity may be outside community bounds, the proximity is not relevant to distance but relevant to community. For example, artists in other locations outside the proximity of Detroit would see representation in Guyton as an artist and would feel community through that representation as an artist. The face deemed to be representation of self remains community rather than difference.

Community can take on meaning in difference, if those in the community perceive that in difference there is still representation of self. For example, while Guyton is an unconventional artist, his community may reduce him to the very difference of his artistic occupation and the pursuit of his art forms, yet as a local resident and educator, his face remains in representation and proximity. While some in community may find meaning through various facets of representation and proximity others have rejected both.

Guyton, as part of community, recognizes difference as he challenges tradition through his art-making methods. In the Heidelberg Project's history, city officials appear to have reduced community to difference that becomes too proximal (too close for comfort) as representation of Detroit as part of a deteriorating urban city. This proximity resulted in the 1991 and 1999 destruction of his art-adorned houses ("Timeline"). While Guyton is addressing societal issues that are taking place within his neighborhood, city, and country through art, local government agencies reduced his art installations to difference as they were targeted for demolition, thus removing the face of representation. Simultaneously, the face of the other (Guyton) abides in representation without proximity as people from locations throughout the world visit the art installation and become community in difference.

Breathing in the Midst: Guyton is responsible to the other through his act of creating before the other is aware there is an artist breathing in the midst. Breathing is reciprocity with the universe. It signifies one's responsibility for the other within the complexities of one's human and non-human environment. Levinas conveys that "inspiration arouses respiration" when we consider "the other in the same" as being part of the universe (OTB 116). The atmosphere in which Guyton is breathing in the Detroit 48207 Zip Code was established long ago.

A neighborhood in proximity is created through its shared atmosphere. The urban space identified by city blocks and streets allows for breathing beyond its neighborhood's geographical boundaries. With no atmospheric demarcations, the proximity of "I'm still here" transmits beyond the hearing of the sound of Guyton's voice within the 48207 Zip Code. From Guyton's breath, molecules ride on air streams to disseminate into the greater neighborhood of humanity. Simultaneously, molecules from the greater neighborhood converge to recirculate within the Heidelberg Project.

Discarded athletic shoes, plastic dolls, and metal grocery carts carry the exhaled breath of the other. Reclaimed narratives include a young mother stopping in the middle of a summer's run to tie her shoelaces, the little girl whispering anxiously into her doll's listening ear while hiding under an unmade bed, and the elderly man breathing on fingers exposed through worn-out gloves while shifting hands on the metal grocery cart handle in the push through the Michigan winter. The runner's shoes now hang on a chain link fence, the secret-keeping doll waves from the flowerpot on the front porch ledge of the Dotty Wotty house, and the silver grocery cart becomes part of hundreds that form a mountain in the making. Guyton has touched the molecules of breath exhaled on each. The Heidelberg Project is bonded to the other by what is unseen – the energy, gravity, and breath of the other.

German cultural critic, Peter Sloterdijk examines the notion of air and how we are living and breathing in the air with others. Although he focuses on the environment and the assaults on it through acts of warfare, he considers other 'air' circumstances. In writing *Terror From the Air* (2009), Sloterdijk examines Surrealist artist, Salvador Dali's attempted experiment in an art performance when he dresses in a diver-suit and almost suffocates due to not being correctly connected to the air supply. The audience applauds because they think it is part of the act and at first, the stagehands and his colleagues do not realize that he cannot breathe. Sloterdijk conveys that life is always life in an environment and placing one's trust in a primary surrounding becomes an "invitation to self-harm" (108). In this context one examines an atmosphere, the ability to live in a space where one feels in control of their breathing environment in air that is paid for or designed for the consumer to breathe in, such as a home or shopping mall, or the city block where one lives. The air that surrounds the Heidelberg Project is one that carries multifaceted dimensions of respiration. From the atmosphere of Detroit, particles of Guyton's

history, segregation, riots, the automotive industry, and music collect to become conditions of culture in the urban setting. The cultural ability to survive or thrive within a designated air space is determined or influenced by the complexities of community, heritage, society, and politics.

Connecting the Dots. Covered in colorful dots of various sizes, the Dotty Wotty house, Guyton's childhood home, is a two-story bungalow built in early 1900. Facing Heidelberg Street, the porch has two square column supports, a wooden rail, and seven large and three small vertical sash-style windows. While the dot functions in a literary context as an ellipsis in omitting a word, line or phrase, the "dot" of Heidelberg Project allows the viewer to insert their own interpretation of the meaning of a larger story (see fig 1.11).

Julia Kristeva examines an author's use of ellipses in her essay "Ellipses: Three Dots and a Suspension" in *Powers of Horror* (1982). She notes that the three dots may point to an overflowing of the clause into a higher unit of enunciation of the message or that there is a loss of its identity as it floats in a "syntactic irresolution" (198-200). The space is where one visually journeys from one location to the next and finds one's own way between the spaces. In this context the reader's response to the invitation (or the absence of the writer's thoughts) may be ambiguous, and the reader may be perplexed as to what the personal response should be toward the ambiguity as the narrative transitions from the writer's lens to the reader's lens.

The three dots (ellipses) allow the reader (viewer) to subjectively include oneself in the saying of what the dots or the space between, means. The 'dot' icon of the Heidelberg Project allows the viewer to contribute their own narrative albeit joy or sorrow. The dots of the Heidelberg Project appear as semi-permanent colors painted on wood, metal, or concrete; as an icon silk-screened on t-shirts; or as chalk-drawings on the sidewalks. The air between becomes the space between objects, people, art, and thoughts.

One remembers within the visual space between the dots, racism, environmental injustice, urban decay, and the societal redefining the term respiration in an atmosphere of police brutality and a global pandemic as well as the death of George Floyd, an African American male murdered on May 25, 2020 by a white police officer after saying numerous times, “I can’t breathe,” (Deliso, “Timeline: The impact of George Floyd’s death”)⁷ The global pandemic identified by the virus, COVID-19 led to the deaths of several millions and the political division in countries world-wide derived from regulating its spread. One sees between the dots, social movements and advocacy for breathing rights for all.

One also sees in the visual space between the dots joy for art with local narratives embedded on the soles of flip flops, sandals, and boots that intercept one’s thoughts. A child’s bicycle, doll house, and soda-pop cans captivate memories from childhood. The air of the Heidelberg Project allows for laughter between the space of friends standing in the sunlight of the present. The gentleness of the air between the dots of color invites the visitor into the energy and gravity, and to breathe in a place that they never knew prior to the invitation of the ellipsis.

While Sloterdijk examines the topic of breathing spaces that humans are intended to share and the effects of atmospheres that are controlled through manipulation of power or promotion as in war, economics, or retail advertising, he notices a reference to air in a speech by one writer about another. In 1936 (the same year as Dali’s diver-suit accident in London), thirty-one-year-old Elias Canetti author and literary writer gave a speech for Austrian author and poet Hermann Broch’s fiftieth birthday. Sloterdijk defines Canetti’s speech as being the first time a speech is given that compares the author in context of time and breathing space. He notes that Canetti writes that Broch has an ability to write and integrate people into his personal air

economy and that Canetti likens the poet to a curious bird who has the freedom to slip into any cage “taking air samples” with him as he leaves (97).

Caged Bird. Guyton’s Heidelberg Project recalls Sloterdijk’s reference of the poet Broch.

According to Sloterdijk, Broch’s ability to integrate people into his personal air economy and his artform as he discovers “atmospheric multiplicities” includes residents and their social breathing spaces (98, 99). As a bird with the freedom to slip into any cage, Guyton also takes air samples as he slips in and out of the Detroit neighborhood. It is as if Guyton is the bird that American author Dr. Maya Angelou writes of in her 1983 poem “I Know why the Caged Bird Sings”:

But a bird that stalks / down his narrow cage / can seldom see through / his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and / his feet are tied / so he opens his throat to sing.
The caged bird sings / with a fearful trill / of things unknown / but longed for still /
and his tune is heard / on the distant hill / for the caged bird / sings of freedom.
(Angelou “Caged Bird”).

In Dr. Angelou’s poem and literary works, the black bird becomes a metaphor for her and other African Americans that are not living free due to societal restraints that include oppression and discrimination. Her writings depict various stories from her life experiences as a black woman raised by her grandmother and her journey as an African American, Civil Rights activist, educator, and mother. As a poet, her air samples include discoveries from creative, academic, educational, political, and social atmospheres. Guyton as the metaphorical black bird longs for a future of freedom from bars of oppression and societal constraints. His artworks become the song of a creative voice that others can hear through visual form.

Guyton’s repurposed bird cages from the Heidelberg Project collection provide a glimpse of his air samples in a literal way. On the curbside of the outdoor installation, worn shoes

touched with splashes of paint are overcrowded in the metal enclosure as if the souls themselves are caged. Guyton's *Untitled (bird cage, re-lynching)* is on display in a different environment.

Created from a vintage, Victorian-style metal cage that hangs from a cast iron stand, within the University of Michigan Museum of Art, the multi-colored orange and red painted enclosure holds objects from air samples that the artist has collected. The remnant of an American flag positioned in a corner, a replica of a penis painted black hanging from the center of the cage, and a small toy bell fastened to the side integrate Guyton's air memory. Although there are no visible metal bars that surround Zip Code 48207, within Guyton's atmosphere of lived experiences, there are moments where his creative expression frees him from an invisible cage. (see figs. 1.13, 1.14).



Fig. 1.13. Tyree Guyton, *Untitled (bird cage, re-lynching)*, 1980-2010. Metal bird cage stand, American flag, rubber elements, metal bell and rectangular-shaped screen. 5 ft. 6 in. x 16 in. x 11 in. (167.64 x 40.64 x 27.94 cm). University of Michigan Museum of Art, Gift of H. David Zucca, 2013/3.12. Photo permission Collection of the University of Michigan Museum of Art.

Fig. 1.14 (right). Detail, *Untitled (bird cage, re-lynching)*.

Levinas discusses the freedom of one who does not begin himself in his own freedom or his own present, but one who is for all in responsibility for others and is in support of the universe through his approach. He forwards the premise that “responsibility for the other, this way of answering without a prior commitment, is human fraternity itself, and it is prior to freedom” (OTB 116). This is the one that who is not focused on self, but on others not only in the present, but for the future as well. The commitment that is prior to freedom is that which allows for the recognition that one is responsible for the other before knowing or seeking freedom for oneself.

Guyton’s responsibility for the other as part of human fraternity compels him to continuously return to Heidelberg Street. As part of the larger expansion of life that is beyond self. Although the neighborhood of his youth is no longer in representation, the artist sees from his vantage point what others cannot. According to Levinas, in this there is an inscribed “trace of infinity” (OTB 117). Guyton sees that trace (as a small part of what is unfathomable) and through taking air samples in his place of existence, attempts to recreate through art, a semblance of “human fraternity” or a connection to humanity that Levinas speaks of (OTB 116). The map (design or structural make-up) of the universe (Infinity) exists prior to the artist. The artist through witness and interpretation of his existence seeks the trace of what exists and has existed before him in order to consider elements that he can re-trace in his responsibility that he sees as addressing the freedom of others.

Levinas conveys that in the framework of “otherwise than being” that a being divests itself, wherein passivity that is “inconvertible to an act” rests in the bearing of one for the other; the “state of being a hostage is to always have one degree of responsibility more, the responsibility for the responsibility of the other” (OTB 117). In context of the hostage, one is

bound to the limits of self in considering the other in such a way that it is not a burden, but as a framework or parameter in which one is constrained. In Guyton we apprehend Levinas's words that only through the "condition of being hostage that there can be in the world pity, compassion, pardon and proximity," and that the "unconditionality of being hostage" is the condition for all solidarity and for the possibility of putting oneself in the place of the other (OTB 117). In this context, Guyton bears in his unconditional return to Heidelberg Street, the holding of himself in the premise or parameter of a cage (of thought, art, perspective, location, or place) in which he knows that this constraint allows others freedom through his art. To Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Guyton would answer, *Yes*.

While the fabric of Guyton's old neighborhood is no longer tangible and the air is missing the sounds of his youth, Guyton becomes the keeper of empty lots, abandoned houses, and broken sidewalks as he cares for his neighborhood. According to Levinas, face of the other in proximity is more than representation; it is an "unrepresentable trace" (OTB 116). Guyton's public art created becomes the unrepresentable trace of the face of the other from the neighborhood of his youth. The other cannot be fully known by limited personal attributes, however, how the other lives, cares, or exists is evidenced through the things and activities that become part of or additions to one's life journey that becomes the trace of one's existence.

While some neighbors may not grasp him as an artist, they accept his ways, and others do not accept that his ways are obscure. French author Édouard Glissant discusses one's right to *opacity* in his writing *Poetics of Relation* (2006) as he considers the notion that when we look at another and cannot see what we are desiring, the term *obscure* is used, as if the transparency we are expecting is not working. However, when we have the right to opacity, accordingly we are not trying to make the other conform to our own understanding. City officials that bulldoze the

art houses on Heidelberg street do so because they cannot “grasp” Guyton nor his art environment. In nonconformity, he appears obscure. Not finding the transparency that they were expecting or desiring, city officials try to delete his work in an attempt to make him disappear. Although they do succeed in destroying physical houses and much of the art, the artist remains.

On Heidelberg Street. When approaching the city blocks where Heidelberg Project is located, the visitor is drawn into the menagerie of brightly colored discarded and repurposed objects that carry the burden of pop culture and consumer materialism. In this world of plastic and metal, one examines the Modern era and the rehabilitation of what is defined by those beyond Heidelberg as consumer trash. The outdoor installation evokes memories of childhood as well as the assurance that a consumer-motivated future continues on the horizon. In the urban setting, molded plastic finds a second life as public art. Children’s rusted foot-peddle cars segue to broken plastic Coca-Cola crates that lead to stacked metal shopping carts, and suitcases appear ready for travel rest on the windshield of the car.

The partially buried two-door 1971 Saab becomes an imaginative work of public art. Bearing paint in colors of faded sunflower yellow and duct tape gray, the car body displays large painted multi-colored dots. Its hood, fenders, and rims reveal small dots made of gray-painted pennies. The car covered in pennies, known as *Penny Saab*, 2006, has gone through several iterations since its original decoration by local high school students (“Take a Virtual Tour”). Cross symbols form shapes on the windows, and suitcases are positioned on the windshield. Painted athletic trophies and a formal teapot make for eccentric hood ornaments. The viewer may spend time observing not only the applications of rainbow hues, but the immobility of a mobile design. One wanders to the chain link fence and a mound of discarded shoes and considers the hundreds (perhaps thousands) of reclaimed soles. (see figs. 1.15, 1.16).



Fig. 1.15. Tyree Guyton, *Penny Saab*, 2006. Photo author's collection.



Fig. 1.16 (right). Tyree Guyton. Discarded shoes painted by artist. Photo author's collection.

The artist standing in the street, sweeps with a worn-out broom while talking with the driver of a white pickup truck. Dressed in a black ribbed long-sleeved sweater, black knit hat, and blue denim contractor's pants, Guyton's thick-soled boots are chestnut brown and black. Atlas brand waterproof black and gray gloves cover both hands. Intrigued, one notices splashes of paint in a variety of colors on his clothing. Visitors explore the landscape of assembled objects while the artist tells them to have a nice day and a blessed upcoming holiday. He thanks them many times for coming. On this day before noon November 19, 2021 (during the author's visit) the guest register lists visitors from Denmark, Alaska, Canada, and the Netherlands.

Inside/Outside. Guyton may be perceived as an 'insider' when showcasing his artwork in accepted institutions and deemed as an 'outsider' in the context of city blocks being filled with discarded consumer products. The term outsider art is a type of art recognized as outside the mainstream of that which is traditionally accepted as art, or artwork by those not specifically trained in the arts. Guyton, however, is a trained artist with an honorary doctorate degree who makes artwork that does not fit within the traditional role of art. His art addresses societal issues,

the environment, and Civil Rights, as well as political issues, community, and his own African American heritage through the re-purposed consumer items.

Often whimsical, his artforms convey significant meaning through concept, process and final assemblage. The art exhibited within the institution, gallery, or educational spaces is the same art created and standing in the outdoor installation. It is important to note that while historically some artists outside the mainstream have been exploited by collectors due to the lack of awareness of the financial ramifications in the broader art world, Guyton's life partner Jenenne Whitfield is the President and CEO of the Heidelberg Project with financial oversight (Whitfield Personal Interview, 8 Aug 2020).

Documenting and studying the ways of art-making by those untrained or uneducated in art, French artist Jean Dubuffet, according to John Maizels, author of *Raw Creation: Outsider Art and Beyond*, Dubuffet coined the term "art brut" (later referred to as "outsider art") in order to capture the meaning of raw art made by gifted individuals working free of normal cultural influences or with pure intuitive and original expression are often deemed "visionaries" as they make art within local spaces or places (Maizels 33).

Dubuffet writes in the Preface titled "Crude Art Preferred to Cultural Art" exhibition catalog for the 1949 Paris exhibition, *L'Art Brut*, that this kind of work is created without the influence of art culture and that the artist in taking "everything from their own inner being" creates art that is guided "solely by the creator's own impulses" (607). President of Heidelberg Project, Jenenne Whitfield refers to Guyton's art as "intuitive art" and suggests that it is not 'outsider' art (Whitfield Personal Interview, 18 Aug 2020). Guyton's work reveals an intuitive way of making, that provides witness to wisdom, societal awareness, historical, spiritual, and physical connections to the world in which we all live.

French cultural critic, Julia Kristeva discusses in her essay, “Inside/Outside” the notion of the Pharisee as one who judges (114). Within her text *Powers of Horror* (1982), Kristeva examines the complexities of gestural contact as well as appearances in her consideration of the Christian themes of defilement, clean, and unclean. Through this lens, the notion of the acceptance of one’s artwork as it is deemed inside or outside, may be viewed in context of who is doing the judging. The art, when installed in the institution (museum or gallery), is viewed from inside the art norms or traditions of a conventional space.

In this context, the viewer (standing on the inside of the art gallery viewing Guyton’s artwork) may applaud or praise the artwork even while not understanding it. Because of the location, the viewer may perceive Guyton’s upright sweepers or reclaimed automotive hoods to be art. Simultaneously, historical evidence suggests that his artwork in the urban outdoor space (especially when adorning abandoned houses) are judged to be ‘outside’ the established norm or tradition. This appears to correlate with the Pharisee’s legalistic view as unclean, or in the case of art, absent the proper appearance.

The artist’s outside (artwork) is often judged by those judging according to their own laws, rules, or personally imposed standards. The artist’s interior is pure with integrity and authenticity in speaking to lived experiences and what has been witnessed. The Pharisee’s preconceived notion does not allow for one to be obscure. The Pharisee admonishes the other that does not abide by the laws they believed to be true. Ironically, it is the outside appearance that made the fellow Pharisees a part of their group as an insider. Guyton, although an insider relevant to being a Detroit native, is deemed an outsider by those who do not understand his appearance or his art from viewing it superficially.

When the art moves to the traditional or ‘inside’ space, where it may be called art, the location may be deemed to be a space or place to commune with that which is sacred or spiritual. This may be for the viewer, contemplation and reflection that invites one to reflect on self, creativity, heritage, myth, religion, or personal identity. The institution provides the exterior façade for the art that is now on the inside. The artwork now in the interior is perceived as being accepted by those that are in a position to determine what art is selected for the interior (gallery) space. It is no longer in the impoverished neighborhood. When the viewer is not standing outside on the urban street in Detroit viewing the artwork and is instead on the inside of the institution, the artwork becomes clothed in the appearance of ‘artwork.’

Guyton, as the caged bird is on the inside and outside of the atmosphere. He is in the space of the cage, but beyond containment. The breathability of Zip Code where Guyton creates enables him to return freely to this space day after day and he survives and thrives in the air space. Through the lens of German cultural critic, Peter Sloterdijk’s thought on “thematized air” in which the air modifies the “mood of air space users,” Guyton’s air space would be considered medicinal for those who continually return (94). Although Sloterdijk references interior spaces, Guyton in this context designs an outdoor breathing environment whereby the atmosphere is dispensed to his visitors through the invitation to think about art (95). Guyton’s artwork has changed the atmosphere in the location of his breathing.

Although Guyton was awarded an honorary doctorate of fine arts and served as an artist-in-residence in higher education, as well as being featured in national and international exhibitions, the work of the Heidelberg Project is still a “balancing” of processes. Jenenne Whitfield, the President and CEO of Heidelberg Project (and spouse of the artist) states:

The nature of the Heidelberg Project's work is that we are balancing without and within.

As the driving force of the organization, we are surviving – surviving two partial demolitions by our own city, surviving racism, surviving being ostracized from the mainstream ... from a cultural aspect, surviving 13 fires and not knowing who was setting our work on fire. ... And to be able to stand today, one would have to ask, 'What is it that you know?' That is what makes us rich: what we know, how we continue to stand, and will continue to stand ... and how we will pass this information on to others.

(Whitfield Personal Interview, 8 Aug 2020)

Whitfield conveys that prior to her involvement in 1993, Guyton had created a sign that read, "The Heidelberg Project Is Saying, Seeing, and Feeling All Things." Whitfield suggests that just as one's biological system works toward harmony the Heidelberg Project has worked toward harmony in community and through Guyton's authentic artworks (Whitfield Personal Interview, 8 Aug 2020). Tyree Guyton states on his website: "When you come to the Heidelberg Project, I want you to think—really think! My art is a medicine for the community. You can't heal the land until you heal the minds of the people" ("Tyree Guyton: Detroit based artist: About"). In this context when one views humans interconnectedness with land as community, the minds of individuals must be healed from the effects environmental injustice that is often witnessed through poverty and marginalization of communities. The public art invites the viewer to consider that the healing of self is the starting place.

CHAPTER TWO

Testimony – The Caretaker Says

Gentleness: an active passivity that may become an extraordinary force of symbolic resistance and, as such, become central to both ethics and politics. Anne Dufourmantelle (5).

By bringing art into the public realm, three Michigan artists reveal complex relations between environmental and sociopolitical structures as they give voice for communities effected by various facets of environmental injustice. Desiree Duell, Kelly Church (Ottawa/Pottawatomie), and Leslie Sobel create public art that includes an outdoor installation of lavender-lighted, plastic water bottles, woven basketry from the Black Ash tree, and collages of mixed-media and paper. The art not only addresses but resists the effects of a city that allowed lead to leach into drinking water for more than a year, the loss of Indigenous cultural identity, and the disproportionate impact of a global pandemic on populations within certain urban Zip Codes.

The theme of ‘testimony’ derives from German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s question of the essence of technology, wherein he conveys that art is not only about the artist as practitioner and theorist, but it is also about the unfolding of the artwork as a condition of human existence wherein the artist brings something forth to presence (BW 317). In this context the artist brings her voice to presence through the artform that attests to what she has witnessed. The artist endures the ongoing narratives as a way forward.

French philosopher and author Anne Dufourmantelle writes in *Power of Gentleness: Meditations on the Risk of Living* (2018) that gentleness is an active passivity that may become symbolic resistance and contends that without gentleness there is “no possibility for life to advance in its becoming” (5-6). Individually unique, each work of art in its silent public display

provides testimony that the artist's gentleness, embedded within the layers, becomes a symbolic force of resistance.

Flint artist Desiree Duell, while sick from drinking toxic water and facing vulnerability, continues in her resistance as she creates *A Body of Water*. The installation series addresses the intersection of a government agency's mismanagement of the natural resource of water and the human body as a body of water. Duell's art testifies to her resistance to wrongful actions toward her community as evidenced in her adaptation to the difficult and changing circumstances that became for her an experience of trauma.

Kelly Church (Ottawa/Pottawatomi), mother of daughter and collaborator Cherish Parrish (Ottawa/Pottawatomi), creates woven basketry that gives voice to a community that includes Indigenous heritage and traditions. Church's art reveals care for the natural environment through materials and processes that speak to the importance of the loss of the Black Ash tree and its use in cultural preservation. Her work addresses issues of safe drinking water, ecological systems free from breached underground oil pipelines, and environmental racism prevalent in communities of color.

A Detroit district map, environmental temperature statistics, and graphics depicting COVID-19 (global virus) 'hotspots' become a work of art titled, *Detroit Data* by environmental artist Leslie Sobel. In the form of a two-dimensional collage, fragmented layers obscure various statistical details, yet the art is transparent in its depiction of a contemporary crisis within Detroit's urban communities. Revealed through the map's designated neighborhood Zip Codes, locales of deforestation become relevant 'hotspots' that define areas of increased respiratory disease.

WATER: *A BODY OF WATER*

In an outdoor art installation, hundreds of lavender-lighted, plastic water bottles are positioned upright on the ground. Grouped together and contained within the shape of a human body, each bottle conceals a miniature LED (Light-Emitting Diode) that shines through the bottle's liquid. The shape on the ground is reminiscent of a simplified outline chalk-drawing that marks the tragedy at a crime scene. The outlined shape forms the boundary for the repurposed plastic bottles to become an undulating silhouette in the kinetic violet hue. *A Body of Water*, by artist Desiree Duell, allows the viewer to see refracted lavender move through the liquid as if a living form.¹ The installation is the first public art to protest Flint, Michigan's mandated water supply switch in April 2014 that requires the city's drinking water to be sourced from the local Flint River without ensuring safety measures were in place for the conversion.

After becoming sick from drinking tap water from her home at the onset of what later became known as the Flint Water Crisis, the artist and her son began drinking only bottled water. As the collection of the recyclable empty containers kept growing, her son asked about using the bottles to make an art project. The two began to experiment with the plastic bottles in their backyard, and soon the art project expanded beyond the backyard into the community. Their at-home art experiment became a series of community-based participatory workshops and public art installations (Duell Personal Interview, 11 Oct. 2019).

This intertextual examination will consider how German philosopher Martin Heidegger's notion of bringing forth an artwork by the artist, merges with American cultural critic Judith Butler's insight on resistance of wrongful actions. Duell's artwork embeds resistance in its creation in the midst of personal trauma wherein she is vulnerable but continues creating the artwork in order to resist injustice. German political theorist Hannah Arendt examines the notion

of one who does not think in a bureaucratic system and as a cog does not take personal responsibility for actions. Within the Flint Water Crisis, Duell kept making artwork and continued to think about her role in the potential for change. She refused to be a cog in the system of those who would not or did not think about their decisions. (see figs. 2.1, 2.2)



Fig. 2.1. Desiree Duell, *A Body of Water*, 2015-16. Recycled plastic bottles filled with water and LED lights. The first community arts installation responding to the Flint Water Crisis. © Photo courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 2.2. (right). Preparing for the exhibition at the artist's local church, Flint, MI. © Photo courtesy of the artist.

Exposure to Power. Duell's site-specific public art installations began in May 2015 in an effort to address through art the effects of environmental injustice from the mismanagement of the city's natural resources by public officials. When safety protocols were not adhered to, the voices of residents who reported the condition of their tap water were not heard by city officials as being credible. During this time the artist along with thousands of other residents experienced several water boiling advisories upon hearing announcements that bacteria had been found in the water. It was reported that the local General Motors (GM) automotive plant had reverted to its previous method of sourcing water from Lake Huron due to the water's corrosive effect on

engine parts, (“Flint Water Crisis Fast Facts”) and the *Detroit Free Press* reported that local residents were upset due to the water (Stafford, “Crowd Outbursts Cut Flint”). Information was also released about Legionnaire’s disease occurring from the contaminated water (“Increased Cases of Legionnaires Disease”).

Judith Butler argues against the notion that “vulnerability is the opposite of resistance” in her discussions on the relationship between vulnerability and the practice of political resistance (22). She posits “affirmatively that vulnerability, understood as a deliberate exposure to power, is part of the very meaning of political resistance as an embodied enactment” (Butler, VIR 22). In this manner Butler conveys that when one risks, life, health, or safety in an effort to resist wrongful actions such as marginalization or oppression, it is an act of the whole body’s capacity, physically and mentally (VIR 22).

When one stands up to the power of government agencies or organizations that may use force or control over the one standing, the exposure is unlimited in multifaceted ways. The exposure may include physical and mental detriment for self and others involved in the resistance. Even while Duell herself is feeling ill from the effects of drinking toxic water and is experiencing vulnerability from her trauma, she creates distinct artwork that not only addresses the injustice but resists the actions of the Flint city officials while exposing herself to their public scrutiny of dismissal or ridicule. The art installation gives testimony to her deliberate exposure to the city-government’s power as an embodied enactment that Butler speaks of.

Duell experiences the biological condition of physical trauma as she continues to work by making public art using bottled Flint River water that addresses the city’s wrongful actions. It is with an extraordinary force of resistance that she cares for justice in her community and exposes herself to the scrutiny of the city officials. In January 2015 Duell was one of many Flint residents

that took gallon jugs filled with discolored tap water from their homes to City Hall in protest of the water quality (Duell Personal Interview, 11 Oct. 2019). Two months later, in March, a water quality report was released by the city officials that ensured that residents should be confident that the water is safe to drink (“Water Quality Update”). It was not known, however, by the residents at that time that as a result of the water supply switch, thousands of children were being exposed to neurotoxins in the tap water and that lead had already begun leaching into the tap water.

According to Duell, a formally trained artist, as she and her son began accumulating the water bottles, they became interested in what could be made with them and began to experiment. Filling several plastic bottles with tap water and considering recycling possibilities, they placed a miniature lavender colored LED light within each. The bottles were then positioned together on the ground inside the outlined shape of her son. She notes that “My son and I created an artwork with the idea of creating a body of water, which has a reference to rivers – and other bodies of water – but also to our bodies that are made of water”(Duell Personal Interview, 11 Oct. 2019)

As the work of art expanded into the community with the help of neighbors, friends, local families, and businesses, their collection of empty bottles grew to more than 1,500. Duell, encouraged by her pastor, used the church for the first opening of her series of art-making workshops. Participants would gather and draw outlines on paper of children’s silhouettes in posed positions on the floor. Each outline became the representation for the body that contained the water-filled lavender-lighted plastic bottles for the site-specific installations. The public art installations derived from the series of workshops begin to raise awareness about the Water Crisis as well as allow for the possibility of becoming a catalyst for change. Duell notes that

although the concept began with her son and her, “the art itself is that of the community” (Duell Personal Interview, 11 Oct. 2019).

Liquid Lavender. As depicted in a digital photograph, the elevated three-quarter view of *A Body of Water*, (see fig. 2.1), features the installation of upright plastic drinking bottles positioned on the ground in a series of outlined shapes of the human body. Within the figural shape, dozens of plastic bottles filled with Flint River water create a reflective texture in lavender-lighted hues. Situated in Flint’s waterfront greenway, the figure appears both dynamic and static: dynamic in its liquid movement and static as a compositional relief against the contour of the earth. Her use of plastic water bottles filled with water from the Flint River, the body-shaped formation, and the lavender lights integrate the Water Crisis narrative in aesthetic form.

Appearing precisely carved with machined-formed ribs and indentations, the cylinder forms are consistent in height and circumference. White caps provide the illusion of miniature headlamps hovering over the lavender. In the backdrop, the Flint River, the body of water embedded in the work, reflects in the dusk. The plastic relief gives the illusion that liquid lavender flows within the body from one bottle to the next in a bio-circulatory rhythm. The violet light shines against the grass green and burnt sienna earth. When walking in the glow of the night’s refracted light, one would see the whitecaps reordering from the viewer’s perspective, contributing to the body’s movement. Without labels, the bottles appear anonymous in the absence of identifiable brand names.

The inception and production of *A Body of Water* in which the artist addresses the complexities of the contemporary injustice reveals the artist’s knowledge of aesthetics that includes elements of art, principles of design, composition, color theory, and proficiency in actively making, producing, and collaborating. From one who is a mindful creator, the

installation through materials and presence on the public greenway reveals both the artist's force of gentleness and her resistance to trauma. In the context of the complexities of the injustice, the body's semblance with lights and plastic performs symbolic resistance as the lavender-lighted installation breaks into the night and subsequently into the mind and physical presence of the viewer. While the irruption is the artist Duell, the bringing forth comes with personal exposure in resisting the effects of her experience.

The color lavender holds multi-faceted meanings. Color theory includes reference to imagination and creativity, association with springtime, optimistic beginnings, or vitality and youth.² However, one may consider "lavender" as recalled from US socio-political history. The "Lavender Scare" within the United States government in the 1950s saw government-affiliated discrimination in an attempt to remove federal employees from their jobs due to sexual orientation (Adkins, "These People Are Frightened").

Additionally, lavender has a negative connotation due to the 1978 cult atrocity that led to the mass drinking of cyanide-laced grape Flavor-Aid by a group of followers of a former American minister, in Guyana, South America. This event led to the popular cliché (albeit misnomer) "drinking the Kool-aid," as a term for accepting what one is told without questioning the directive (Rothenberg Gritz, "Drinking the Kool-Aid"). Whether color theory, American political history, or association with another liquid atrocity, the viewer may interpret individual meaning from the visual associations.

American marine biologist and author Rachel Carson writes in *Silent Spring* (1962), of the acceptance of toxic levels of pesticides. She conveys that those decisions are being made without understanding the hazardous effects on wildlife and humans. She notes that the "control men" are those who are making environmental decisions without regard to the devastating

ramifications (86) One senses that Duell's public art provokes the question of *Who are Flint's "control men"*? Duell notes that while city officials were denying that there was anything wrong with the Flint water, emails surfaced where they referred to activists protesting the water conditions as the "anti-everything" group (Duell Personal Interview, 11 Oct. 2019).

A Body Represented. Sensing the physical space of the city greenway of Flint, the viewer may recall walking in the area or driving across the Flint River. The recycled plastic bottles are visible reminders of the Flint's water narrative. While there is a sense of security in drinking water packaged in bottles, the 'body' of the installation evokes a sense of unease from knowing of the harm inflicted on the children and families of Flint. The viewer may feel from the artwork both sorrow and hope, sorrow for the residents of Flint that appear to be discarded without identity by those who are in power. Yet, hope as a way forward when considering the efforts of the caretakers in the community attempting to assist. One considers that local residents are fearful of drinking water from their own tap, are devastated by health issues, and are discouraged by the added costs of purchasing water. Also, residents are aware that bottled water supplied by the city and state governments, and the kindness of strangers are a temporary fix.

The bottles, organized in careful formation, allow the viewer to selectively analyze the spectrum of violet hues. Envisioning the outlined body formation as self, one may reflect on how the artist conceives, collects, and creates to share the narrative of the Water Crisis. Once the identifying label is removed from the plastic bottle, the viewer can no longer see its name, allowing the viewer to consider the residents still feeling ill or who remain nameless or unknown, from the Flint Water Crisis. The contained liquid constrains the water source and therefore the association that one's personal health is constrained by those in control making decisions.

When viewing her installation, one considers the impermanence and permanence of the Water Crisis. The packaged bottled water and LED lights (and the artwork) are temporary. The mental and physical havoc is permanent. According to Duell, the plastic, as a resolution intending to be discarded, becomes another problem for residents due to the cost of managing its disposal. Yet, the violet lighted liquid provides momentary beauty that evokes a fleeting joy much like lights during a holiday. The viewer may consider families and children that participated in the creating of the installation and whether the community finds meaning in the light.

Staying With the Trouble. The body made of the multiple water-filled bottles appears vulnerable as it lies on the ground. (Author's note: while the packaging of bottled water is reliant on natural springs and the issue of corporate contracts that may contribute to additional environmental injustice is controversial and concerns the Michigan artists interviewed, the topic is beyond the scope of this research.)

American author, Donna J. Haraway, author of *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016) discusses the relations of humans and nonhumans that co-exist on earth as she addresses the importance of the notion of *sympoiesis* or "making with" (58). Her discourse examines the entanglements of all creatures of the earth and their associated systems and more importantly how all live together. This concept merges with Heidegger's notion of *poiēsis* that combines one's skill and making abilities as well as one's thinking of the arts (BW 317-318). This coexistence of systems allows for all facets of art making and existing on earth as an interrelated and dependent coinciding in order to bring forth beauty through the aesthetic form.

In the context of entanglement, this author suggests that the body is a part of the world as an organism made of cells, molecules, and water. The trace of each becomes not only part of the

system of relations but is infused into all associated systems. For Duell, the artwork of plastic bottles carries the saliva, fingerprints, and memories of each person who drinks from, transports, refills, or positions the plastic bottle on the ground. The artwork as an irruption breaks into the viewer's mind and physical space and continues as the trace of memory that orients the viewer within a future system.

In the text *Heidegger Among the Sculptures* (2010) by Andrew Mitchell, Heidegger notes that the body as a being-in-the-world, does not have a “place *in* the world,” but “a place *as* the world” to be encountered “there literally ‘in’ the world there -- *that world is my body*” (45). In this way Haraway's view coincides with Heidegger's supposition that to be in the world is to penetrate and permeate it and that the world runs through us in the interplay of body and space. *A Body of Water* reveals the harmful realities that occur when, according to Haraway, “making with” is not considered (58).

Embedded within the public art are multifaceted complexities in systems that include vulnerabilities in social and personal process and procedures. The artist, her son, family, and friends that contribute to the making of the installation artwork are each a part of the narrative of these systems. While each has a story and is affected by the water crisis that is carried within the installation, the automated technology used for the temporary resolution is also subject to complex protocols and processes. According to Duell, the plastic packaging compounds as permanent waste or refuse as the city of Flint grapples with the ramifications of supplying semi-truck loads of bottled water (Duell Personal Interview, 11 Oct. 2019). The outcome extends beyond the limits of an economically viable or sustainable resolution.

The lavender lighting the night of the public greenway may be interpreted as flashes of light from Georges Didi-Huberman's writing on “fireflies.” The French art historian reflects on

humanity in his writing *Survival of the Fireflies* (2018) as he considers one who provides light on the story and one that resists against the “destruction of experience” (81). Through the light of her public art, Duell radiates resistance to the destruction of experience and makes visible the bodies of Flint.

The bottles together become reflections of the participants in Duell’s creative workshops. Finding solace in making, sharing, and becoming a body together through regaining power as testimony of their own light. As the ongoing events unfold, the public art gives voice as a metaphor for artist’s vulnerability, through the ease with which the bottles may be discarded. Yet, the reconstitution of power (visual attraction of the lavender lights) and the persistence in creating and installing the art form, testify to Duell’s resistance to her own trauma.

The lavender light-filled bottles softly glimmer, appearing in symbolic resistance with gentleness through their silent stance. The child that appears to be discarded by the “control men” is embraced within the formation of the plastic community. While physically attempting to shield her own child from harm, the artist brings to visual form that of another’s through “a body of water.” The caps on the bottles appear as anonymous contributors to the life of the work. Bottles closer to the viewer become individualized with distinguishable features or markings, while the distant bottles appear as strangers in unity.

Without brand labels, ridges and contours reveal the bottles’ manufactured heritage, while dents and scratches provide evidence of each bottle’s unique journey. Without identity, the form appears as an anonymous body lying on the ground near the Flint River. Retaining unique scars of individual suffering on a journey, residents organize the bottles to help each other overcome the crisis. The artwork reveals a community in its making.

When Duell was preparing to install the lavender lighted plastic forms and she had the correct permit for installation on the city's greenspace, a local official told the artist that the city office did not have the record of her permit on file and to "get off the lawn." The artist produced her permit copy and was allowed to install her work (Duell Personal Interview, 11 Oct. 2019). The viewer may consider the irony in the notion of the lavender scare, although recycled bottles as an artwork wouldn't be alarming, however, if the installation leads to increased awareness about the Water Crisis that leads to an uncovering of detrimental government action or inaction then the lavender would in this context become a scare for the control men.

The artist in the role of caretaker resists environmental injustice by bringing forth a work of art wherein "active passivity" through gentleness, according to Anne Dufourmantelle, becomes a force of symbolic resistance (PG 5). The artwork silently speaks to the events occurring in Flint. With a permit to appear in the city's public space, the art installation gives voice for the ethics and politics from which the injustice originates. Through aesthetic form, the artist utilizes contaminated water as material evidence of the injustice to bring forth awareness of the Water Crisis.

In her examination of political systems and personal responsibility, in *Responsibility and Judgement* (2005), political theorist Hanna Arendt conveys in her description of a political system that "it is inevitable that we speak of all persons used by the system in terms of cogs and wheels that keep the administration running; each cog, that is, each person, must be expendable without changing the system" (31). In her examination of responsibility and judgement relevant to the trial proceedings of Adolf Eichmann for WWII Nazi atrocities in which he claimed to be just a "cog" in the system, Arendt states: "In every bureaucratic system the shifting of responsibilities is a matter of daily routine" (RJ 31).

It is worth noting that in the bureaucracy within the revelations of shifting responsibilities that surface later through Flint court proceedings, it is disclosed that bottled water coolers were installed in the government offices at the time when officials were proclaiming that “the water is safe to drink (“Water Quality Update”). Additionally, a chemical company hired to analyze the water in Flint become aware of lead in the water, but since they had not been asked to report on lead specifically, they did not mention the lead levels in their official report (Holden, Fonger, Glenza, “Firm knew about lead in Flint’s”).

The artist as caretaker addresses Flint’s bureaucratic ‘cogs’ through her public art, as well as her role in the system that allows for her to feel responsibility for making change in that system. Lyrics written by singer/songwriter, Joni Mitchell for her 1969 song titled *Woodstock* reference the counter-culture music festival that takes place on a farm in New York.³ The song appears as a contemporary analysis of self as she feels “to be a cog in something turning” relevant to being part of something important. Yet the song references the juxtaposition of the realities of war and peace, and the answer is to get back to our original environment, the Garden of Eden or Paradise. In part her lyrics include:

“Then can I walk beside you / I have come here to lose the smog / And I feel to be a cog in something turning / Well maybe it is just the time of year / Or maybe it’s the time of man / I don’t know who I am / But you know life is for learning / We are stardust / We are golden / And we’ve got to get ourselves / Back to the garden” (Mitchell, “Woodstock”).

As the events unfold, Duell creates art as part of the movement of activism for the residents of Flint, wherein she walks beside others to “lose the smog” that is in the context of her experience the haze of mistruths she sees projected by city and state officials. In the context of Mitchell’s lyrics that “life is for learning,” Duell recognizes the challenges of the moment in the fragility of the human condition and complexities of the societal conditions that surround her and

attempts to promote change through her artforms as new information surfaces about the water crisis.

Duell's artwork adapts in form as it addresses changing information about the crisis. In the privacy of her studio, through concept and design she creates art that resists the wrongful actions by those in power while exposing her own vulnerability to those same decision makers as well as to the health issues that arise because of ingesting toxic water. While her process coincides with Hannah Arendt's notion that the artist transforms the art from the private to public realm, the artist herself experiences another kind of transformation – one that Catherine Malabou forwards as a metamorphosis of the psyche.

Within *Ontology of the Accident* (2012), Catherine Malabou explores the notion of transformation that takes place from trauma as she examines the relation between form and substance in the identity of self. Through aspects of neuroscience, philosophy, and psychology and myth, we understand transformation. She conveys that the morphing powers of the Greek Goddess Metis allows her to return to her original identity (form) while her nature (substance) remains unchanged. The forms of the wise Metis include a lion, bull, bird, flame thrower and flowing water (Malabou 7). As the artist Duell addresses the experience of her trauma, her own metamorphosis is akin to the changing disposition of the Greek goddess.

Duell's morphing powers are seen through courage (to confront city government), determination (to address injustice), endurance (resolve to witness from her unique vantage point), as well as voicing condemnation (for wrongful actions), and grief (disclosing tears or the Flint River). The artwork as a metanarrative for becoming life allows the artist to experience changing dispositions while still recognizing self. Like Metis who continues to make a helmet and robe for her daughter Athena while consumed by Zeus, the artist continues to keep watch on

the community while consumed by the events taking place. The transformation of dispositions occurs as the artist witnesses the events unfold. Duell wisely transforms during the art making process as she responds to environmental and societal conditions taking place in her city. In the role of caretaker, her wisdom for assessing circumstances and ability to adapt is the force that propels her to continue making art for the public realm.

In further discussions, Malabou claims that in another type of metamorphosis both identity and nature change. She notes that when one encounters the impossibility of flight from the trauma, one is transformed by the experience and states, “Flight identity forged by destructive plasticity flees itself first and foremost; it knows no salvation or redemption and is there for no one, especially not for the self” (Malabou 12). In this context Duell would not be able to flee from the destructive nature of her physical or psychological experience of ingesting lead-contaminated water. Although Duell may comprehend the circumstances of the Water Crisis, there is no flight or escape for from her trauma. From the experience of loss of personal health and that of the knowledge of loss of the health and life of family and friends, one’s identity is forever changed. She understands that self as identity (form) and nature (substance) are changed due to the water crisis.

In Malabou’s discourse on forms of post-traumatic subjectivity, she uses the term “new figures of the void” in reference to those that elude psychoanalytic therapies (14). When one avoids possible help, it allows for the direction of nonexistence in a world in which one does not know how to exist. Feelings may become numb to trauma, therefor one becomes numb to life, whereby living in the void, may be living in hopelessness. This would suggest that the figures of the void are, for the artist, the residents who become sick, those who have died, and those who were unborn. The artist may see herself as a figure of the void through the experience of the

darkness that ensues from her own illness from the contaminated water and from the fear of knowing there is no way to transform immediately back into her former identity of wellness.

The figures of the void appear through *A Body of Water*. The aesthetic illumination of trauma is revealed through the outlined shape of a child or friend. In the soft glow of the night, lavender lights disclose the trauma held within the plastic texture about the Flint River. It is only when children's blood is drawn into the light that the lead levels and other toxins are disclosed. *A Body of Water* speaks to and for the trauma of environmental injustice in an understandable way.

According to Arendt in *The Human Condition* (1998), "Compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life – the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses – lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivatized, and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance" (50). In this way, one's private thoughts may explore a whole range of conceptions and pre-conceptions that may ebb and flow through in elusiveness. When one determines that the thought will become a reality through one's gesture or public action, the thought may be revisited or reworked to anticipate its reception.

While it is within Arendt's notion of the unseen of the heart, mind, and senses that we see the juxtaposition of Duell's own passion in creating public art that makes visible the city's shadowy response to the plight of the residents, the artist must navigate her way through her own thoughts that flow between herself as an artist in the position of activist that can effect change as well as the thoughts of others who may be threatened by her activist role.

While the effects of injustice are often hidden or silenced, the artwork itself is a silent form that appears through the artist's power of gentleness. The viewer may comprehend that the artform gently carries the artist into the public in the role of caretaker. The mother's pain hidden

in her heart, mind, and senses transforms into thoughts of the outlined shape of her child, that becomes the artwork for public appearance.

In matters of the unseen of the heart, Anne Dufourmantelle reminds us that the way Ancient Greece conceives of gentleness is through the “relation that a human community maintains with the law, justice, war,” and with the “values of the ‘heart’ that emerges” (PG 27). The artwork that Duell places in the city’s public space reveals vulnerability of children exposed to toxic water by a city agency. This discloses that within the private space of home families become victims. The public art depicts not only the heart of the artist as caretaker, but the heart of the relation (environmental injustice) that the city and state agencies of Flint have during this time with their residents.

Bulgarian French philosopher Julia Kristeva, author of *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) writes of abjection from a multifaceted lens as she examines systems that cause disturbance in one’s identity or order. In this context, she references abjection as that which is beyond one’s ability to think about or to fathom or that in which meaning collapses (Kristeva 3, 4).

In her discussion on the notion of debt and iniquity, wherein she examines the sacred and secular, she conveys that which “does not respect borders, positions, rules” includes the fragility of law, wherein abjection in a system is “scheming and shady” (Kristeva 4). In this context, one that operates without deference to boundaries will certainly infringe on the boundaries of others. Those that infringe with intentionality will justify or rationalize that infringement without adherence to equity or reason. Referencing I John 3:4, Kristeva conveys that abjection, on the level of debt and iniquity, that “sin is set forth as the constitutive of man” that comes from “the depth of his heart”; and further states that as a “breach of duty or injustice, sin is an act and is

proven to be within man's jurisdiction, within the scope of his own responsibility" (Kristeva 121). In other words, man is also capable of not breaching his duties as the responsibility is within his power.

While Christian interpretation generally intends a variety of sins to be from within the heart of men, through the lens of the artist this becomes relevant to the breaches of duty or injustice enacted within the jurisdiction of responsibilities of Flint public officials. The borders, positions, and rules transgressed by city and state officials that resulted would be considered, according to Kristeva, abjection. Considering the physical and psychical damage to the families and children of Flint, the artist creates aesthetic beauty as resistance to the breach of duty that occurs against the bodies of the residents.

America's Heartbreakers. On May 16, 2016, ten women lay on the steps of the Flint water treatment plant in a peaceful protest, "die-in." In response to the Flint Water Crisis, Desiree Duell creates the art performance *America's Heartbreakers* to raise awareness about the impact of the water crisis on the reproductive health of women.⁴ Each wears a white jumpsuit with a large red painted heart with the letters FLINT stenciled on the chest. The red paint appears splattered and drips down the front of the jumpsuit. On some the paint covers the pubic area. When the jumpsuit is unzipped, the heart appears to crack and split into two.



Fig. 2.3. Desiree Duell. *America's Heartbreakers*, 2016. Performance on steps of Flint water treatment plant, Flint, MI. © Photo Desiree Duell, courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 2.4 (right). Detail, *America's Heartbreakers*, 2016. © Photo Desiree Duell, courtesy of the artist.

The women performing the *America's Heartbreakers* “die-in” have experienced reproductive health concerns and illness, as well as continuing unease from the disturbing news of lead in the water. Although recognizing the performance may cause controversy due to the graphic nature of the depictions of the painted red hearts, Duell wants this to be the key point as they “die-in” on behalf of those known and unknown affected by the water crisis. As she raises awareness, she is comfortable making others uncomfortable due to the atrocity that has taken place. For twenty minutes, the women lying on their backs on the steps of the water treatment plant in symbolic resistance, attempt to disturb the regular comings and goings of the plant’s daily events.

The white jumpsuits are a familiar coverall-style, often used for contact with dry particulates or contaminants. With elastic wrists and ankles, they are intended to protect one in a minimal way. The jumpsuits are pulled up over street clothes with a front vertical closure that is

zipped upward for the duration of the task. If the hood string is pulled tightly, the face recedes within the synthetic white, and the wearer's identity becomes anonymous. Once the task is done the suit is removed and discarded, and the identity resumes. The jumpsuits provide the performance artists a sterile white canvas for the application of red paint. The bright red provides a graphic reminder of the blood of lives lost during miscarriage. Red, strategically painted, draws attention to the female form and the location from which life and death are expelled.

As an alternative to the peaceful "sit-in," lying supine becomes a multifaceted testimony for what the women have witnessed. The women's bodies of water (60%) ("The Water in You") testify to the body of water (Flint River) that poisoned them, the suppression of their voices by the "water body" (government agencies and officials in charge of municipal infrastructure) that committed negligent acts, and the body represented in a position of vulnerability when violated by those in power.

Santiago Zabala notes in his writing *Why Only Art Can Save Us* (2017), that whether such art enters into or lingers at the borders of the art world should be secondary and contends that much more significant is whether the art tries to save us (29). Duell, as caretaker, artist, mother, daughter, friend, experiences sickness, witnesses suffering of those around her, and recognizes the lack of emergency with which city officials appear to attempt to resolve the Water Crisis. Duell addresses the injustice from complacency and lack of action of city and state government officials despite their knowledge of the lead being in the water.

In accordance with Zabala's notion that the emergency is the lack of emergency, for the things that are marginalized or may not be confronted, Duell's performance is significant. Her art rescues us into the emergency by allowing the viewer to become part of the experience through

the visual performance that provides testimony for what has been witnessed. The viewer may consider the narrative in such a way that personal trauma to be (re)experienced.

Zabala references a difference between Heidegger's notion on art that there are "those who rescue us from emergency" and the "rescuers into emergency" as he clarifies that the former, as a means of "cultural politics" conceals the "emergency of Being," while "the latter are events that thrust us into this emergency" that is the art that the viewer leans into (Zabala 26). The artist creates the performance as an interpretation of the societal condition of environmental injustice due to the city's toxic water and lack of response in addressing its correction. Duell's effort in the artistic performance discloses that she and others are aware that there is a lack of emergency. The viewer does not feel 'saved' from the emergency as in thinking that everything will be ok, but rather, becomes part of the narrative of the emergency that allows the viewer to step forward into it. This is the art that Zabala speaks of.

With the *America's Heartbreakers* "die-in," the performance is intended to raise awareness through art, for as Zabala references, the art of emergency is being about the experiences that we are compelled to ignore or are unwilling to face. When Duell and her colleagues donned white sterile-looking hazmat suits, it becomes a reenactment recognizing the absence of emergency that is currently taking place in context of the unthinkable occurring with Flint residents ingesting toxic and lead-tainted water. The supervisor's attempt to make the "die-in" an emergency that needed to be addressed via the threat of arrest and removal obscures the real emergency of the non-action by city officials for the residents already affected by toxic water.

The *America's Heartbreakers* performance provides disclosure and meaning, although the activists advocate for what others are unwilling to face or address. However, there are some

in the community that do not agree that the performance is art and suggested that the artist and activists were seeking attention for the sake of attention (Duell Personal Interview, 11 Oct 2019).

Judith Butler explains that what interests her are “those forms of nonviolent resistance that mobilize vulnerability for the purposes of asserting existence, claiming the right to public space, equality, and opposing violent police, security and military actions” (26). Although it is reported that the water plant supervisor requested multiple times that the activists leave and threatened them with trespassing charges, the activists complete the twenty-minute performance. Duell explains on her website that the art performance of *America’s Heartbreakers* has three goals: 1) to help those participating heal, 2) to give a name to the unspeakable trauma in their community, and 3) to help those outside their community understand how deeply devastating this crisis was on an emotional and physical level (Duell “America’s Heartbreakers”). Duell notes further that “when trauma on that scale occurs there are often no words to name the emotional response to such a violation” (Duell “America’s Heartbreakers”).

Duell explains that it is difficult for the community to understand the extent of the trauma that occurs within women’s bodies and the bodies of the families of Flint from ingesting lead and other toxins. While deaths from Legionnaire’s disease is reported by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services in December of 2015 and an increase of reported cases in Genesee County began in the fall of 2014, it is unknown how many miscarriages have resulted or have gone unnoticed by health officials (Duell Personal Interview, 11 Oct. 2019).

One of Duell’s friends, Nakiya Wakes, also one of the *America’s Heartbreakers* artists and local activist, miscarried twins in her second trimester due to drinking poisoned water. Wakes, arriving home after her miscarriage, found that she had received a letter from the city of Flint warning that pregnant women and people fifty-five years and older should not be drinking

Flint tap water (Duell Personal Interview, 11 Oct 2019).⁵ While Duell's *America's Heartbreakers* art performance makes local headlines, Duell reiterates that women being poisoned by the government is more offensive than red paint on jumpsuits (Duell Personal Interview, 11 Oct. 2019).

Congressional Testimonies. Within the year after *A Body of Water* was created, Water Crisis information continues in local and national news. In addition to the Virginia Tech Research Team lead-level analysis publication, Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha's peer-reviewed medical report indicating elevated levels of lead in the blood of children of Flint and a variety of filings of class action lawsuits, three schools test positive for dangerous levels of lead in the water. ("Flint Water Crisis Fast Facts").

On February 3, 2016, Duell and her son attended Congressional Hearing on the Flint Water Crisis to hear the testimony of her friend LeeAnne Walters whose home in Flint became 'ground zero,' as the lead level was deemed comparable to hazardous waste. Journalist Dominic Adams reports that Duell states, "It's so important to show our children the power of the people, but also how democracy works, and since democracy failed us it's good to show him that there's a process and there [are] ways to move that forward" (Adams, "Flint people front and center"). Duell wrote and signed along with others two open letters, to Michigan's Governor and to Congressman, seeking an in-person meeting and posing questions as to direct knowledge or involvement with the Flint Water Crisis.

On March 17, 2016, Duell, with other residents from Flint attended the hearing, again with her 10-year-old son attended when Michigan Governor Rick Snyder's testified before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. While waiting outside of the Congressional hearing room for the live testimony, Ron Fonger of Michigan Live news

(mlive.org), reported that Duell stated, “I want to hear ... the truth about the timeline and (to hear them) taking responsibility for their part in the Flint water crisis (Fonger, “Flint Water Crisis Families”). On January 14, 2021, former Governor Rick Snyder was charged with two misdemeanor counts of willful neglect of duty for his role that afflicted the predominantly African American city and became emblematic of racial inequality in the United States. Additionally, there are 42 criminal accounts charged on a variety of people involved in the water crisis (“Flint Water Crisis Fast Facts”).

Duell continues in a new journey inviting others to participate in resisting the effects of environmental injustice through community-based workshops that promote the creative arts, environment, and individual restoration.

LAND: *IN CASE OF CULTURAL EMERGENCY BREAK GLASS*

Baskets, containers, and woven artworks of various shapes and sizes are displayed on open pedestals, within glass enclosures, or hanging from the gallery wall. Black ash and sweetgrass appear as fundamental compositional materials within the artforms. Containers fashioned of rough bark casing have smooth interiors decorated with etched flowers and designs inspired from nature as well as hand-written teachings about the Black Ash tree. As the viewer moves through the exhibition *An Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church & Cherish Parrish* is on display in the Grand Rapids Art Museum.⁶ Located in the lower west geographical quadrant of the state of Michigan, the “GRAM” is less than an hour from Lake Michigan’s eastern shoreline.

In the lighted exhibition space, canned spots from overhead lights shine on an infant’s cradle, a large, lidded basket in the shape and color of a ripe strawberry, as well as a child’s decorated papoose board. Family photos suspended on the wall reveal the intimacy of generational narratives. Kelly Church (Ottawa/Pottawatomi) and her daughter Cherish Parrish (Ottawa/Pottawatomi) are members of the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band (Gun Lake Band) in Shelbyville, Michigan. The mother and daughter work individually and collaboratively to combine history, memory, and place through traditional Anishinabe Black Ash basketry and woven artforms. Through this basketry, the artwork becomes a voice advocating for the protection of basket-making as a cultural tradition, as well as an invitation for the viewer to understand the importance of the survival of the Black Ash tree in sustaining Native lifeways. In the following chapter, Church’s work will be examined.

Writings from T.J. Demos, author of *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (2016) about the artistic practice that challenges sociopolitical and economic

status quo will intersect with German American political theorist Hannah Ardent's discourse on art, within *Between Past and Future* (1968), as she compares art to performance. Additionally, Caribbean author and philosopher Édouard Glissant's insights on the relation between culture and identity found in his writing *Poetics of Relation* (2021) will merge with Santiago Zabala's thought in *Why Only Art Can Save Us* (2017) that the examination of art discloses the "traditions that we stand in" and reveals that the emergency is the absence of emergency, not for the question of beauty, but for "our existence" (Zabala 121).

Sustaining Traditions. Two works of art are positioned at each end of a rectangular enclosed glass display case. Approximately twelve inches tall and positioned vertically, each basket is stylized in a distinct pattern and texture that emphasizes its egg shape. One, titled *You Can't Drink Money* (2020), is woven in Black Ash strips of neutral tan and strips soaked in blue dye with strands of silver. The other, *Balance* (2018), is woven with bark of neutral and sage-green dye with strands of copper. These are inspired by the Coronation Egg of the late 1897 that was created for the Russian Imperial family by Peter Carl Fabergé, where the jeweled eggs were required to have a surprise inside ("The World Of Fabergé"). Each of Church's egg-shaped baskets also contains a surprise (see figs. 2.5, 2.6).



Fig. 2.5. Kelly Church Odawa & Pottawatomi (Gun Lake Band). *You Can't Drink Money*, 2020. Black Ash, sweet grass, fine silver, black sinew. Rit dye. Museum label artist quote: "The black string is a representation of the connection amongst waterways. What happens to my water, can affect your water. We all need to take every action possible to clean and protect our waterway for the very life of our future generations, because their lives do depend on it." *Balance*, 2018 appears in background of photo. Courtesy of the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish-Band of Pottawatomi Indians. Grand Rapids Art Museum, *An Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church and Cherish Parrish*, Aug 28, 2021 – Feb 26, 2022. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 2.6 (right). Detail, *Balance*, 2018. Black Ash, sweetgrass, Rit dye, copper. The image shows two vials, with the Emerald Ash Borer and the other with the larvae. Photo author's collection.

Church's Indigenous basketry tradition becomes a contemporary container for history. It combines the artistry of the Fabergé family of craftsmen with narratives of the Russian royalty as well as Indigenous traditions. Embedded within the woven strands, cultural narratives include the loss of the Black Ash tree caused by infestation of the emerald ash borer, the effects of environmental injustice, and the skillful practice of artistry that transcends generations. The intersection of contemporary and historical narratives of Kelly Church's lifeway is evident in the hidden surprise within each egg-shaped basket. When the upper half of the basket is lifted from

You Can't Drink Money, one finds two vials, one that holds water and the other that holds the US twenty-dollar currency. The surprise inside *Balance* reveals a vial holding a mature emerald ash borer and the other vial, a larva. The vials' closed caps give pause to the accessibility of the surprise.

The looped silver strands of *You Can't Drink Money* repeat in an "x" pattern to give the illusion of diamond-shaped embellishments reminiscent of Empress Alexandra Feodorovna's heavy cloth coronation robe. The weaving appears simultaneously as static and dynamic in its semblance of tapestry. Repeating shapes of the Black Ash bark and fine silver create a rhythm of color and texture. The silver strands rise and fall around the warp and weft of the bark to create an undulating vertical and horizontal rhythm that circumvents the basket's surface. The rhythm moves the eye from the central diameter ascending, descending, and ascending again. The allure is that of the mesmerizing effect of viewing the bejeweled garments of royalty.

Made of Black Ash, sweetgrass, and copper, *Balance* reflects the ceiling spotlights in its changing reflections. Like the larva of the emerald ash borer that remains unseen until the outer bark is removed, the copper strands move in darkness in the interior space of the basket. The diamond shapes evolve in a linear fashion through the transverse connections as historical narratives that intersect present with past (see background left fig. 2.6)

The artist harvests materials from the environment. Nature as the artist's audience becomes witness to the ceremonial harvest, while the harvested materials provide testimony about their removal. The egg-shaped basket contains the narrative of destruction of the Black Ash trees and the future containment of the iridescent emerald ash borer. While on one hand, the loss of the future is relevant to the trees where the time span for their health and recovery is measured in possibly hundreds of years, on the other hand, there is hope for sustaining the

basketry tradition. Church provides testimony for the physical evidence of insect's damage. She gives voice through aesthetic form as witness to heritage, tradition, and future possibilities for change through cultural understanding.

Author T.J. Demos examines "political ecology" in *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (2016), as it relates to environmental concerns embedded in social, political, and economic forces as he examines art and its relation to politics and addresses the points of convergence and the "political effects, cultural translations, and artistic mobilizations" (7, 8). As Church makes art in the tradition of her heritage, one may surmise that Demos would indicate that Indigenous cosmologies are present and evident in her work and that her artwork is political. However, her role as a caretaker is evident through the artform that speaks to the importance of the Black Ash trees and their use in her cultural tradition.

When informed by her knowledge of Indigenous, socio-political, and institutional history, one can hear within her artwork the dialogue of her heritage and advocacy for the survival of the Black Ash trees and for sustainability of traditions. Her artwork embeds political agency, but it is her role as a caretaker of the environment and her Native tradition that compels her artwork forward. Teaching cultural lifeways allows her to move from the past through the present and toward the future. As an artisan, educator, and teacher, she conducts art-making workshops for others, extending her way of creating through basket artistry that others may appreciate traditional Indigenous lifeways.

Church's ability to showcase her artwork in the institution of museums is a method not only for appreciation but for survival. Although many museums are not-for-profit, the art museum as a facet of the larger art market becomes a viable method for artistic advocacy for Indigenous traditional artworks such as Kelly Church's basketry when combined with an

educational (and environmental) format that the museum can offer. Demos discusses decolonizing methodologies from historical perspectives that examine social constructs where “the voices of historically oppressed peoples” have struggled for cultural and environmental survival against corporate globalization (22, 23). As he looks at methodologies that shed light on the historically oppressed people groups and examines ecological concerns, other artists are able to work within and alongside institutions that are willing to raise awareness for the historically underserved through the cultural arts.

Within Hannah Arendt’s text *Between Past and Future* (2006), she discusses the metaphor of politics as a performance art in the context that it is not a tangible product and posits that creative arts brings forth “something tangible” and reifies human thought in such a way that “the produced thing possesses an existence of its own, politics is the exact opposite of art” (BPF 152). In advancing the notion that institutions depend on acting men for their continued existence, she conveys that “[i]ndependent existence marks the work of art as a product of making” while the state, as a product of action, is dependent upon further acts to keep it in existence (Arendt, BPF 152). In this context the basketry made by Church has an independent existence as a product. The aesthetic form designed and created by the artist exists on its own separate from the artisan. The art embeds layers of meaning relevant to the perpetual action of men that historically contributed to environmental injustice of Indigenous peoples.

Arendt, in comparing creative arts as a produced thing, notes that political institutions are more aligned with performing arts in that they rely on an audience just as a dancer, an actor, or musician needs an audience (BPF 152). This author suggests, however, that the static work of art, such as Church’s basketry, woven artforms, or masks that hang in the GRAM gallery, still need an audience. The art also performs in its ability to engage with the audience.

As the artist acquires knowledge of the environment, the trees, shrubs, and flowers become identifiable way-markers for the artist's journey on the aesthetic stage. That stage becomes the setting wherein the artist's testimony finds its means of expression. Positioned under the gallery lights, silently in place, the art performs. The artwork, although silent allows for the viewer to begin dialogue through voice or a gestural response that may include stepping closer or leaning in toward the art for further examination.

Considering Arendt's notion that performing art has a strong affinity with politics, the performance of the visual art as a product is a silent performance wherein the museum or gallery space becomes dependent on the action of the viewers. The art does not have to actively gesture, but it is present in the space with its audience. The artwork needs an audience in order to be observed. The viewer as audience actively engages with the art in order to complete the artwork's presentation. Its presence allows the viewer to actively examine past and future through the viewer's action in the present.

In discussing labor, work, and action, Arendt contends within *The Human Condition* (1998) that "*labor* is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body" – that it is life itself – while "*work* is the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence." Work is an "artificial" world of things, whereby the world is meant to outlast and transcend" things, and *action* is "the activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things" (THC 7). The biological processes of life itself as daughter and mother encompass Church's physicality and psychology, as well as emotions of joy and laughter or tears and sorrow. Her work of art continues as a transcendent product in the world of things.

Healing Wall. On the far wall of GRAM's main exhibition gallery *An Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church and Cherish Parrish* reveal seven hand-made decorated

masks that appear suspended in place. Made with natural elements that include Black Ash bark, birch bark, sweetgrass, paper, seed beads, sinew, and copper, they are spaced with three in the top row and four in the bottom, each has two ribbons dangling from each side. The masks referencing COVID-19 may allow for the consideration of the lack of feeling safe in one's own environment to breathe due to the respiratory transmission of the virus during a global pandemic, for those who are not able to breathe again due to their own passing or for those who feel their ability to breathe is diminished by the other. "Breathe" relates to current issues in the environment relevant to pollution and the importance of the Earth and its atmosphere in use by the First Peoples. (see figs. 2.7, 2.8).



Fig. 2.7. Kelly Church Odawa & Pottawatomi (Gun Lake Band). *Wall of Healing*, 2021. Grand Rapids Art Museum, *An Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church and Cherish Parrish*, Aug 28, 2021 – Feb 26, 2022. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 2.8 (right). Detail, *Let Us Heal*, 2020. Black Ash, copper, ribbon, sinew. Photo author's collection.

An image of Church's brother beautifully depicted on birch bark within an oval braided sweetgrass frame is titled *Irreplaceable* (2021). He is wearing a dark top hat with a red, blue,

green, and white beaded band, and his eyes look directly at the viewer. Red paint covers his face just below his eyes to his lower neck. A negative hand impression is positioned with the palm over his mouth. A beaded necklace is also visible in the portrait. The dates of his birth and death are written on the upper left and right. On the accompanying wall statement, Church states “Masks have become the new t-shirt- away for spreading messages. This is our message to a brother/uncle who passed recently. As these masks have also become a symbol of caring for the health of those around you as much as your own, it seems appropriate to ask, ‘Who would you miss when they’re gone?’ Think on what you would miss about them, then take a moment to tell them while you still can.” (“An Interwoven Legacy”). (see figs. 2.9, 2.10)



Fig. 2.9. Detail, *Irreplaceable*, 2021. Birch bark, paper, sweetgrass, Sharpie, ribbon. Photo author's collection.



Fig. 2.10 (right). Detail, *Breathe*, 2020. Black Ash, copper, ribbon, sinew. Photo author's collection.

Breathe (2020) reveals *that* one is also responsible for protecting the respiration of the other not only in the midst of COVID-19 global pandemic, but in the midst of life. The mask made of Black Ash has the word “BREATHE” depicted in upper case letters made of hammered

copper tacks. Braided sweetgrass forms the edge (fig. 2.10). Church notes in the accompanying wall statement that “This word *breathe*, is something not to be taken for granted.” As something one does each day, we don’t think much about it. “For some it is deemed a privilege and the right to breathe is used as a weapon against them” (“An Interwoven Legacy”). In this context, the mask gives voice for what it is to *breathe* in our contemporary society in light of protests against police brutality and the death of black men by white police officers, as well as the thought of the historical context of the treatment of African Americans in the U.S. that has led to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Church has witnessed with others across the globe, the recent news about the death of African American, George Floyd, killed by a white police officer that occurred in 2020. One officer held his knee to Mr. Floyd’s neck, as Mr. Floyd said several times “I can’t breathe.” (Deliso, “Timeline: The impact of George Floyd’s death”). The artist raises awareness for discriminatory events and inequities of those killed by the hands of one unwilling to allow another to breathe freely. Giving voice to the ability to live is layered in Church’s work and is evidenced in the complexities of the interrelationships of environment, society, government.

Let us Heal (2020) is made of Black Ash, copper, ribbons, and sinew. Church notes in the wall statement that “This mask is made of copper, which has been proven beneficial to healing, our cedar, which we use for tea and cedar baths, our sweetgrass for cleansing the air, and our Black Ash – which teaches us to work together and helps to heal our hearts.” While Michigan has a history of copper mining, the beauty and malleability of copper and its natural anti-bacterial and medicinal qualities juxtapose with the loss of land through mining as well as its toxic runoff that occurs in Michigan waterways (“Timeline of Michigan Copper”). (see fig. 2.8)

Church as an artist in the role of caretaker addresses healing and loss of the individual and the environment through her artforms. As she raises awareness about the Emerald Ash Borer, she contributes to the collection of Black Ash seeds for storage and protection until it is safe to replant.⁷ Church demonstrates sensitivity to the history of and for the future of the environment that includes human and nonhuman worlds through her cultural tradition of basketry art and weaving. Her sensitivity is such that through the lens of author T. J. Demos, Church would be recognized as one who lives in an environmentally sensitive way (23).

Through Church's work, the viewer comprehends the complexities of harvesting the Black Ash, the context of the loss of millions of trees, and the environmental injustice found within the sociopolitical history of Indigenous tribes. Embedded in Church's artwork is the labor, work, and action that makes one human in the context of the categories in which we live that Arendt explores in her text, *The Human Condition* (1998). Through Church's individual biological living, she is a being (daughter, sister, mother) that creates artwork that may be used as an agency for resistance to the erasure of cultural traditions. Her action through discourse with institutions and governmental agencies allow her an audience for the promotion of change within the existence of the institutions that would continue through others' perpetual performance of action for legislating sustainable ways forward.

The Caribbean author Édward Glissant writes in his essay "Distancing, Determining" within *Poetics of Relations* (1997), that the notion of relationships rooted in identity or relational in identity. In this context, the idea of the root that Glissant forwards is the notion that "when identity is determined by a root, the immigrant is condemned ... to being split and flattened" (143). He is "[u]sually an outcast in the place he has newly set anchor, he is forced into impossible attempts to reconcile his former and his present belonging" (Glissant 143). In this

manner, an immigrant that is rooted in identity such as family or land will have challenges in reconciling his belonging or sense of identity when one or the other is gone.

While Indigenous tribes contain knowledge as a landscape of intellectual territory for thought, traditions, or history, Colonialism attempted to remove the Indigenous intellectual landscape as well as their physical land, language, and traditions. This author suggests that this was done in order to minimize the European settlers' self-referential identification as 'outcast.' Rather than pursuing a relationship with Indigenous tribes, Europeans sought accommodation for their own rooted identity and sense of loss by attempting to deplete or reduce Indigenous cultures in order to reconcile their own present belonging in America.

Church is one who is rooted in identity through her focus on artmaking and the cultural understanding of the intellectual and physical environments is not entitlements, but the resistance to erasure since Colonialization. Her methodology for creating is similar to Glissant's focus on his heritage of Martinique, in that Church examines her identity that is both rooted and relational in its formation. She defends her cultural traditions that include intellectual heritage, language, and environmental resources, while developing relations with others outside of her tradition and culture. In alignment with Demos, Glissant notes that an ecological vision of relation indicates that it has implications for populations that are threatened as a people group (146).

Knowledge Spaces. Nancy Marie Mithlo, editor of *Making History: IAIA* (Institute of American Indian Arts) *Museum of Contemporary Natives Arts* (2020), conveys that an essay began a new way of educating about Indigenous culture. The paper titled "Teaching from Three Knowledge Spaces: The Native Eyes Project," in part incorporates cultural and intellectual contribution of Native Peoples into mainstream teaching in the humanities and social sciences, addresses critical

issues from a liberal arts perspective, and receives input from tribal elders and leaders and Indigenous writers and scholars (Mithlo 163).

“A Third Knowledge Space” called “Theatre of Diversity” it is a space where “knowledge systems, world views, languages and theoretical constructs” merge without the need for “common vocabularies, singular methodologies or the resolution of apparent differences” (Mithlo 165). According to Mithlo, the third space allows for the practical ecology of a cultural commons whereby one system is not privileged over another but allows for inclusion of imagery and the encouragement of cultural connections through interactive learning (167). In this context, Kelly Church operates in the Third Knowledge Space as she gives voice for her cultural heritage yet, provides a map for inclusion for not only ways of knowing and being regarding her cultural traditions of basketry, but also lifeways that contribute to a sustainable and just environment for all.

Cultural Emergency. On the right, next to the glass-faced wooden shadow box that holds an assembled set of small items, the wall statement for *In Case of Cultural Emergency Break Glass* (2020) notes that “This piece contains all the teachings and necessary elements to carry on the traditions for the Black Ash basketry should it be lost in the future due to the Emerald Ash Borer” (“An Interwoven Legacy”). The objects, numbered for identification, are listed as 1-12 in the “Directions for Use” on the left side of the display. The box contains Black Ash seeds, a flash drive with Black Ash teachings, Black Ash bark, flashcards that identify winter buds and summer leaves, semaa (tobacco), and examples of splitter, weaves, baskets and embellishments (see figs. 2.11, 2.12)



Fig. 2.11. Kelly Church Odawa & Pottawatomi (Gun Lake Band). *In Case of Cultural Emergency Break Glass*, 2020. Wood box with glass. Grand Rapids Art Museum, *An Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church and Cherish Parrish*, Aug 28, 2021 – Feb 26, 2022. Photo by Kim M. Reiff, 2021.

Fig. 2.12 (right). Detail, *In Case of Cultural Emergency Break Glass*, 2020. Contents of box. 1) Black Ash seeds, 2) Flash drive, 3) Black Ash bark, 4) Flash card to identify winter lead buds, 5) Flash card to identify summer leaves, 6) Semaa (tobacco) “to thank the tree” (before harvest), 7) Example of splitter, 8) Examples of different weaves “Twill, Plaited, and Chevron,” 9) Example of round bottom basket, 10) Example of round bottom basket woven with Curly-Q and point embellishments, 11) Example of Black Ash Bark with etching, 12) Example of a rectangular shaped bottom basket with loop embellishments.

The listener of the oral history becomes a learner and maker through the physical process. Historically, the teacher and the learner were simultaneous makers. Church is the maker as she records the teaching instructions. The new maker follows the instructions through the trace of Church. Oral history becomes cultural history without the physical presence of the teacher. The cultural heritage is sustained through the teacher’s digital presence rather than her physical presence.

In the absence of the presence of Church as teacher, there is absent-presence of the listener as learner. The responsibility for the passing and receiving of the tradition is a shared

responsibility. Church is responsible to her heritage and tradition in providing instructions, and the new basket-maker is responsible to receive the instructions as the new caretaker of the other. The teachings are perpetuated through action (as audience and performance) in order to sustain the Indigenous tradition of the basketry artforms through the Black Ash survival.

The basketry instructions are contained on the flash drive as part of the artwork. While the recorded digital memories are embedded in a computer chip within the plastic case, the fragility of the instructions as memory is at stake. While the flash drive (jump or thumb drive) attaches and interfaces with the host computer, its interior contains a network of storage controllers. The lifespan of a flash drive may last five to ten years or 10,000 to 100,000 write/erase cycles (“How Long Can USB”). This author suggests that metaphorically the ‘write/’ of the cycles of Indigenous peoples may be more limited by the ‘/erase.’ Church attempts to continually write and re-write the knowledge of Anishinaabe basketry art, through renewing her heritage without allowing her heritage to be erased by others. The cycles of writing become generational, just as the cycles of erasing have been generational.

As a Native artisan, Church creates a container that another may have access to in the event of emergency, with no stipulations as to culture or ethnicity, religious, or political affiliation, for the one that may accept responsibility for breaking the glass. The digital flash drive gives voice for the artist once the glass-breaker acts. The one responsible for breaking the glass becomes the one responsible for carrying the cultural tradition forward. The question may be raised, ‘who is the one responsible prior to the glass breaking?’ In this context through the lens of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas writes in *Otherwise Than Being* (1998), that one is responsible to the other prior to the knowing that the other is present (OTB 10). By creating of

the glass covered container in which the contents are placed, Church as the maker is responsible for the other who may be the glass-breaker.

Santiago Zabala writes in *Why Only Art Can Save Us* (2017) in the essay “Emergency Aesthetics” that while philosophical thought may attribute that in the existential call of art in the twenty-first century, essential emergencies are disclosed through works of art, he counters this view. He conveys rather that “[t]his emergency has evolved us at an ontological level where what is at stake is not beauty but rather our social, urban, environmental, and historical existence” (119). In this context, when Zabala is considering the emergency as the absence of emergency, it is within the absence that reveals the complexities of our combined existence.

In considering the traditions we stand in, Zabala forwards that the event of understanding through art “does not proceed from the disclosure of a new world or of a commonality that binds us to a tradition, but instead from the emergency of the absence of emergencies in our framed democracies” (123). The existence is relevant to the complexities of our living which effects not only the individual, but the global community. In this way, the issue of emergency becomes an issue for all. Art is just one way of allowing the viewer to step into the knowledge of the circumstance and by becoming part of the emergency, would then consider that which is creating the emergency and lack of recognition for the emergency.

This suggests that the artist through the artwork leads the viewer through or into a conversation or a dialogue with the artwork according to the viewer’s perception of what they already know or how they already perceive themselves. When the viewer begins to apprehend the artist’s inception of how the artist is standing in or through the work as a formal product, the viewer begins a dialogue with the artwork. The viewer formulates questions, and a conversation

to the masses commonplace information (Glissant 166, 175). In this context, he discusses the idea of relation and the pull or interception of relation that becomes a dividing line (Glissant 164). He conveys that the flash that dictates fashion and commonplace comes about from the weak point of two different structures. In this context, the notion of the flash as a common trend or fashion relates to the flash drive that Kelly Church uses in her work.

Her flash (drive) becomes itself a relay agent for strength in a system of basketry art traditions. The flash agent in this case may serve as the connection for the idea potentially of a commonplace understanding for Indigenous traditions. Although Glissant notes implicit violence as it relates to the speed of relation as we see currently through the interaction of what we perceive as fashion or the commonplace (166), this author suggests that implicit violence is needed in the gesture of breaking the glass to retrieve the flash drive to carry cultural traditions forward.

Didi-Huberman writes in the *Survival of the Fireflies* (2018) in his essay on “Images” about one’s inner experience. What is the most “*subjective*,” the most “*obscure*,” may appear as a flash for another from the moment that it finds the right form of its construction, its narration, its transmission (Didi-Huberman 72). He implies that it is more of an idealized notion but the true “*firefly peoples*” are not ones who want to be seen in the spotlight but are the ones who retreat into the night into the dark places to provide a flash for others (Didi-Huberman 71, 72). We see Church as one that is a storyteller rooted in the freedom of her experiences.

Simultaneously, while the artwork is in the museum, the curators and staff become as flash agents that forefront Church’s work. Glissant’s notion of the flash agent differs from German philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman’s notion of the firefly as a flash for others. The

begins with the silent form that leads to the dialogue of the absence of emergency for lost culture, land, and traditions.

Glissant speaks about the violence in identity and its history. Within Church's work, one sees historical violence enacted on Indigenous Peoples during Colonialization by those rooted in European identity. Recent media coverage discloses of the number of Indian schools in North America where Native children were removed from their homes and land and were later murdered or died of neglect or abuse ("Native American Boarding Schools" and Yellowhorse Kesler, "Indian Boarding Schools' Traumatic"). Church's ability to retain her intellectual and relational landscape of knowledge allows her to compartmentalize the violent effects witnessed during European-mandated identity programs that contain unexplainable violence toward Indigenous Peoples.

As indicated in her artwork, her care and concern are for the cultural emergency taking place. In this context, this author suggests that through the lens of Santiago Zabala one may surmise that the breaking of the glass needs to be done immediately. The emergency is the absence of emergency that is taking place in the present, as revealed through the sense of complacency that others may have about the Black Ash tree crisis. Church in experiencing the emergency creates art that allows the viewer to become part of the intervention. Breaking glass in case of cultural emergency is a needed violent act to become part of the absence of emergency.

Glissant discusses actuality or current events that have taken place "by an infinite number of agents" that he refers to as "commotion" or "flash agents" (165). Flash agents, he suggests, are those focused on the haste of the change in our present society, and he makes the connection to radio, TV film, and products that spread the "radius of their own dazzle" through broadcasting

flash of light that Georges Didi-Huberman speaks of is those that bring light to others in order to bring recognition to their visibility rather than to effect what is “commonplace” (Glissant 176).

The notion that Church is a firefly or a flash for another through her storytelling in the form of its construction, narration, and transmission, is evident through her art-making, teaching, and methodologies. Relay agents today become flash agents as the flash drive becomes the lighting speed of a technique of relation that segues into the commonplace. In this context, Church’s flash for ecology, the Black Ash tree, a just and sustainable environment, and traditions of her cultural heritage are evident through her artforms.

Didi-Huberman references Hannah Arendt’s discussion on the resistance of thought, of signs and images against the “destruction of experience,” as he examines the notion *freedom to make peoples appear* in spite of all (81). In this context, Church as flash agent and firefly shines the light on her family heritage, makes future generations appear, as well as the visitors appear in the art gallery who enter to see her artwork. Church’s artwork in the museum has the power to make her family heritage appear through her artwork, photographs, and storytelling. Through this she resists the erasure of her heritage and the “destruction of experience” that Arendt speaks of (81). It is Church’s construction, narration, and transmission that appears as a flash for another. As a Native artisan she is vulnerable to environmental destruction, the history of Colonialism, COVID-19, and the loss of her family members; however, she is a firefly for others through her artmaking tradition.

Native Resistance. Church as an artist in the role of caretaker is a container for her cultural future. Church’s *In Case of Emergency Break Glass* provides a process for sustaining the future if one can hold memories of a life experienced. While the digital format allows the trace of Church’s narrative, it also allows for the trace of the manufacturer of the plastic and metal

container and its chip and circuitry. The narrative of the mother becomes the interwoven narrative of the child, environment, and social institution.

The Emerald Ash Borer is not native to America, and the indigenous natural forests are without immunity to its infestation. Comparatively, Colonialization was not indigenous to Michigan nor the Midwest, and the First Nations as residents were without immunity to fend off its effects. Church's artwork discloses the historical and sociopolitical contexts of the loss of cultural traditions and language that First Nations Peoples experienced. Under the aesthetic cloak of governmental and religious virtue, children were taken from their families and forced into English-speaking schools and were not allowed to practice traditional language, crafts, or ceremonies. The presence of the Emerald Ash Borer allows for the metaphorical examination of that which contributes to environmental destruction and loss.

Within the *Lansing State Journal* article by Matthew Miller in 2015, the reporter notes that one hundred million trees have died, and "a few tenths of a percent have survived." He notes that Dan Herms, entomologist with The Ohio State University, calls the survivors "lingering ash" and they are not sure yet, "if the native resistance is real" (M. Miller, "Battle of the Ash Borer"). Comparatively, in tribal culture in an attempt to survive and sustain lifeways, Kelly Church is the "lingering ash" that survives. Her Native resistance is real.

American theorist, Judith Butler discusses in her text, *Vulnerability in Resistance* (2016) the notion of overcoming through resistance. In the essay, "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance" she notes that in the public space media can function as part of infrastructure support when it facilitates modes of solidarity and establishes new spatial temporal dimensions (Butler VIR 14). In the context of one who can appear inside the visual image of public space that Butler references, Kelly Church can function as part of the infrastructure support and the public sphere.

In relation to media, when her work is in the museum and the images and announcements of her exhibitions are distributed through digitized formats, it is resistance to vulnerability. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital format of flash drives, Zoom meetings, and internet technology have become methods for her light as a firefly in the midst of darkness.

The darkness takes on many forms. Present within museum spaces, the darkness surrounds artwork in the absence of the spotlights from closures or reduced public hours, yet the visitor can view artworks highlighted within a curated digital space. The computer monitor sleeps, until it awakens to the luminescence of Church's facilitated workshops. The process of her making is articulated with explanations of Indigenous language terms where written words appear as flash cards and her voice unsilenced in enthusiasm. Digital websites announce her work, news media broadcast, and magazines publish articles about her woven artistry. Her work has been featured in many museums and galleries as well as the Smithsonian Institution, and appears as digital imagery in public spaces. As artist, educator, Native American, and basket weaver, as well as a mother, daughter, a sister, Church resists both vulnerability and erasure.

In examining Church's work, Arendt's writing in *Between Past and Future* (2006) may be considered. While Arendt's notion that the works of human hands owe part of their existence to the material that nature provides and therefore carries the permanence from nature, she further notes that what goes on between mortals directly as spoken words and deeds never outlast their realization (BPF 44). In this context the permanence of Church's work derives from the fact that her materials are from nature, and that while she is a living being derived from nature, it is the use of Earth's elements of stone, minerals, or materials that outlast the humans that make them.

Arendt notes that action between people can't outlast the moment, but rather that moments last via the artworks that are represented through the remembrance of those actions

(BPF 44). Church's Native heritage is realized through actions and teachings from the spoken word in the present as it transmits from the past. Church weaves conversations traced from memory. The actions and words between her students, gallery visitors, museum staff, or family and friends are evident in her ability to remember and create artwork that carries the memories forward. While many of the materials are naturally degradable, such as tree bark, many of her artworks incorporate glass, copper, silver, or stone. Select experimental materials address the environmental conditions of the loss of the Black Ash and are made with synthetics or plastic, which ironically will also outlast the spoken word and deed to remain in existence for an extended duration of time.

Native Vinyl. According to the Museum wall statement, the vinyl window blind and Black Ash strip is circa 2011 exploration in response to the deadly effects of the Emerald Ash Borer. Use of "recycled vinyl window blinds to explore a future in which the traditional materials of Black Ash Basketry are no longer available." Juxtaposed to the vinyl, the bark strip holds the evidence of the emerald ash borer through its pattern of tunnels in the natural organic strip (see figs. 2.13, 2.14).

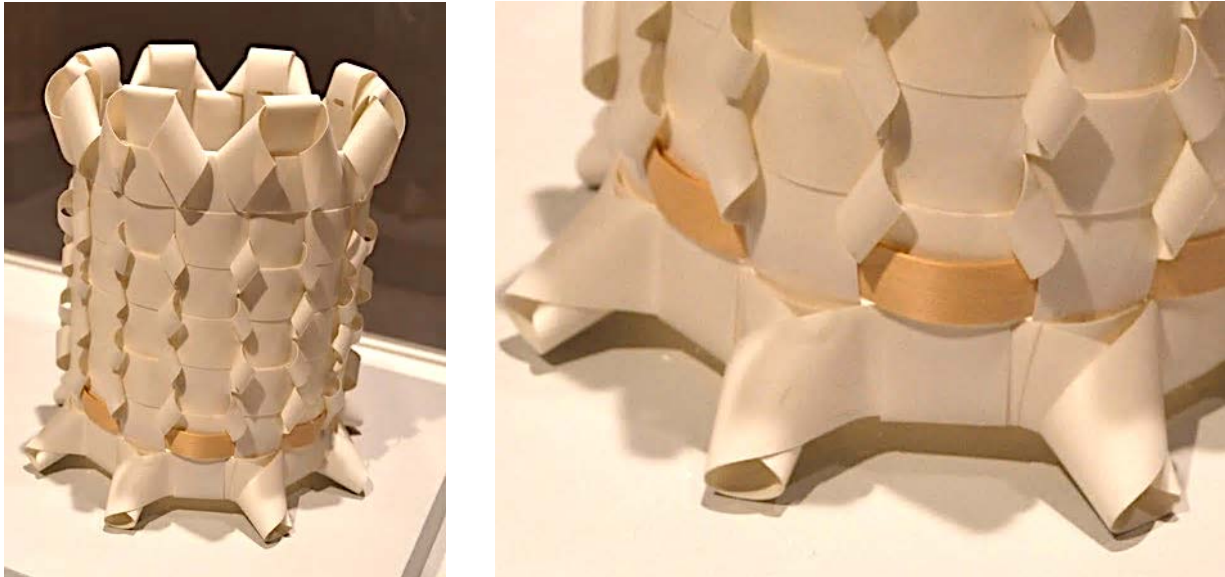


Fig. 2.13. Kelly Church Odawa & Pottawatomi (Gun Lake Band). *Basket*, c. 2011. Vinyl window blind and Black Ash strip. Grand Rapids Art Museum, Gift of an Anonymous Donor, 2019.33. Grand Rapids Art Museum, *An Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church and Cherish Parrish*, Aug 28, 2021 – Feb 26, 2022. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 2.14 (right). Detail, *Basket*, c. 2011. Photo author's collection.

The traditions that we stand in are relevant to the experiences of the artist's history, the Native and Indigenous Peoples, and the (non-Indigenous) viewer relevant to the context of heritage. What the art discloses is relevant to the viewer's encounter with a preconceived notion of already living in the world. The viewer may consider new information about materials or meaning or the viewer's relationship to the artwork as a work of art. The viewer would look at the artwork for what it may reveal contingent on what the viewer already knows based on the traditions that the viewer stands in.

The small basket made from a vinyl window blind allows for the viewer to correlate the representation that art the rescues us into the emergency through revealing the absence of emergency. The artwork made of vinyl due to the decimation of the Black Ash tree is a symbol of the emergency that is taking place in North America. Yet, the vinyl represents the nonnatural

(nonbiodegradable) manufactured product that its use further contributes to concerns of damage to the environment. While the tradition of making is still in effect, the materials become antithetical to the tradition that is embedded in the process of making from the Black Ash tree. The emergency is contained within.

The artwork provides the viewer the experience of looking into history, laws, traditions, that influenced the emergency of environmental loss that may be understood as earth and world loss. The viewer participates in the artwork as the artist as caretaker participates in the lived experience that leads to the process of thinking and creating the artwork in order to address the experience. The viewer is invited to consider the context of a basket made with large sections of vinyl and the small strip of Black Ash.

We are in between the past and future according to Arendt's' intuition dialogue; we can contribute this artwork as an intervention...as an absence of recognition that there is an emergency or there is a lack of a sense of emergency for missing indigenous children and women missing, loss of land and art making traditions, climate crisis, transportation using fossil fuels, or urban spaces. The loss of natural life ways, the loss of living *with* (according to author Donna J. Haraway) the land rather than living on the land becomes an intervention for the emergency of the absence of the emergency. As Church continues to make artforms in order to invite all communities to consider her Indigenous traditions.

AIR: 48235. *BREATHING IN DETROIT DATA*

The two-dimensional mixed-media collage appears as a torn-paper quilt assembled from scrap pieces. The central focal point recedes as a planetary eclipse within surrounding rings. Four strips of hand-written text read in a clockwise motion as concentric circles repeat the words “climate” and “urban” three times each. Within the thin strips of paper, words and letters are crossed out, marked over or cut away. The paper appears to reverse and re-start in circular formation. Lines create geometric guides and enclose Detroit district labels that indicate interior borders and boundaries. Three legends affixed below the horizon clarify Covid-19 hotspots, levels of heat exposure, and reforestation proposal as designated by daubs of paint in muted colors.

Through *Detroit Data*, Michigan artist Leslie Sobel examines the intersection of art, environment, and community. She addresses environmental health and its correlation to human health through maps that depict spaces of environmental challenge, place as neighborhood, and demographics relevant to the COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) global pandemic. As an environmental artist and cross-disciplinary collaborator, Sobel connects ecology, science, geology, and environmental data to people groups. Her art considers injustices derived from lack of care, understanding, or empowerment for the protection of natural resources.

The respiratory disease, as an invisible contagion COVID-19 has and continues to propel in morphed forms through the atmosphere on a global ride. Since late 2019, COVID-19 has spread through air travel. At the onset it was deemed that the virus was spread unknowingly through tourism and airline travel into communities across the globe. Throughout 2020, 2021 and the spring of 2022, COVID-19 overwhelmingly affected fragile populations. Her research

indicates that these include the elderly, minority, and poorer communities with compromised access to healthcare, and those that are living in locations exposed to industrial pollution.

This intertextual examination will consider American art critic, Lucy R. Lippard's notion that all who are involved in collaborations as it relates to the intersections of "art, nature, and society, (or 'political ecology') need to learn how to read these competitive bureaucracies" (178). Consideration for the writings of German cultural critic Peter Sloterdijk will include his examination of the air we breathe within cultural conditions. These authors converge with Sobel, not as a "protest" artist, but as a caretaker that interprets and gives voice through her art and research so that others may consider individual empowerment to make changes from specific fields of vision. The atmosphere in which one lives or the space within which one breathes and how residents are assisted in the community are relevant to decisions made by government agencies.

Sobel's artwork appears to transition between an aerial (earth satellite)⁸ view of the city map and the perpendicular (vertical) view as a wall hanging. The textural work evokes the complexities of an urban landscape, as well as astronomy, and the ethereal. Impressions invite one into an analysis of the known and the imaginary (see figs. 2.15, 2.16).

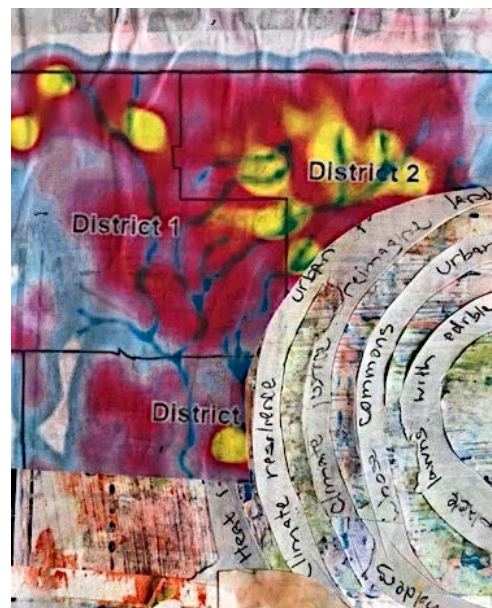
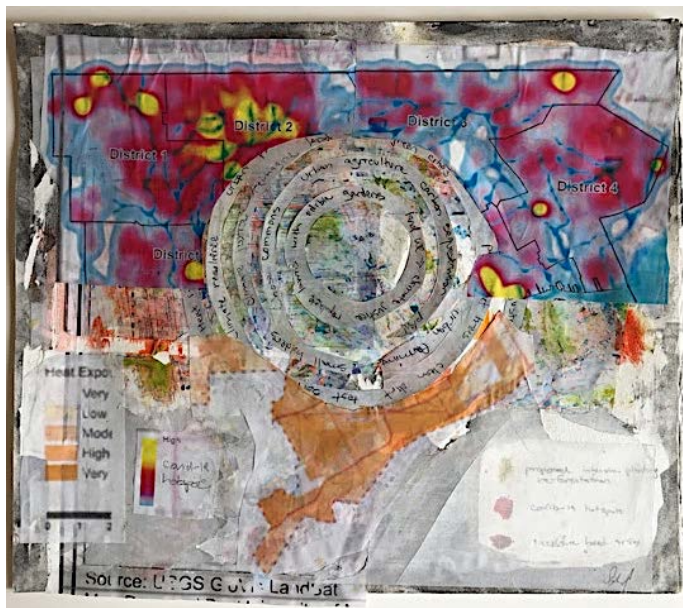


Fig. 2.15. Leslie Sobel. *Detroit Data*, 2021. Mixed media. 13 ½ in. x 15 ½ in. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 2.16 (right). Detail, *Detroit Data*, 2021.

Without boundaries, the virus has disrupted millions of lives world-wide in multi-faceted ways that include hospitalizations and death. A select vaccine developed in 2021, a face mask, and a piece of paper have become the new condition for breathing in defined locations. One could now cross man-made borders only if wearing a mask and carrying proper documentation depicting the status of one's individual air. Simultaneously, there have been protests and political divisions in states and communities across the world regarding the virus, its spread, and imposed restrictions for its containment. States within the United States have been color-coded in blue, yellow, orange, and red for levels 0, 1, 2, and 3 as a way to keep communities informed.

Detroit Data's COVID-19 hotspots not only depict higher rates of the disease, but through Sobel's work give voice to the correlation between environmental challenges of an urban area and increased incidents of a pandemic. Maps reveal District demographic data that embed Zip Codes.⁹ Breathing in the virus in specific Zip Codes reveals those that live near

highly polluted atmospheres of industry are more vulnerable. Access to or lack thereof access to healthcare is revealed through one's Zip Code. Sobel's work reveals areas lacking in forestation and are relevant in this narrative by where the lack of trees, parks, and greenways are in an urban location.

Terror from the Air. Sobel's *Detroit Data* allows for the viewer to contemplate the notion of spaces and places affected by environmental conditions of unseen air forces that occur in the atmosphere whereby citizens or local residents have no control. One may consider her artwork through the lens of Peter Sloterdijk, author of *Terror from the Air* (2009). Through his examination of terrorism, product design, and environmental thinking prevalent in warfare since the early 1900s, he uses the term *atmoterrorism* in context of various governmental war attacks from the air that use thermo heat or radiation (Sloterdijk 9). He argues that "for technical and tactical reasons, practically all the thermo-terrorists and radiation-terrorists attacks on the enemies' life worlds have required air force operations" and cites examples from World War II subsequent to the bombing of Guernica¹⁰ in northern Spain that include bombing attacks by British, as well as the Americans on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, by dropping nuclear bombs ("black rain") from American fighter planes (52, 58).¹¹

Sloterdijk notes that while sky fighting may pique the imagination for the romantic notion of battle scenes between two equal parties or jousts between "aerial knights," the reality of air strikes is by means of precision attacks from aerial fleets (52). 'Aerial knights' are not knights, as in the Medieval era when fighting was intended to be equal or honorable. The air forces of the Modern era which provide thermal or radiation attacks on life offer not honor but death through removing one's ability to breathe. Sloterdijk writes that, since the mid-1900s as a

result of warfare, “being in the world” as an ontological term is more exacting than “Being-in-the-breathable” (48).

Much like the “atmoterrorism” attacks that Sloterdijk references, COVID-19 was/is introduced in a clandestine way by traveling invisibly through the air into the lungs of unknowing recipients. The virus rides on invisible air currents, and the ramifications are unknown until after the attack occurs. As humans we are subject to the environment of the breathable through living in specific locations. Indoors or outdoors, proximity to clean or filtered air of interior spaces such as home or work environments is contingent on economics or employer compliance for occupational safety regulations.

One’s proximity to industrial pollutants, traffic exhaust, or agricultural chemical sprays, are defined by one’s home address or, that is, Zip Code. Being-in-the-breathable is determined by one’s ability or freedom to manage that which defines one’s ability to breathe or ‘breathe-ability.’ One may install smoke or carbon monoxide detectors or hire the removal of mold or asbestos in order to not inhale visible or invisible toxins. Yet, one’s atmosphere in the out-of-doors is not always within one’s control.

Being-in-the breathable allows for one to consider a respiratory virus that travels unseen and also the respiratory failure that one may succumb to or the use of artificial respiration that one’s life may be saved by. Being-in-the breathable also references our contemporary environment that includes atrocities where one’s right to breathe is taken away. Although the broader discussion of Black Lives Matter movement and activism for one’s right to breathe in the context of police brutality, discrimination, and war are beyond the scope of this paper, it is necessary to note that Being-in-the breathable must be examined in context of who the powers are that promote or reject one’s right to breathe.

The “air force” within a certain Zip Code specifies an atmosphere for breathing. The location bears residual effects of government’s decision-making regarding politics or economy. Toxic environments are evident within Zip Codes of predominantly minority communities located adjacent to industrial sites. The air becomes filled with government regulated “black rain” in which residents breathe in the atmosphere that becomes a new age atmo-sfear” (spelling is the author’s own, rather than ‘-sphere’ as an enclosed, expanded physical space or a space that is defineable, ‘-sfear’ allows for the infinite meanings of fear relevant to an individual’s mental anguish).¹² This spelling references the insecurity of those living in breathing spaces due to pollutants or toxins or transmission of COVID-19 within the proximity of their living. Residents living near superfund sites or within locales of industrial pollutants or agricultural pesticides usage are unaware of their breathing exposure to particles being transmitted through the air. This exposure is addressed in Rachel Carson’s 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, wherein she examines the detrimental health effects on humans and the non-human environment.

Lucy R. Lippard’s *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West* (2014) begins with a discussion on gravel, gravel pits, and mining and the undermining of landscapes that she notes changes the trajectory of the animals and people associated with the landscape. According to Lippard, “[t]he elements play their part: earth (mining, land art, adobe, archeology), air (breath, pollution, death), fire (global warming) and water (from above, stored below)” (2). Sobel studies landscapes, air, climate, and waterways for the environmental elements and conditions that she cares about.

For Sobel, the environment is not only about considering the trees and waterways for aesthetic beauty, but for researching and understanding the atmosphere in which we live. This includes government systems with which we live: residential locations of place, and space.

Lippard discusses place-specific artists becoming knowledgeable about landscape design, city planning, demographics, water rights, and land and stream reclamation (183). Sobel created *Detroit Data* so the viewer may have a sense of place when looking at the artwork.

Lippard notes in reference that “eco-art” of today is different than earth works of 1960s and 1970s (where artists focused on our relationship to the land through creating artworks within or of environmental landscapes), where today the term ‘eco-art’ is used as it raises awareness for ecological issues and climate change. Eco-art focuses on local specificity and cross-disciplinary collaborations that include artists working in collaborative settings with scientists, as well as urban architects, community activists, and city planners (Lippard 181). According to Lippard, those involved in ‘political ecology’ must understand the inherent competitive bureaucracies (178). Understanding the nuances of bureaucratic systems, Sobel’s focus is not to be a lobbyist for legislative change, but as a caretaker, to interpret and give voice through her art and research so that others may consider new lifeways for themselves and the planet (Sobel Personal Interview, 11 Nov. 2020).

As Lippard documents the fragments of moments in time, Sobel does so as well. The narrative continues beyond the actual work completed. The collage of torn paper painted segments, pieced-together newspaper articles, text, statistics, and numbers become fragments of the narrative. Through Sobel’s work, the viewer contemplates the artwork, the narrative of the pandemic, and the fragmentation of individuals, families, and society. As COVID-19 travels, political commentary fills the atmosphere. Sobel is aware of distributed media messaging that may be helpful or toxic as it rides on the air waves.

Lucy Lippard and Donna J. Haraway, author of *Staying With the Trouble* (2016), converge on topics of environment and the relationship that one has with the elements of life.

While Lippard examines ‘elements,’ Haraway forwards the notion of thinking *with*. In this context Haraway discusses “collaborative entanglements” that derive from intra- and interactions embedded in the complexities of living together on the earth (63). As an environmental artist, Sobel’s work embraces the vast relationships that landscapes, animals, humans, and non-humans have. Although vulnerable from the possibility of breathing in the virus as she cares for her family member during the pandemic, Sobel continues to make art.

As the pandemic attempts to undermine her efforts, Sobel attempts to undermine the pandemic as she selectively develops visual and physical aesthetic form. Her artmaking is an endeavor in resistance to the “atmo-sfear” incurred by not only the environmental injustice of a virus transmitted on a global scale or of an invisible virus, but of sorrow and grief. Sobel’s art allows us to see her care for community through the lens that gives voice for loss.

Fragile ecological systems, neighborhoods, and lifeways that intersect place, environment, atmosphere, and Sobel’s own urban home appear to be in danger. Through the carefully cut pieces of paper, precision edges, thinness of layers, dried paint, ink and textual writings, loss is visually depicted. Sobel’s art allows the viewer to consider one’s own sense of loss through the aesthetic form. Environmental injustice in a variety of forms includes the lack of understanding of the origin of the virus and its transmission through environmental spaces, as well as injustice toward people groups that are prevented from crossing borders or neighborhood boundaries due to ethnicity or political rhetoric. Sobel’s work gives voice for the artist as one who is learning to grieve “with.” According to Donna Haraway, “[g]rief is a path to understanding entangled shared living and dying; human beings must grieve *with* because we are in and of this fabric of undoing” (39).

Sobel as an artist and caretaker reveals her humanity through public art. The ability to think, convey emotions and compassion, reflect, and mourn her art provides testimony for her witness to that which she observes. Voiced through her labor of making, according to Haraway, Sobel would embody entanglement in the ability to cultivate response-ability for a sustainable and informed response (39). Sobel can be referenced as one for whom the world becomes a matter of care. Her art reveals her testimony as witness through her interpretation in the role of caretaker and also her response-ability.

Sobel is learning to grieve *with* as people around her are affected by COVID-19, with those that she knows and those she doesn't, but is aware of through scientific data. Haraway references the writing of an ecological philosopher, Thom Van Dooren, author of *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction* (2016), wherein he examines the natural sciences and the loss of biodiversity. She notes that he considers a specific bird species living on the edge of extinction and their relationship to mourning. Haraway notes that Van Dooren proposes that "mourning is intrinsic in cultivating response-ability" (Van Dooren qtd. in Haraway 38). The grief that Leslie Sobel feels for her experiences of loss of family, friends, and those she only knows through numerical identification allows her to create art through the practice of thinking *with* the entanglement in the narrative of Detroit. Her cultivated response or response-ability, includes mourning.

Haraway forwards Van Dooren's notion that "genuine mourning should open us into an awareness of our dependence on and relationships with those countless others being driven over the edge of extinction ... there *is* no avoiding the necessity of the difficult cultural work of reflection and mourning. This work is not opposed to practical action, rather it is the foundation of any sustainable an informed response" (Van Dooren qtd. in Haraway 38, 39). Through Van

Dooren's biobehavioral studies, Haraway suggests that as Van Dooren recognizes that mourning is not only limited to humans but thinking people, in dwelling with a loss, must learn to "grieve-with" (38). From her lens, the 'with' is in context of not only humans, but non-humans as well as part of the culture of living and existing on the planet.

Sobel invites the viewer to understand that humans are driven over the edge of distinction by no longer having the voice for testimony for environmental health, traditions, or culture. Of the millions of people throughout the globe who have died from COVID-19, many were already living on the edge of distinction through, environmental racism, economic, or political boundaries. As an artist in the role of caretaker, Sobel continues to analyze, engage, and dwell with the entanglements of life in order to move forward from human and environmental loss toward a healing ecology. Her contributions toward healing include creativity, credibility of research, and making interpretive forms that become public art whereby the viewer may acquire new knowledge or inspiration that allows pursuit of new personal contributions toward a just environment.

Anne Dufourmantelle, French philosopher, psychoanalyst, and author of *Power of Gentleness: Meditations on the Risk of Living* (2018) conveys in her discussions on gentleness in resistance, that "[g]entleness is an active passivity that may become an extraordinary force of symbolic resistance, and as such, become central to both ethics and politics" (5). In this context, the passivity is considered as a presence in resistance. When one is gentle in an approach of just being, it allows others to recognize there is a force, but not the force of violence. Active passivity may be, for example, considered in a number of ways. One the artist appears passive in contemplated while thoughts and muscle memory are active in the process of imagining the process of making, or when a family member or friend silently sits at the bedside of one who is

ill. While the medical staff may encourage the family member to leave, one's persistence in passivity of present silence is an active force. And it is not uncommon for an artist in the role caretaker to engage in both of these events simultaneously.

Sobel, in the process of creating the aesthetic narrative, carefully places the components of her materials. While actively making is motion of gentleness, the gesture and precise careful treatment in the process allows the paper to bend, roll, turn, or lie silently in position. The simple gesture of watching the glue flow out of the bottle or waiting for it to dry is an active passivity. One waits for materials to take shape in development or wisely contemplates that which may appear. An active passivity as an action for Sobel is an extraordinary force of planning, calculating, and thinking. Considering the complexities of the aesthetic form or bringing the unfolding form forward as a product is the force of her resistance to resistance. Just as Lippard considers the environment, animals, and people, Sobel transports self visually through the two-dimensional aesthetic landscapes of the artwork regardless of obstacles of aesthetic resolution. She breathes in the "atmo-sfear" of the unbreathable, unbelievable, and sometimes the unbearable knowledge of loss. Through this, she continues to make art.

In using the term "undermine" according to Lucy Lippard's writing, *Detroit Data* has been undermined by COVID-19. Sobel's artwork initially was viewed in a virtual environment rather than a physical landscape of the art gallery or within the walls of the institution. Undermining as in a real landscape that Lippard speaks of Sobel's artwork participates in a trajectory of an environmental change. Much like the mining that takes place in rural areas out of the control of the local residents, the undermining by COVID-19 is out of the control of the artist. COVID-19 undermines Sobel's plans for artwork to be viewed in-person a gallery space, her father's care, the expansion of her creative making through on-site research in the Arctic as a

collaborative endeavor with climate scientists. For these live events, the artist navigates with new understandings of the changing landscape. She grieves for what was familiar in her environment, actively pursues new art research, and through persistent gentleness continues in dialogue with others.

The undermining of the artist experiences, in effect, becomes rhizomatic in meaning as Sobel attempts to show her artwork in the physical space of an art gallery, provide care for family, pursue scientific research on the environment, and address the effects witnessed in environmental injustice. Her entanglements continue endlessly as outward and inward movements. The term “rhizome” derives from collaborative authors Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (D&G), writing in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), they discuss social and psychological analysis in the postmodern era. Deleuze, as a professor at the University of Paris, and Guattari, a psychoanalyst and political activist working at La Bord, France, the pair conveyed that “[a] rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles” (7). Their notion of rhizome is one that considers the network of relationships as a never-ending expansion. Differing than a tree root where there is clarity in the formation of the linear growths that could be untangled, the rhizome is a continual entanglement in which everything is connected.

In this context, Sobel’s artwork of paper and mixed-media combines maps of Detroit and designated COVID-19 hotspots within the city of Detroit, and reveals formal qualities using Elements of Art, Principles of Design, and Compositional Rules of Arrangement. Her work provides a ceaseless interrelatedness that represents connections, organizations, and circumstances of life. As an assembled piece with various elements of data, the artwork embeds “multiplicity” which as a term used by D&G refers to the concept that there is no one pivot point

such as a finite linear formation, but rather an endless spreading out (8, 9). We can see this in Sobel's assemblage of newspaper clippings, data reports, or paint pigment that embed messages, meaning, history, and societal constructs. While the physical pieces are affixed together, the information, concepts, and measures that are in representation are endless.

The formal language of aesthetic critique using adjectives or descriptors for the work that Sobel creates reveals multiplicity. When discussing the Principles of Design, the formal language may be defined as formal language, but there is no limit or dimension to the descriptions themselves. For example, balance relevant to quadrants as the absence of color provides a counterweight to the presence of color; red and blue emphasize the upper portion of the artwork that is interspersed with drops of yellow; red moves through the transparent blue of the District boundaries (patterns); the rivers creating a network of indigo navigate through the red; or the rhythmic writing appears to rest before the next letter speaks. The language may continue to spread as deemed by one viewer or endless viewers.

Sobel's art manifests within the context of the air she breathes. The environmental conditions take place in the world around her, on her, and in her. Sobel as a human organism is affected by her living in the air of her own environment. *Detroit Data* reveals a complex multifaceted environmental integration that includes, as Haraway suggests, the entanglement of biology, politics, government, history, society, economy, and space wherein Sobel lives – all conducive in the entanglement with art that she makes.

Sloterdijk considers atmospheric conditions that pertain to human life and its terror on it as a new level of explication like gas warfare; he references terrorism as an assault on environmental living conditions as a poison attack on the human organism's most immediate environmental resource: the air he breathes (Sloterdijk 29). Within Sobel's work one can see

Sloterdijk's references of "dimensions of respiration in cultural spaces of motivation and concern" (84). In context of Sloterdijk's discussion of Salvador Dali's air supply system, (where Dali attempted an art performance in a deep-sea diving suit incorrectly connected to the air supply), the atmosphere forces a sustained mindfulness of the air's breathability (73). Sobel has a continued mindfulness of the "air's breathability" as she creates this work with her own sense of place and is mindful of the dimensions of respiration in her cultural spaces.

Within French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's writing *Otherwise than Being: Or Beyond Essence* wherein he discusses responsibility and the relationship to the other in context of proximity and language, he notes that in art the works that we see can only be described or defined through our senses. He argues that we use language to say from our perception the color red is red, or as he references "in painting, red reddens and green greens, forms are produced as contours and vacate with their vacuity as forms"; further he clarifies that in the renewal of art, colors, sounds, or forms disclose qualities through adjectives "recommence being" (40). In the context of red and green as complementary colors, each promotes the intensity of the other through visual comparison.

In this context, 'recommence' may be considered as reestablishment, reinforcement, or reinstalment in such a way that Leslie Sobel's renewal of art recommences being through disclosing narratives that bear testimony to the life in which it reveals environmental injustice. Each material selected has its own history, nature and quality. While the artist's fingerprint, method, and praxis determine the form the artwork takes, the stage of search is never overcome. Like breathing, wherein the body continually seeks oxygen, the artist continually seeks recommencing. For the artist, the artwork is the seeking for renewal of experiencing living life and being. The interconnection between land -- urban Zip Codes, districts and the "air" (Covid-

19) disease -- is notable. Areas of heat concentration typically reveal themselves to be areas of urban decline or industry wherein there are less greenways, trees, or parks. The bounding squares or man-made mapped neighborhoods marked by grid lines inform zoning laws, voting laws, and the outcome for political candidates.

The phenomenology within which we experience art does not describe or apprehend exactly what that red or green is. According to Levinas, only through language can we attempt to describe or give it a name or speak about it (OTB 41). With Sobel's work we can through language refer to the work through the use of nouns or address one's perceived familiarity of colors or compositional arrangement. We cannot articulate the living experience of our processing or seeing, nor can we adequately describe our visual response to artwork.

According to Levinas, we are limited by the language of what it is we are trying to identify or describe the work as a lived experience. While we can view Sobel's *Detroit Data* and give names to such things as COVID-19 hotspots or boundary lines, the colors blue or red in her work disclose in the nature of the work the recommencing of being. That is what is being reestablished through the language of color, form, or texture. The viewer looks at the work and experiences, according to Levinas, the phenomenological search for what is actually present in the environment (OTB 40). Whether perceived or real environment, the viewer's descriptions allow the work to have attention in the atmosphere of the viewer's presence. By articulating in language and breathing out the words that describe the art, the viewer reestablishes the being of the work within the breathing space. Through language, the viewer inhales in the viewing that which the artist exhales in the creative development. The recommencing of being is manifested through the molecules and particles of the artwork.

Aerial Boundaries. The patchwork overlays of torn paper affixed onto the support feel disconcerting as one begins to apprehend the narrative that the artist is conveying. The sense of movement of the colors flowing under the boundaries gives the sense that something (the hues) are not in one's control and are without restraint or do not adhere to or recognize the boundary lines intended to confine them. The viewer attempts to identify the shapes and to unify them to apprehend or connect the meaning of the words and the legends applied in the artwork. The caption "*Detroit Data*" allows one to consider the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on Detroit residents on a global scale, as well as the embedded narrative of the history of Detroit that includes automobiles, music, and civil rights. One considers data collections that reveal statistics for discrimination and redlining, as well as the economic decline not specific to Detroit as an urban area. The velum overlays allow for the viewer to sense the obscurity of relevant facts.

The viewer's eyes search between the layers to decipher the data. The viewer leans in closer to consider the legends colors and the locations within the artwork and to understand the zones. The heat legend appears blurred as if the viewer is seeing a desert mirage. Districts 1, 2, 3, and 4 are legible beyond the circular turning at the center. In trying to read the words, one must tilt sideways to see the words in a clockwise rotation. The orange/sepia appears to overlay redline markings under the layer. The viewer's eye moves radially and in a "Z" pattern. The eyes view the center in which moments appear as a garden and planet. The viewer's eye searches for accuracy in the horizon's location that bisects the artwork.

The viewer describes through language what is understood through the senses, but the artform allows for the unspoken entanglement of meaning. Through the art, the artist recommences the world. The viewer comprehends the pandemic with historical and political

contexts, as well as grief and joy. While red-reddens, the text reads, shape shapes, circles enclose, or squares frame, one understands through the visual impression one's own entanglement with *Detroit Data*. Memories, knowledge of aesthetics, or the experience of one's own life interruptions undermines the artwork. While one may not have familiarity with the represented statistics or borders embedded within the artwork, the narrative of the artwork entangles with one's own and therefore with the narrative of the artist. The artist's voice testifies to her experiences that allows the viewer the possibility for speaking of one's own.

While Sobel uses color harmonies in her selection of the primary colors of yellow, blue, red, with hints of tertiary in the green, violet, and predominant orange to give voice to the COVID-19 data, 'color theory' has a separate sociohistorical meaning within Detroit. According to Gerald Van Dusen, author of *Detroit's Birwood Wall: Hatred & Healing in the West Eight Mile Community* (2019), framed as zoning ordinances, the 'redlining' of neighborhood districts indicated where property could be purchased based on the color of one's skin (39, 40). The color theory lies in the fact that if the person was not white, land could not be purchased outside of the zoned area. The areas zoned for people of color were areas closest to industrial locations and high traffic areas and contained little, if any, green space.

Viewing the works of art is a matter of understanding that breathing is done within designated breathing zones. While Sobel's artwork addresses COVID-19 in select demographic Zip Codes, the viewer may seek beyond the present in an attempt to orient oneself in designated breathing spaces. Sobel's artwork addresses the effects of environmental injustice that allows or disallows one's ability to breathe. Breathing in the breathable as well as breathing in the unbreathable occurs when one inhales and exhales in the proximity of the other. From this context one may examine the notion of saying "breathe-ability" relevant to one's ability to

breathe as a neighbor. Sobel's art reveals her testimony that says the effects exist. The notion of climate change and the relevance of the COVID-19 hot spots are interrelated. The viewer becomes aware of one's own breath while looking at the artwork and considers those who have died in Detroit and other cities throughout the Midwest, United States, and globally.

Sobel recalls through memory the reconstruction of history and anticipates future through painting, writing, and assembling of her work in the present. Her work becomes respiration in response-ability for the other. In this context, she is susceptible in vulnerability as she cares with exposure to suffering, loss, and grief. She breathes in the environment, the borders, socio-politics, governments, and the differing contextual realities that are taking place in society.

As discussed by Deleuze and Guattari, multiplicities are defined by the outside. According to D&G, the notion of deterritorialization is that according to which lines change in nature or connect with other multiplicities: "the plane of consistency (grid) is outside of all multiplicities" (9). When one moves beyond the bounds, the network becomes as never-ending layers of relationships or experiences that contribute to one's new navigational journey or location. When Sobel's work connects on the two-dimensional plane, with outward and overlapping layers of color, texture, and shape in a variety of paper and mixed materials we see evidence of the term rhizome as areas of lines that reverse back through one another and the central circular motion reverses itself. The actual grid of the Districts of Detroit is outside of the artwork.

Within the essay "1. Introduction: Rhizome," in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari discuss the notion of a map compared to a tracing. In this they are examining the principle of cartography and the representative model of the tree or root as it follows its reproducibility essentially through its own tracing. The tracing is what happens when there is an

“overcoating structure” as essentially that overrides or follows something that is already made or is existing already (D&G 12). The map structure is already there that allows for the tracing or reproducibility. According to D&G, “The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious” (12). In this context, the map is the origin of the journey. It serves as the exploratory guide for what or that which may follow. The tracing follows the lines of the map or becomes an overlay or repeat of the previous journey.

Sobel’s artwork is a map representing her contact with the real. It is an assembling of text and imagery from different locations and a piecing together from the central spiral in a way that becomes rhizomatic in its making. On one hand, the statistics that she is using and the boundaries of the Detroit map of her assemblage are themselves tracings reproduced from prior maps or contacts with the real. By creating new forms from her own origin of motion, movement, and memory, multiplicity is in the very action and context of her making. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, the map is open and connectable in its dimensions, can be susceptible to continued modification, and may be re-worked by individual or group (12).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the artwork itself is not a reproduction; it is not predisposed to a pattern or code that already exists, but an original pattern with multiple entries, exits, and connections, and is modifiable, detachable, and reversible (21). The gentleness in resistance and care with which Sobel develops artwork continue as a becoming-with and a becoming-caretaker; this allows the viewer the becoming-viewer as one considers the work of art.

Becoming Viewer. The notion of “becoming” is a term that Deleuze and Guattari use in context of their essay within *A Thousand Plateaus*, “1730: Becoming Intense, Becoming Animal, Becoming Imperceptible” (24). D&G note that Virginia Woolfe, author of the 1927 *To the*

Lighthouse, wrote on the concept of ‘becoming-woman’ in a field that was dominated by men at the time of her writing. Their notion that “becoming” is that “the girl and the child do not become; it is becoming itself that is a child or a girl” (D&G 277). The viewer may have seen Sobel’s art initially in the digital format due to the pandemic and art galleries being closed. Due to COVID-19, the viewer in becoming-viewer becomes a different kind of viewer: not one who may have encountered the real work in the real world of the physical gallery, but one who may have encountered the digital representation of the work in the virtual world. As D&G convey the idea that the becoming itself is imperceptible because of the molecularity of the intervals or micro-intervals between matter, colors, and sounds that engulf the lines of flight (282). The lines of flight become the passage or movement toward becoming change.

The viewer who no longer is allowed the in-person experience of observing art in the art gallery space is becoming-viewer in the digital space. The artist and viewer are vulnerable in the fragmented world of the digital format. On the flat screen, viewing is limited or segmented through a mobile device or laptop computer. The viewer connection, artist connection, and gallery connection may be through the digitized imagery of the virtual world. Until the viewer can see Sobel’s artwork in person, the digital image is as a placeholder. The tactile nature of her work is meant to be seen and touched in person. Becoming-viewer, becoming-virtual-viewer, and becoming-caretaker each is the becoming itself.

Sobel’s work appears as a passage or movement that we see. The passage through the indicators of COVID-19 is the passage for the movement of the symbols of the pieces of papers from one text location to the other. The particles and molecules pass from the ink through the pen in writing, indicating what is passing from the thought to the hand in Sobel’s artwork. We see boundaries of Detroit, the street one passes by, houses, districts, and boundaries within those

spaces. The context of becoming with Sobel as the artist being in the particles and molecules becoming through the journey or the passage is transparent in the motion of caring for the other through the artwork. Sobel in becoming artist and caretaker moves through the passages of art, responding to that which she sees by creating form into artworks.

The viewer examines the artwork with a continual movement of the eye; the artist has created the art through the continual movement of thought to the hand. As the viewer looks at the artwork, the look as a movement is realized as becoming-viewer. In this context, D&G use the term “becoming” in context of the plane of memory in such a way that the viewer looks at the artwork, and as the look moves through the artwork memory, it encapsulates the first look then becomes memory in another location; as the eye moves through the picture plane, the viewer has memory of what has already been seen in reference to what is being looked at what one has in memory in becoming (295).

The viewer also is becoming-viewer from the action of moving through the passage of not looking to looking at the artwork. In this context the viewer moves through places and spaces in order to look at the artwork through molecules and particles that exist. The artwork becomes rhizomatic in its movement and extension beyond where it is statically located. It expands into the larger environmental context as infinite expansion. The work itself continues beyond itself, as it maps its way through its own rhizomatic structure to becomes a trace for the viewer and the artist as memory. Without the vanishing point perspective, the viewer is held in the middle, as with Sobel’s work there is no foreground, middle, background, only an entangled middle.

In looking at *Detroit Data*, the middle, quadrant sections, maps, and central spiral appear without coordinates. The viewer orients self with the four quadrants to sense the compositional direction. The spiral brings one back to the center. Sobel’s lines start and stop; her hand-writing

starts and stops. Lines converge: some are stitched, hidden, defined, or lost. No depth nor vanishing point gives perspective in her work. Sobel is making new landscapes through the movement of visual form.

There are not fixed codes or boundaries within the artwork. The viewer may look at the artwork and connect to one's own memory and personal meaning of color, shape, or line. The becoming-caretaker allows the viewer to be the becoming-viewer. The artist becomes her own passage between past and future, while the viewer becomes herself between past and future. In this way the artist becomes rhizomatic in creative practice. As one who lives multi-faceted experiences, researches, and embeds layers of meaning within the work, the artist knows no bounds nor pivot points in the continual expansion and making art. A rhizomatic relationship develops between the artist and viewer as the interconnections that continue become integrated and intersect in all facets of the exchange of life within the atmosphere of the artist's giving and viewer's receiving. Each carries forward the experience of the artwork into new territories of dialogue. The art becomes as an entangled thread within the perception of the artist and the viewer. The art makes its way into the atmosphere through the breath of the artist and through the viewer into the broader community.

CHAPTER THREE

Shelter – The Caretaker Protects

Gentleness is a relationship to time that finds in the very pulsation of the present the feeling of a future and a past reconciled, that is, of a time that is not divided. This reconciled time makes life possible. Anne Dufourmantelle (67, 68).

This intertextual analysis will consider the notion of shelter relevant to the embedded layers of meaning within the public art. In association with Czech Republic-born Chicago-based artist Jan Tichy, artist Cherish Parrish (Ottawa/Pottowatami) Gun Lake Band, and Detroit artist and advocate, Teresa Moon, the artworks include the three-dimensional copper pipe installation exhibited in the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University, Black Ash tree basketry exhibited at Grand Rapids Museum of Art, and the Birwood Wall, a 1940s mural-adorned segregation wall located on Detroit's north side. The unfolding narratives of the effects of environmental injustice address a city's water crisis, loss of Indigenous traditions, and the 'redlined' breathing spaces of a Detroit neighborhood.

The theme of shelter derives from German philosopher Martin Heidegger's lecture series in 1951-2. He explains in the essay, "What Calls for Thinking?" in regard to the presuppositions of language that to call is "to command" and does not mean to give orders "but to commend, entrust, give into safekeeping, to shelter" (BW 387). In this context the artist offers the artwork into safekeeping for the viewer to not only to contemplate but also to interpret the artwork in the present. The viewer's response is within the shelter of one's thought.

The term 'shelter' commonly refers to a physical place of safety or refuge. For this study, it conveys how artwork is entrusted in its development through the artist's thought. The artist shelters or protects the process of interpretive thinking about aesthetic form. The viewer becomes a participant through, as Santiago Zabala, author of *Why Only Art Can Save Us* (2017) notes, the

discourse of art as interpretive response or of intervention rather than of contemplation (23). In the present, the art safekeeps, wherein the artist preserves and cares for the entering into thinking that allows one to synthesize a remembered past, as well as an anticipated future through thought in the moment of looking. Through personal interpretation, the viewer may perceive reconciliation and as well as the caretaker's gentleness through the agency of time.

Jan Tichy is invited by Steven L. Bridges, curator at Broad MSU, to create a collaborative art exhibit with high school students from the communities of Flint and Lansing, that addresses the Flint Water Crisis. The effort culminates in drawings, poetry, and audio recordings by students that interpretively express their experiences of the Water Crisis. Tichy creates the installation titled, *Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint* (2017), that reveals his role as caretaker. Sheltered by Tichy and their teachers during the creative making, the students are allowed time to reconcile future and past, through art.

Cherish Parrish (Ottawa/Pottowatami) cares for the loss of Indigenous traditions as she teaches others through active participation through educational workshops. This study focuses on Parrish's basketry work, whereby artistic traditions include the harvesting of bark, dwelling within environmentally sacred spaces, sustainable treatment of the environment, and generational learning and teaching for future communities.

A life-long resident of her Detroit neighborhood, Teresa Moon advocates for the care and preservation of the Birwood Wall. Intended to physically separate Blacks from Whites in purchasing land for home building in the 1940s, the Wall is a reminder of 'redlining' that was done through racially motivated environmental discrimination. Moon contends that the mural-painted Wall commemorating a segregated past will bring unity through understanding her history and that of her community.

WATER: *BEYOND STREAMING: A SOUND MURAL FOR FLINT*

Appearing as a rigid tapestry, the three-dimensional installation of connected lengths of soldered copper pipes and water spigots is exhibited in the Eli and Edythe Broad Museum of Art (MSU Broad) in 2017. The ‘mural’ of vertical and horizontal copper pipes stairsteps toward the ceiling crossing over and under in rigid formation with elbow fittings assisting in the turns. Embossed lettering indicates conformity to ‘Pb Free’ lead-laws and the green tee-style handles complement the warm cast-brass spigots. The spigots become thirty “sound” stations that appear to advance and recede in the fluctuating hues of the natural light. The formation ascends in conformance with the inward-leaning height that encloses the windows in the Alan and Rebecca Ross Education Wing.¹ *Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint* is the resulting public artwork from the collaboration between Chicago-based artist Jan Tichy and high school students and their teachers from the cities of Flint and Lansing, Michigan.

In a series of workshops through paired participation, student peers address the invisible wounds of the Flint Water Crisis through creating hand-drawn works of art and written narratives. The students’ voices are recorded as they read from their narratives that reflect their experiences of the Water Crisis. Within the copper pipes in the absence of water, the digitized audio recordings are ‘streamed’ to allow museum visitors to listen to the students’ personal stories by turning open the handle on each spigot. The viewer therefore may participate as well through the gesture of opening and closing the spigots, active listening, and interpreting the students’ narratives of the city’s Water Crisis (see figs. 3.1, 3.2).

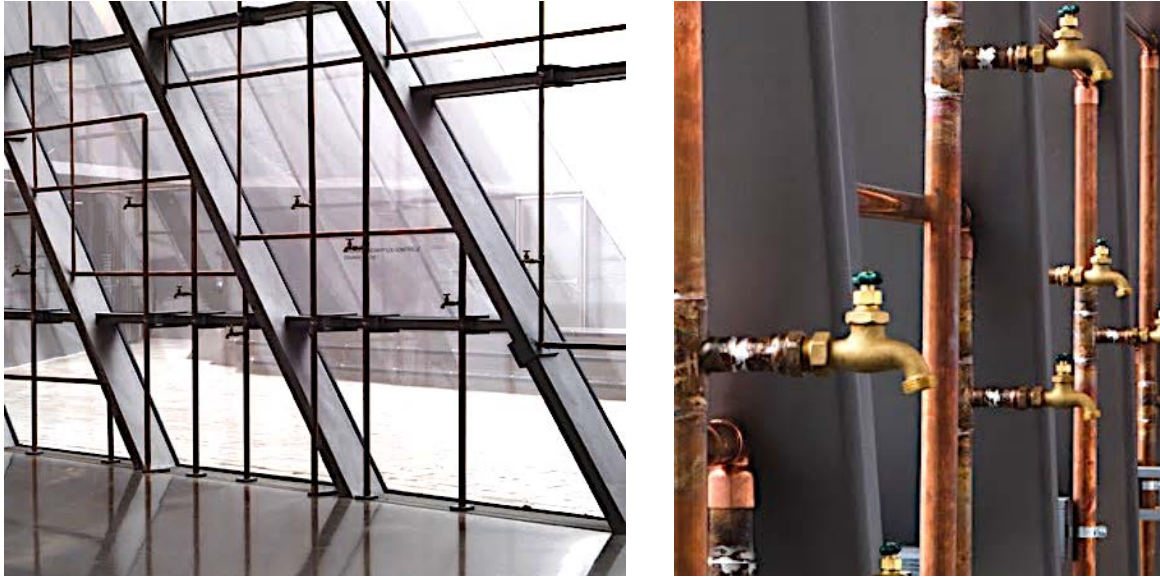


Fig. 3.1. Jan Tichy, *Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint*, 2017. © Photo 2017 Jan Tichy, 2017. Image courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 3.2 (right). Detail, *Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint*, 2017. © Photo 2017 Jan Tichy. Image courtesy of the artist.

The installation is the method of response for the artist as he collaborates with the community of students to address their experiences of the Flint Water Crisis. The city's economically based decision-making resulted in hazardous toxins and lead leaching into the tap water of the homes of Flint's residents for more than 18 months.

This intertextual examination will consider public art through the perceptions of artist Jan Tichy and Steven L. Bridges, Assistant Curator of MSU Broad, as well as select philosophers and cultural critics. The notion of care that is revealed by Tichy and Bridges will be considered through the lens of cultural critic, Santiago Sabala's discourse on the importance that one's response to art must be from an individual interpretation. This will converge with German American political theorist Hannah Arendt's thoughts conveyed in *Responsibility and Judgment* (2005), asserts that one's conduct toward the other depends on one's conduct toward self (RJ

96). Jan Tichy, invited by Bridges for the artist in residence program, facilitates the collaborative student workshops that allow for the intersection of care, interpretation, and conduct to merge through the development of the public art installation.

The artist provides a way forward through art, from the effects of environmental injustice that resulted from the mismanagement of the natural resource of water. The high school classroom as well as the Museum provides shelter for students to think about individual responses. The creation of the public art allows for new understanding of community contexts and the development of relationships between the students and the artist. Students experiment with new materials and creative processes. Sketching, drawing, writing and audio production allows for students to experience reconciliation between future and the past.

Collaborative Interpretation. Philosopher Santiago Zabala, in writing *Why Only Art Can Save Us* (2017), discusses works of art through the lenses of philosophers Hans-Georg Gadamer and Martin Heidegger, wherein both discuss art from the phenomenological perspective. Heidegger discusses the origins of a work of art and one's encounter with a work of art, wherein Zabala notes that Heidegger conveys [a]rt is "a becoming and happening of truth"; on the other hand, Gadamer conveys that the work of art "takes hold of the interpreter and becomes an event with which she engages through conversation" (Zabala 122). From these two lenses, the artist Jan Tichy's collaborative work may be considered.

While on the one hand the artwork unfolds not as truth as a definitive account, but truth in its unfolding as a revelation of knowledge about a circumstance or the artwork's development in and of itself. Simultaneously the interpreter may consider a variety of meanings through conversation with the art and in this case, specifically through the recorded conversations. In this way, Zabala advances the notion that the art demands a reconsideration of "our way of standing

in the world” as an intervention that is an “existential project of transformation that concerns our future” (124). Considering the past through art making in the present allows for transformation that comes through the reconciliation that opens dialogue for future.

Zabala conveys that, specific artworks such as those linked to environmental emergencies of climate change, ocean pollution, or deforestation, call for existential interventions that require involvement in environmental projects. He explains that indifference or complacency is the absence of emergency and notes the “hermeneuticist’s responsibility” to call for experiential intervention where the viewer must become part of the emergency (Zabala 125). He notes that this is where one intervenes ignored accounts from history “in a project of assistance, reconciliation, and recognition” (Zabala 125).

The collaborations between Tichy and the students resulted in writings and poetry that address the Flint Water Crisis in such a way that allows for the students to acknowledge a variety of perspectives and personal insights. Writings include descriptions of phone calls asking for help with the water, comments about Flint city officials, and expressions of knowledge of the Flint administrative wrongdoing. Drawings depict cubes of lead dropping from a water faucet, discolored water flowing from a drinking fountain, and a child’s eyes filling with tears. In the process of making, the entering into thinking is evidenced within the written and visual narrative of each of the student’s work of art.

Tichy guides students in the dialogue of aesthetic beauty as he facilitates their creative connection of materials and processing that requires students to be in the present. The artist models research as fundamental to his creative process. Students apprehend the importance of research as they become aware of the history of copper, not only holding meaning as the new water conduit for the homes in Flint, but also thought to have been used since the Ancient Greeks

as a remedy for health. The students begin thinking beyond what they already know about the conduit's use as a replacement for lead pipes. (Tichy Personal Interview, 9 June 2020). The artist in the role of caretaker models gentleness in the collaboration for the protection of thought in the making of artforms so that others can experience reconciliation in the present. The creation of art becomes a shared experience for the students and community as each individually interprets a way forward.

The interpretation of the artform, according to Zabala's reference of Martin Luther's belief during the Reformation about scripture, is best understood through individual interpretation and that it must be experienced from within, separate from spiritual, cultural, and political authority (115). In this context, the students under Tichy's guidance were able to interpret individualized experiences through the workshops without feeling that an authority was dictating to them about how they 'should' interpret their own existence relevant to the water crisis. Zabala notes that Heidegger favors the "interested interpreter who is concerned with the ontological essence of the world" wherein Heidegger conveys also that to "be human is to be an interpreter and not in any merely contingent sense, but essentially" (118). I suggest that the students from Lansing and Flint have become the new generation of interpreters in the collaboration of protecting thought, not contingent on what they have been told, but essentially in how each interprets through their own experience.

Heidegger's notion of "at home" in the context of the examination of language is relevant to the term "to call," wherein he notes that in language we are often not at home with a word because we no longer live in it (BW 388). Santiago Zabala conveys that Martin Luther's importance in hermeneutics stems from the notion that one is 'at home' with personal interpretation that Luther advocated for, in pushing back against the Catholic Church as the only

valid interpreter of scripture; according to Zabala, the interpreter has the capacity to “judge for herself” (115). When one is allowed to interpret for themselves, whether scripture or public art, the viewer becomes part of the experience of the meaning. Through time, the viewer not only contemplates, but may have a physical and psychic response to that which is being interpreted. The viewer dwells within the shelter of thought in order to reconcile a personal perspective that results from considering the past as well as anticipating the future in the present.

Students become at home with thoughts protected through individual thinking, whether about family, loss, new friendships, or art materials. Each develops her own perspective, just as each exchanged with the other a gift (of a cup) at the onset of the project. Each student’s thoughts are not directed nor controlled or provided by the artist or the teachers. Students experience through the process of artmaking individual thoughts that are manifested through physical and intellectual creativity. As students collaborate, each becomes more at home with personal interpretation through the artist and teachers’ encouragement of individual creativity.

Converging with Heidegger’s notion of shelter in the protection of thought, German American political theorist Hannah Arendt discusses in her essay, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy” within *Responsibility and Judgment* (2005), that which concerns individual behavior relevant to rules on how one judges others as right or wrong (50). In this context, she conveys that the “conduct toward others will depend on my conduct toward myself” (Arendt, RJ 96). From this view, this author suggests that the artist as caretaker is one that protects thought for justice for others as if for self and that care for self will translate or model how the artist cares for others.

The artist creates art through thinking. The thought, whether conception, reflection, or introspection, is a process of regard not only for the thinking itself and one’s own experience but

regard for the experience of others. Through the lens of Anne Dufourmantelle, author of *Power of Gentleness* (2018), the artist's thinking as a conduct toward self is one that embeds "empathy" and "suffering with" wherein "gentleness is a higher degree of compassion than simple care" that manifests as that which the artist sees in self in order to embrace it in others (13). The artist protects and entrusts the thinking as well as the process for the making through his behavior of gentleness toward self. He protects the students by encouraging them to also think as he continues to model the making of art without conveying his judgment on the circumstance of the Flint Water Crisis or the thoughts or expressions of the students. In this context the artist is at home thinking about the circumstances of a city in crisis and residents and students in crisis from government decision making. He dwells in thought about the experiences of students from Flint and Lansing.

Tichy notes that his facilitation included meeting with students individually in Flint and Lansing, then meeting together several more times as well as installing the artwork and visiting during the exhibition run. He conveys that he "built the Flint project around this idea of two people coming together and sharing personal, intimate experience of ... the trauma" (Tichy Personal Interview, 9 June 2020). He asks, "What does it mean for a kid from Flint to share in a very personal way with another kid, without anybody being around, in a way, how was it to live without water? What does it mean to be afraid to open your faucet? And what does it mean for these two people that live just an hour away from each other, to share not just that, but other struggles that they experience?" (Tichy Personal Interview, 9 June 2020).

Tichy considers his own vulnerability as a guest in a new location, as one who arrives from Chicago to make public art with students who have experienced trauma and those unsure of how to process experiences that are not their own. The artist facilitates art-making that allows

students to have a voice and articulate without fear of offending or hurting the other through guided dialogue and conversation that allow for validation of personal perspectives. In this way, the artist's individual behavior appears to have gentleness in relationship to time that allows for students to have a relationship to time, each other, and their processes, as they become comfortable with articulating their interpretation through the visual and written form.

The artist through facilitation models a way forward for the students in how to think through the experimentation of process, practice self-expression, and undertake research that allows students to interpret for themselves through personal discovery. In this way students regain a sense of self that constitutes the person through the creativity that Arendt speaks of. Through paired collaborative actions and the building of relationships, the students from Flint and Lansing are able to initiate new thoughts and remembrances that allow them to create new artworks and judgments that could inform their future conduct. In facilitating the collaboration, the artist guides students on how to think about the form, materials, and process – not what to think. In alignment with Arendt and Dufourmantelle, I suggest that the force of gentleness in protecting thought provides the conduit for empathy. It is the artist's creative constitution that allows shelter for thought for self and for others by inviting the students to create without condition.

Artists that light the way for others through their ability to shelter are often illuminated by the shelter of others. French art historian Georges Didi-Huberman conveys in *Survival of the Fireflies* (2018) the notion of the firefly as the illumination of humanity. He posits in the essay "Images" that artists who provide a light for others become themselves fireflies as they bring awareness to the plight of the others (85). In the context, the artist Jan Tichy illuminates others through his public art, while simultaneously he is illuminated by others.

The artwork is physically illuminated in its juxtaposition in a common space framed with steel beams and walls of windows that allow sunlight to filter in. Visitors to the Museum are illuminated in shelter as they step through the main entrance door into the lighted steel structure of the Museum's architectural design. The artwork not only brings awareness to the plight of the Flint Water Crisis and of those that have and still are experiencing its effects, but also illuminates the student artists and writers themselves for their creative work. The installation provides a way for the students' experiences to be recognized through the visitor's experience of listening to their voices stream through the copper pipes.

In Arendt's essay "The Crisis in Culture" within *Responsibility and Judgment* (2005), notes the underlying meaning of shelter and culture derives from Western philosophical-political traditions in which she conveys that this "earthly home becomes a world in the proper sense of the word, only when the totality of the fabricated things is so organized that it can resist the consuming life process of the people dwelling in it, and thus outlast them" (206). In this context she references objects and works of art and conveys that things fabricated with the intent to outlast man become culture and may only then be spoken of as works of art (Arendt, RJ 206). She notes that the starting point for any discussion of culture begins with the phenomenon of art (Arendt RJ 207).

In this context, when one starts with the phenomenon of the artwork *Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint*, one considers the creative endeavor, artisans, materials, circumstances of the art's collaborative making, and exhibition venue. This discussion includes the examination of the narratives of environmental injustice that encase the public art. Tichy discusses the knowledge of rich history of Michigan that students acquired through research; this includes the Upper Peninsula where copper was first found, as well as students learning chemical processes

of copper materials through conducted experiments. After attending meetings in Flint and actually seeing the copper pipes being placed into the ground in Flint by the street crews, Tichy began thinking of the concept of using copper pipes in collaboration with students' discussions of murals which were types of art they were familiar with (Tichy Personal Interview, 9 June 2020).

When one starts with the artwork as Arendt indicates, the narrative unfolds to the discussion of culture. While considering the relevance in which copper pipes are replacing lead pipes in the context of a preventable water crisis in this particular city, one may also consider the complexities of the historical events that have occurred. These would include discussions on the migration of families from Southern United States to Southeast Michigan for the automotive industry in the early 1900s, the subsequent mid-century decline, and the Civil Rights movement, as well as economic hardship in Flint that preceded the governmental decision for switching the supply source for water.

The context of Tichy's perspective of examining the artwork is through the cultural lens of education in which he allows the students to creatively participate and learn about new materials and viewpoints. According to Tichy, "The most important thing was that these two groups of young people came together...and were able to share, and the really important things that happened there were the things that happened to the participants.... The second thing that happened was the installation [in] the museum. ... [there was] a lot of audience response. ... The third part is what happens after...[that] all of these projects have a website, that they become archives. And that's where I feel in regard to many other works of art, that the relationship between artist and work of art becomes ... shared by museums" (Tichy Personal Interview, 9 June 2020).

“Some Notes on Caring.” According to Steven Bridges, Assistant Curator of the Eli and Edythe Broad Museum, *Beyond Streaming* came into development through a series of factors. When Bridges moved to Lansing in 2015, he thought that the Flint Water Crisis “seemed far away” (Bridges 2). Hearing about Flint through activities at MSU, he knew that various departments were trying to help in various ways and had seen that the Journalism School was writing about the Water Crisis and was aware that Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, an affiliated faculty and Flint pediatrician, was working with medical colleagues and students to address the health conditions of the children of Flint. Bridges was also aware that there had not been a cultural artistic response and wanted MSU Broad to play a role in engaging with the social issues that were taking place (Bridges Personal Interview, 31 Oct. 2019).

Bridges was familiar with the artist Jan Tichy and his Chicago collaborative artwork titled *Project Cabrini Green, 2011*² that addressed the demolition of the last of the public housing projects on the north side of Chicago. Through a collaborative public art effort between area youth and the Art Institute of Chicago, Tichy created a public art installation that placed lights in the windows of the high-rise building, and as the building was demolished, the lights disappeared. Bridges wanted to develop an artist in residency model with Tichy, as he believed that his sensitivity to social issues and his collaborative experiences would be the right match. Bridges invited Jan Tichy to Lansing for the artist’s residency. (Bridges Personal Interview, 31 Oct. 2019).

Within the context of this Museum’s focus, the setting for such an exhibit embeds the depth of complexities of societal circumstances that occurs in cities similar to Flint across the United States. This Museum becomes a place of shelter for those who have experiences with inequitable outcomes of governmental decision-making regarding the mismanagement of natural

and environmental resources, as well as other historical inequities. As shelter, the Museum becomes a flash of light for those that have been obscured. As Bridges deflects credit from himself and speaks about his passion for the project, compassion for the students, and the circumstances of Flint, he illuminates others in the manner that German historian, Georges Didi-Huberman speaks of in *Survival of the Fireflies* (2018). As a ‘firefly’ Bridges exposes the light of the artist, students, and teachers involved in the collaboration. Through the artwork, the viewer may consider their own narrative and may find a new light of understanding.

According to Bridges, upon Tichy’s first visit to Flint, he and Bridges began the dialogue about local relevance and global significance. Meeting with the high school teachers, attending public hearings, and listening to city workers that were replacing the lead pipelines with copper, they began the amplification of perspectives and stories of those who had been affected by the events of the Water Crisis. As Tichy listened to the stories unfold, he was careful as an outsider to not speak on behalf of others, but to create a platform for others to speak. Bridges and Tichy were both aware that the residents of Flint felt that they were not being listened to by the State seated in Lansing, as well as other city government officials (Bridges Personal Interview, 31 Oct. 2019).

According to Bridges, the Museum borrowed copper purchased by MSU for maintenance operations. The Museum and artist utilized copper pipes from the university, knowing that the copper would be returned once the installation exhibition run ended (Bridges Personal Interview, 31 Oct. 2019). Referencing the collaboration acquisition of copper pipes Jan Tichy notes on his website the installation was composed of approximately 1,460 feet of copper piping and 530 copper fittings.

Within the exhibition catalog, published for *Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint*, Bridges penned “Some Notes on Caring” wherein he conveys that he feels a responsibility to address the Flint Water Crisis. As a curator, he asks, “What do I care for, for whom do I care, and why?” (Bridges 2). Bridges notes that the definition of curator derives from the Latin word *curare*, where its meanings include “care for,” “study,” and “oversee” and explains that historically, curators were charged with the care of specific collections as well as their histories and knowledge attached to them, whereas, today much of the work is performed by registrars and conservators. In wondering how the notion of care remains relevant, Bridges writes, “The notion of care is still highly relevant, but it has shifted from caring of objects to caring for the relationships involved in an exhibition or project, among artists, audiences, gallerists, collectors, donors, and others. The curator is often the glue between these different protagonists, and the level of care invested significantly influences the quality of the work undertaken collectively” (2).

Bridges indicates that another dimension of care that bears on his work grows out of a sense of empathy as he writes, “Contemporary art and artists are often deeply invested in social issues” and suggests that “‘care’ is the work of not only curators, but also the institutions they serve” (Bridge 2). In noting that art, in part, makes the “invisible visible,” Bridges conveys the importance of making others visible, just as Didi-Huberman does when he speaks of the filmmaker who makes visible the refugees fleeing in the night (Bridges 2 and Didi-Huberman 81). Bridges is also an illuminator of others in his role as a curator and educator. (see figs. 3.3, 3.4)

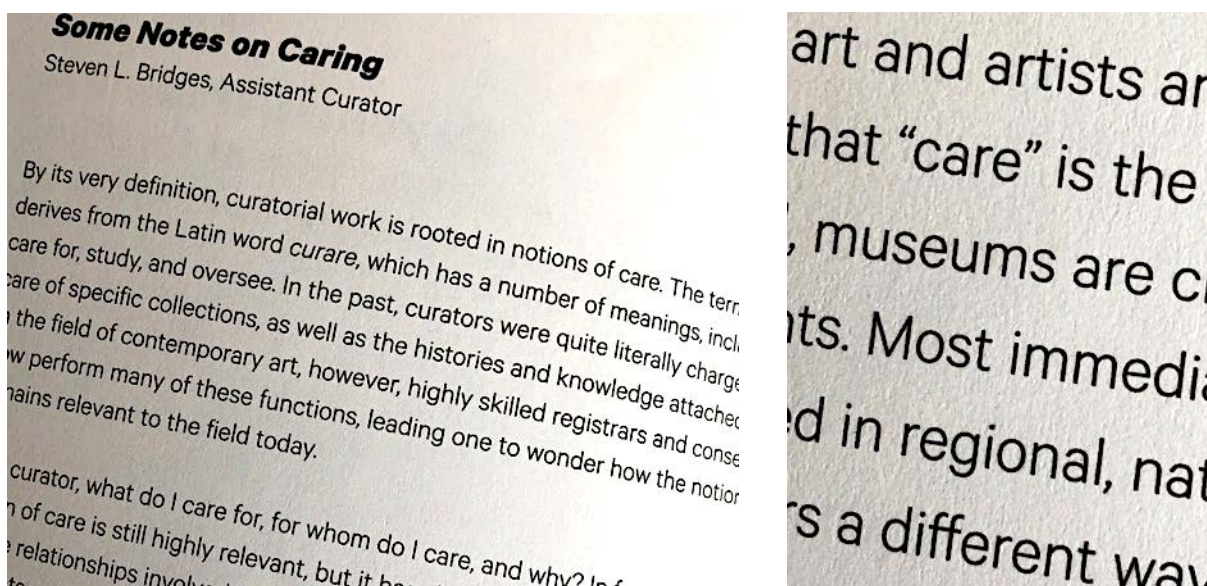


Fig. 3.3. Steven L. Bridges, “Some Notes on Caring,” 2017. Exhibition Catalog published by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU Broad) on the occasion of the exhibition *Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint*, on view January 21- April 23, 2017. The exhibition was part of the MSU Federal Credit Union Artist Studio Series, which invites artists to interact with the community through site-specific installations presented alongside educational encounters that offer insight into the artist creative process. Photo author’s collection.

Fig. 3.4 (right). Detail, “Some Notes on Caring.” Photo author’s collection.

At the time of his writing, Bridges notes that while the project’s impact is unknown, “art is not about fixing problems or providing clear-cut answers to complex questions,” but that through the efforts of Tichy and his collaborators there was an acknowledgement of a “shared sense of responsibility to act and make one’s voice heard – in the hopes that others will not simply hear but listen.” In closing, Bridges writes, “When words flow like water, momentum grows, and the possibility of change produces new realities” (3).

Bridges explains that Tichy is a “facilitator, mentor, and adviser” in his role as an artist and believes the experience for the collaborative effort was “impactful, moving, and beautiful.” He noted that the workshops were key to the success as they allowed for a way for students to

learn from each other's perspectives and experience each other's geographical locations and allowed students to cultivate a greater sense of empathy for each other. Bridges also commented that while he was aware of other good things taking place in Flint, such as community projects undertaken by the University of Michigan Theatre troupe and the Flint Institute of Arts, he was sensitive to Flint becoming a "spectacle" for the media. Bridges added that the student voices recorded for *Beyond Streaming* would be added to the voice library and that he would be working with the student authors to re-print their poetry. (Bridges Personal Interview 31 Oct. 2019).

Jan Tichy conveys his thoughts on the artist in the role of caretaker:

So, I see myself as an artist, an educator; I think that I see the practice of a contemporary artist such myself as responsive to the world around us. But we are all responding ... we as artists, as cultural producers, have the responsibility to do that, right? If you're talking about practice in this sense ... I think that I see it first of all as a responsibility to respond. And the responsibility lies with the social contract that we are part of, or that we are always part of some social contract as artists. I'm brought in to get involved, respond again. (Tichy Personal Interview, 9 June 2020).

Beyond the Café. The author experienced sitting with Steven Bridges in the central court adjacent to the Alan and Rebecca Ross Education Wing in 2019. The Museum's café opens into the educational wing where *Beyond Streaming* exhibited two years before. The protected space is spellbinding in its beauty. The vantage point allows the visitor to observe others walking through the sunlit space. MSU students study at the café's high tables, and the barista is heard greeting customers over the sound of grinding coffee beans. Beyond the café, Museum staff welcomes incoming visitors and engages in pleasant conversation.

The grand architectural design serves as shelter for art. As an experience of space and place, the interior protects the visitor from Michigan's frigid winters and humid summers. The light enters through the steel-framed wall of windows. Recalling the 'theology of light' from the study of Medieval Gothic cathedrals where the churches were constructed with such height that light streaming from clerestory windows becomes divine to the pilgrim, the visitor's eyes draw upward in awe. Within the Education wing, large clear windows allow for a visual mosaic of the exterior landscape. One may believe that here, one has also entered a sacred space.

The sun rays highlight and reflect from the grids of steel and cast shadows that causes one to pause in thought. One studies the windows and structural steel of the architectural space that highlighted and sheltered the installation *Beyond Streaming*. Although copper is cool to touch, the word *copper* reveals the warmth of its sienna and cadmium red hue. One considers its historical multifaceted use by artisans for jewelry and weapons or its medicinal healing and spiritual energy. The digital visual images that accompany the audio clips on Tichy's website are printed also within the exhibition catalog. Reflecting on the children's voices and the images while sitting in the beautiful café, one may try to personally reconcile the future with the past.

Listening. Tichy explains, "[When Steven brought me in] it was not about getting the public attention ... it was about something else. And therefore, the response from me was structured ... in regard to taking care of, I think that it is this, also. If you talk with Steven, I think that it really resonates with his perspective of cultural practice of taking care of the institution, taking care of the artist, taking care of the community, taking care of these relationships. I feel that I am, first of all, responsible to respond, as a listener." (Tichy Personal Interview, 9 June 2020).

Archived on Tichy's website are the students' drawings and audio. One can listen to the voices streamed from the computer desktop, as they were streamed from the copper pipes during

the installation exhibit. Still, hearing takes time; the listening, even longer. The students' audios stream in a variety of durations: twenty seconds, thirty-eight seconds, forty-two seconds, one minute twenty seconds, and up to three minutes. The listener wonders if the voices of the residents of Flint were ever heard by city officials within similar increments of time. One hears in the student voices the sound of courageous candidness in the steady resonance of seeking truth. The questioning of the Governor for his role in the Water Crisis is met with silence. While listening to the voices, one realizes there is no audible response from those to whom the questions are being asked. Silence is the only response to the students' vulnerability in sharing their personal experiences.

When listening to one Flint student, one hears first, the sound of water. Then the student speaks his written text that asks, *What about you?*, "What would you do If it was you?" A sketched drawing in black ink and blue pencil by a Lansing student depicts a multi-faceted view of the interior space of a home with a close-up view of the kitchen sink with water pouring lead out from the faucet. There is a bathtub, toilet, and the view through the window, where one can read the name "Flint" across the top of a water tower in the distance. Hand-written, gestural notes and question marks are strategically placed in various locations within the drawing. Questions include, "Is this water??!?", "why" and "wtf is this???" ("Beyond Streaming").

As a listener of the audio recordings, it is hard to imagine the feeling of helplessness from these non-answered questions. One takes for granted water as a positive element in the journey toward health. Being in a home where it is unsafe to drink the water due to environmental injustice is hard to comprehend. The viewer may perceive that in the space of the Museum or in one's home, wherever the listening takes place, the students' recorded voices empower not only

the students but allow for the hearer to interpret their own meaning of the spoken narratives that have been allowed to be protected through the creative process.

Sheltering Thought. Copper as an ancient metal embeds history relevant to Michigan and the prehistoric culture of artisans that mined copper to create tools, jewelry, and other items for trade. Tichy's copper installation speaks to the complexities of cultural contexts for a city's Water Crisis, the environmental injustice and its interpretation. In the light of the MSU Broad Museum windows, where the copper joined the established architectural design, the pipes revealed freedom in the discourse for the residents of Flint through dialogue about the tap water constrained within a prior injustice. The copper pipes made visible that which was unseen. Trenched below the earth's surface to carry the water supply, the copper pipes still make visible the children of the Water Crisis.

The notion of turning the sound 'on' to hear someone's voice and 'off' to silence reminds the viewer of the sound of the Flint voices being turned off as they tried to raise awareness about the conditions of the water. In the Museum space, the viewer that chooses to listen turns the handle to the open position and steps in closer and adjusts their ear to the spigot. The students from each of the Flint and Lansing school systems similar to copper have an embedded history, are adaptable, and will provide the way for another's future. The students are becoming caretakers for not only cultural art but will become the new shelter of thought for others through witness and giving voice for environmental justice. The artist's care for community provides shelter for thought that allows students to reconcile past and future as a way to move through the present.

LAND: *THE NEXT GENERATION*

As one moves into the exhibition gallery of the Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM), one encounters an array of decorative and functional woven basketry art. Made from strips of Black Ash as well as birch, cedar, sweetgrass, and other natural elements, the exhibition includes a baby basket, top hats, and decorative masks stylized for respiratory protection. Several of the baskets appear as life-size female forms. Fitted from the upper chest to above the knees in variegated natural cream tones, the forms allude to mannequins wearing trendy, strapless summer dresses. Thin strands of Black Ash form the horizontal and vertical texture of the basket's contour, while the top edge pulsates with sweetgrass in a rhythmic spiral around the circumference of the form.

The exhibition titled *The Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church and Cherish Parrish* features the practice of the Anishinaabe tradition of Black Ash basketry. As members of the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band (Gun Lake Band) in Michigan, the mother and daughter artists weave their Native heritage with contemporary topics that include care and concern for a just environment and a sustainable future. This essay will focus on the artwork of the daughter Cherish Parrish and her figural basketry. As Parrish entrusts the meaning of her work through the shelter of thought for the loss of and subsequent protection of Indigenous cultural traditions, her public art reveals the artist in the role of caretaker through the duality of her relationship with her heritage and environment.

This inquiry will consider German philosopher Martin Heidegger's essay from his lecture on "What Calls for Thinking?" whereby one may consider within the context of Parrish's work that to commend, entrust, give into safekeeping, and to shelter that "what calls for thinking" is that which directs one into thinking (BW 387, 389). The notion of shelter will converge with the

thoughts of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, author of *Otherwise than Being* (1998) in the consideration of his essay on “Sensibility and Proximity” in the notion that “sensibility is exposedness to the other” (OTB 75). Whereas, Berlin-based philosopher, Andreas Weber’s writing *Enlivenment: Toward a Poetics for the Anthropocene* (2019) will provide insight into how humans share a mutual relationship with nature.

Without arms, shoulders, or heads, the figural baskets recall the archeological finds of ancient statuary. While the center of gravity within the square base of one basket allows for the stability of the three-dimensional handcrafted form, its asymmetrical shape emphasizes shifts forward at the mid-section with the perceived weight of an imagined child. While ancient statuary is rare in depiction of pregnancy, the figure itself is reminiscent of the ancestral notion of mother goddess ancient myths or the fertility figurine *Venus of Willendorf* c. 25,000 BCE, found in Austria (Zygmunt, “Venus of Willendorf”). While the viewer is unable to see through the woven covering that hides the small statue’s face and head, the four-inch-tall carved limestone figure with the protruding belly has been projected as a figure for procreation. Informed by Greek and Roman mythology for her name, the figure feasibly would have been hand-held and carried to benefit the tribe’s future (Zygmunt, “Venus of Willendorf”).

The three-dimensional hand-crafted form of the Black Ash basketry art of Cherish Parrish employs vertical and horizontal weaving as if the warp and weft used in creating tapestry is created on a loom. The neutral tones create implied lines that appear as variegated ribbons around the basket’s circumference. Subtle variations of natural tan appear in the horizontal strips as they accommodate the vertical rise. The natural-colored bands wrap around the form’s top portion and embrace the waist’s protruding belly. Closed at the base and open at the top, the basket form of *The Next Generation* is a representation of pregnancy (see figs. 3.5, 3.6).

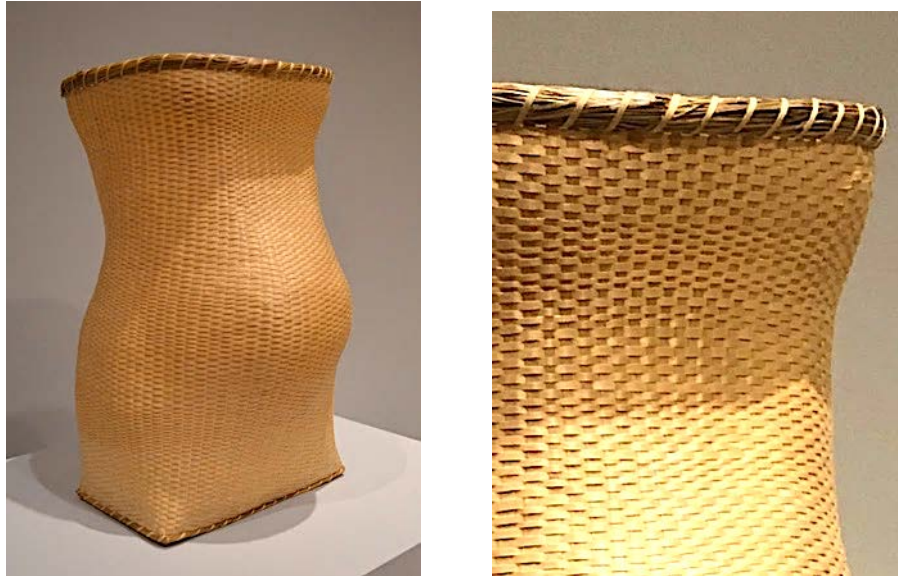


Fig. 3.5. Cherish Parrish Odawa & Pottawatomi (Gun Lake Band). *The Next Generation*, 2012. Black Ash with sweetgrass binding at opening. Collection of Michigan State University. Grand Rapids Art Museum, *An Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church and Cherish Parrish*, Aug 28, 2021 – Feb 26, 2022. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 3.6 (right). Detail, *The Next Generation*. Grand Rapids Art Museum. Photo author's collection.

Carriers of Culture. The form appears balanced as it rests on the flatness of the square base to seemingly counter the off-balance that occurs in pregnancy. Life size, the torso is formed from below the hips to the lower breast. The free-standing basket without identifying personal features becomes a container that alludes to an anonymous mother. As the carrier of culture through the gesture of making, Parrish weaves the basket form from the process of gathering. Preparing the Black Ash tree strips is a laborious process, and the motions recall the tradition of ancestors.

The basket appears to have a gentle nature or presence. The duality of the square base gives the form a feeling of stability and strength, while the soft cream hues appear feminine and made with gentleness. The interwoven Black Ash strips allow for real as well as implied textures

that derive from shadowed highlights, while the muted colors emulate the form's silence.

Without the head, the narrative is derived from the viewer's understanding of the form.

The proximity of the viewer to the basket allows the viewer to observe both the outside and inside simultaneously. Maternity is sensed from the exterior, yet as the viewer steps closer, the basket's empty interior can be seen, and the child imagined from a distance dissipates. The torso as the form of a pregnant woman remains in silence and can only share her history through the materials that give voice for the artist as a caretaker for passing Native traditions to the next generation, the endangered Black Ash tree, and the sheltering of thought for a just environment.

Examining Cherish Parrish's work through the lens of the Levinas allows one to consider exposure of one to the other in. In his essay "Sensibility and Proximity" within *Otherwise Than Being* (1998) wherein he conveys that "sensibility is exposedness to the other," Levinas conveys that the senses engage one with the other and that it is through the senses by which one navigates through life (OTB 75). In this context, the five senses of touch, sight, taste, smell, and sound allow one to know there is the presence of the other. Exposure through the senses allows one to find the course daily in which one travels. The ability to sense or one's *sense-ability* allows one to know at all that there is another in the midst or there is another in one's proximity or presence. Each is exposed or becomes vulnerable to the other when the proximity is such that any of the senses are informed that the other is nearby.

In the absence of protection and cover, Levinas notes that "exposure as a sensibility is more passive still" and that it is as "though the sensibility were precisely what all protection and all absence of protection already presuppose: vulnerability itself" (OTB 75). When the viewer engages with the maternity basket, *The Next Generation*, the exposedness to the form allows the

viewer to consider individual vulnerability relevant to the basket's ability to protect. The basket appears both visually and literally vulnerable.

The maternity basket embeds layered meaning within the vulnerability of the protection of the baby's life by the mother. As one who encloses the baby with protection, she is absent her own protection. While the maternal form is a visual allusion to pregnancy, the mother is crafted as passive, without sense-ability to protect the unborn child. Without the five senses she cannot sense danger, nor can the viewer imagine how she would defend herself if in danger's presence. The basket relies on the maker Parrish for its protection and therefore the protection of the next generation.

The vulnerability of the baby itself in the womb is exposed through its passivity to the mother's sense-ability, which may or may not reduce its vulnerability in real life as she cares for herself in an effort to care for the unborn child. While the basketry allows for the consideration of Levinas's thought, the basket itself is vulnerable to decay, damage, and lack of protection as an artform. The sense-ability of its maker Cherish Parrish exposes her own senses in the basket's making as well as in considering her memories, heritage, and future generations. Within her own protection and/or absence of protection, she is vulnerable as a protector of the Anishinaabe tradition of Black Ash basketry.

The senses are informed by the proximity of the artist to the artwork, the artist to her mother, and the perceived basket-mother to the perceived basket-child. The viewer's proximity to the maternity basket allows the 'baby' to dissipate. The baby's perceived imagery is not protected, and its existence is vulnerable to its fading. The maternity basket's proximity to the other baskets determines the proximity for the viewer. In maternity, the mother bears the

responsibility for the proximity of the child; the protection of or lack of presupposes the vulnerability that Levinas speaks of.

Emmanuel Levinas discusses the notion of “maternity, vulnerability, apprehension” that “binds the node of incarnation to a plot larger than the apperception of self” wherein he conveys that the idea of proximity is not just the experience of the superficial formation of an object, but that one is bound to others “before being tied to my body” (OTB 76). In this context one perceives that which is beyond the physical tangibility of another or an object in which one understands through the senses only. Through the lens of Levinas, it is suggested that we are tied to others prior to even our own existence or knowing that we ourselves exist as self.

Levinas notes that understanding flesh and blood or the exterior of things is not an indicator of the experience of proximity, but that in the consideration that “subject as incarnate, is sensibility – an exposure to others, a vulnerability, and a responsibility in the proximity of the others” (OTB 77). In this way, one through senses comes to understand that one’s exposure is not only through the encounter of closeness with the other in the same physical space, but that it is through multifaceted relationships within the context of living that existed before one is aware that an exposure is taking place.

According to Levinas, “maternity, vulnerability, responsibility, proximity, contact – sensibility can slip toward touching, palpation,” wherein something is known by its palpability (OTB 76). In this, he conveys that proximity is not just the perceived consciousness of another in relationship with a body, but that proximity is a relationship to the body that existed prior to our knowing of the past at all or of our own existence. He notes that prior to knowing the proximity to the other and prior to maternity, there exists an ancient connection that we envision historically that provides a lineage to the past. In order to orient ourselves in the present, we may

examine ancient lifeways, which are not through only materiality in the present, but through the concept of the incarnate in which, according to Levinas, is already “the sensible experience of the body” (OTB 76). Through Levinas’s lens, the artist Parrish has exposure tied not only to current systems in which she lives, but to others and her own heritage prior to her own living in which her sense-ability or exposedness takes place.

In his discussion on exposure as sensibility, Levinas notes that maternity as a responsibility for the other is “bearing par excellence,” in which the one bears “responsibility for the persecuting by the persecutor” (OTB 75). For this consideration, one may surmise that responsibility exists for the other beyond reciprocity or obligation, but responsibility for the actions of the other in such a way that provides the other with the means of existence or the means to be. A mother is responsible for the child in such a way that when the child persecutes the mother, the mother is responsible such as when in labor during childbirth. The female carries the responsibility before the child is in existence at all.

Cherish Parrish creates her maternity baskets in the context that would be, according to Levinas, prior to maternity and earlier than nature; this pre-existence, presupposes her making through vulnerability itself (OTB 75). Parrish, an artist creating in the context of considering future generations, embeds through her art the responsibility of making, while simultaneously giving of herself through her artwork as a responsibility to the future generations. Her basket-making methodologies are passed to the next generation, which bears responsibility for the next generation’s work in traditional making as well as actions of protecting those traditions. Vulnerable, she is exposed to the outcome before the next generation begins their making.

Levinas imparts that one is “bound to others” before being tied to one’s own body (OTB 76). As maternity pre-existed our own documentation through artforms, *The Next Generation*

allows one to comprehend that Parrish's artwork embeds our pre-existence within her work. Within the female's DNA is the heritage that carries culture into the future. The basket as a functional container may be filled with tangible or intangible items (clothes, toys, thoughts, memories, etc.) that the artist wants to physically or imaginatively insert. As a vessel, it becomes a reciprocal form. What one puts in, one may retrieve. The child relies on the mother for its future, just as the mother relies on the child as a marker for the mother's future lineage.

With Parrish's basketry, thoughts of maternity, vulnerability, mother-and-daughter relationships, and future generations are interconnected in the weaving of the Black Ash strips. Embedded in the weave are the ancient past and distant future made visible in the viewer's present. The propositions for positive and negative life ways are revealed through Parrish's care for the traditions of her heritage and the narrative of the Black Ash tree. However, Levinas notes that sensibility (vulnerability) cannot be made into the tangible as he references a recoupable ontological past in that of maternity and suggests, the "pre-ontological past, that of maternity" cannot be assembled in a representational present (OTB 78).

Although the basket form reveals the complexities of sensibility as well as responsibility and proximity that Levinas speaks of, one cannot use the physical senses or sense-ability to represent maternity as it is not reproducible as a lived or explainable experience of being. Parrish's work as representation of the tradition of intelligibility of ancient, modern, and contemporary thought allows the viewer an exposure that may invite entry into a new discourse regarding the other.

Likened to the Ancient Greek legend of the complexly tied knot, Levinas references the Gordian knot of the body, whereby the interweaving of the extremities of beginnings and ends cannot be undone (OTB 77). In this manner, within one's body, sensibility itself is a complex

interworking of human experiences that begins before the beginning and that continues generationally without end. One is not able to apprehend the past or the future, and likened to the complex knot, one may only understand there is complexity of existence within pre-existence wherein one is aware of one's own biology and the multiplicities in contemporary environmental structures that include natural as well as man-made.

The subtle colors of the basket are as time or growth rings hidden on the inside of the tree only seen in the cross-section of the tree's exposure. The basket's horizontal bands mark moments of time for the artist in the duration of making. The process is through the progression of time. As the carrier of culture, the basket is created for the next generation. Although informed by narratives of European projection, the Native American heritage, passed through generations of gestural making, rituals, hand-crafted traditions, and oral teachings, is predominant in the form. The empty vessel becomes a container for personal experiences. The past, present, and future are interwoven through the vertical and horizontal crossing of the Black Ash strips.

While the form appears stable in its stance, the disembodiment recalls ancient armless and headless sculptures damaged from war or environmental elements. However, with this work, the future of the child is the perceived focus, whereby the viewer may consider life renewal or the next generation for the family that is depicted in *The Next Generation*.

Levinas, in discussing exposure in his writing *Otherwise than Being* (1998), addresses the notion of signifying the other through communication as exposure and claims that "to say is to approach a neighbor, dealing him signifyingness" (48). In this context one may consider that to signify would be to notice, acknowledge, or recognize the other person's presence within the present, past, or future. Levinas conveys that "[s]aying is communication, to be sure, but as a

condition of all communication as exposure” (OTB 48). In this manner, one’s exposure in being in proximity of the other allows one to feel without protection or covering for one’s thoughts or physical presence. One places self at risk for the other’s unknown response. For Parrish, exposure precedes the risk of uncovering self. As a Native artist, her presence is exposed through the artforms as she approaches the other as neighbor.

Communicating sorrow, grief, joy or happiness through her basketry art, Parrish acknowledges the same in others as she exposes her own vulnerability. The saying is that which the artist engages in and approaches the other, child, mother, or viewer with significance. In the role of caretaker, prior to creating the artform, Parrish uncovers self in the risk that precedes the exposure. Additionally, the artist exposes self to opposition or critique, for the narrative of heritage, methodologies, or for the artwork itself.

The exposure of Indigenous identity becomes exposure for the viewer to have new knowledge or insight into Native People’s experiences through historical and contemporary contexts. One considers exposure to hardships that have taken place through government agencies, experiences of the natural environment, or societal conditions. National news and media coverage continue relaying the historical exposure that First Nations People experienced. The lack of protection for natural environment land use, waterways, or the attempted erasure of tribal heritage and customs through historical mandates for re-culturation (Indian Schools) in Canada and the US (“Native American Boarding Schools” and Yellowhorse Kesler, “Indian Boarding Schools”) allow one to examine the notion of exposure.

In Levinas’s notion of saying, whereby one is signifying or acknowledging the other’s presence, the artwork is the saying and the artist as caretaker is signifying the other by bringing forth the artform. The other is addressed or acknowledged in communication in a context that

supersedes a preconceived notion not accounted for in historical precedent. The basket's material, derived from the exposure to the environment and the artist's harvesting, are exposed within the gallery setting. The tree is exposed to the Emerald Ash Borer through the insect's signifying of the tree. The basket is the form (saying) for Heidegger's thought of shelter.

Through her artwork, Parrish is signifying the other in a way that reveals exposure prior to her own existence. This form of communication is the uncovering of oneself that Levinas forwards that "it is in the risky uncovering of oneself, in sincerity, the breaking up of inwardness and the abandon of all shelter, exposure to traumas, vulnerability" (OTB 48). The artist in the role of caretaker uncovers herself in such a way that the uncovering becomes both the abandonment of shelter, according to Levinas, as well as the protecting of the shelter for thought for sustaining the Anishinaabe traditions.

Parrish addresses her Native heritage while abandoning her own shelter of protection of inwardness, silence, or caution about that which she is able to convey or make in the attempt to shelter and protect traditions for the future. The abandonment of personal safeguards or securities that provide comfort or a shield for the heart or memories or dreams becomes exposure when the artist creates. In order to signify the other, one must signify self. This signification includes addressing or exposing one's own vulnerability in one's process of artmaking or acknowledging this in another for Parrish through *The Next Generation*. As the artist allows herself to be exposed, she signifies the other's experiences.

Reweaving Relationships. As the artist assembles (weaves) the baskets, the stories of the materials are told. Berlin-based philosopher Andreas Weber, author of *Enlivenment: Toward a Poetics for the Anthropocene* (2019), discusses material and spiritual commons and the meaning of the matter embedded within nature and the ecological art of living that pushes against the lens

of the capitalist economy, in the current geological age (23). The history of natural materials used by Parrish becomes part of the meaning of the basketry art through which it is harvested in the context of a collaborative community in locations of shared space in which the environment is thanked, as is customary, for its participation in the giving.

Weber proposes a reweaving of relationships with nature that is within our ability in context of our relationship with the biosphere. When we have an opportunity to recultivate our relationship with self and the other whether humans or nature, he conveys freedom as communion and the idea of enlivenment as a principled ordering of “how we perceive, think, and act,” and that we can develop our cultural life differently, as one that allows for inclusion and cooperation wherein theory and social practice are intertwined (Weber 14, 15). One communes with earth, thoughts, and self as one transverses culture, life and individual directions through tradition and landscape. In this context Parrish pays attention to the world around her as she cares for her the journey of her ancestors and future generations within the spaces and places that become familiar.

The artist inserts herself into the context of the environment and of others. With the experiences of nature on forest trails with the earth, the artist familiarizes herself with the nuances of rocks, trees, and branches in her paths. A relationship with the environment develops, as the artist walks through the familiar. She embodies Weber’s notion of enlivenment wherein he calls for “more tenderness” in the “messiness of life” and advocates for the “reweaving of relationships” in order to “adopt a culture of life” in which we can exist in a biosphere that connects us to all living organisms (14).

Weber forefronts that the lens of an observer “opens oneself up to the other’s aliveness” and once “we realize that only through the mirror of the other can we become aware of

ourselves” (155). In this context, Parrish and her mother Kelly Church mirror the other in order that each becomes more aware of self. Weber notes that “other first” is how the world works on ecological grounds as he considers the various ways that we depend on others, including feeding, exchanging oxygen, carbon, water, shelter and more (155). As in Weber’s discussion on the dependency of life-giving relationships, both mother and daughter artists create containers that reveal the other in relationship. Parrish follows in her mother’s tradition as she mirrors the basketmaking artistry as taught by her mother, and her own artforms reveal a life-giving relationship in the theme of maternity.

In his discussion on the dependency of one on the other, Weber notes, that “only if the caregiver really ‘sees’ the baby and the baby’s needs, and deeply welcomes these needs, can an infant develop a healthy, socially adjusted personality” (155, 156). In this context Parrish must “see” the baby first, prior to attending to its needs. Within the artwork, the baby for the next generation is imagined as seen as the carrier of culture.

One may ask, “How does one shelter thought for ‘other’ by making, collaborating, protecting thought for a just environment, or protect thought for the future of the Black Ash tree?” One may answer as Parrish has: protect thought for how to minimize damage from the emerald ash borer to minimize damage for the tradition of basketry. Through education, the continued weaving and telling of the narrative of the heritage, teaching next generations about the insect, how to collect the seeds, and shelter them for the survival of the Black Ash tree. Is a how Parrish protects thought for a way forward.

Cherish Parrish is herself a carrier of culture as a between – between her mother’s generation and that of the future. Each generation passes the teachings to the next generation without always having exposure to the face of the other. What Parrish chooses to put into the

basket (literally or metaphorically) becomes the teaching guide. Like the formed torso baskets, the faces of past generations are missing. The face of the unborn child is imagined. The artist only knows the faces of those living within her present.

The basket form in the shape of a pregnant female speaks to the alternative of loss: loss of heritage, family, traditions, and rituals, as well as the loss of trees from the infestation of the emerald ash borer. The basket allows for contemplation over time about the complexities of the interweaving of life circumstances. While the form appears passive, it gives voice in silence for narratives of vibrance. *Next Generation* embeds maternity, caretaking, and the future of the Indigenous traditions. As Parrish responds with aesthetic forms of tradition, she carries the past into the viewer's present as well as allows a cultural tradition to be carried into the viewer's future.

Jingle Dress Dancer Study #1. The feminine basket form appears life-size and is positioned on the pedestal situated between *The Next Generation* and Parrish's mother's display of Top Hats. In neutral tones the Black Ash strands provide texture in various widths as the upper bodice reveals a decorative weave of implied embroidery. At the waist, decorative strands emulate ribbons and attached shells or metal objects that encircle the dress. The basket appears decorative in form with three thick lower horizontal bands embellished with looped strands along the edges. The form stands on its closed woven base (see figs. 3.7, 3.8).



Fig. 3.7. Cherish Parrish Odawa & Pottawatomi (Gun Lake Band). *Jingle Dress Dancer Study #1*, 2021. Black Ash, sweetgrass. Grand Rapids Art Museum, *An Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church and Cherish Parrish*, Aug 28, 2021 – Feb 26, 2022. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 3.8 (right). Detail, *Jingle Dress Dancer Study #1*, 2021. Photo author's collection.

In the Grand Rapids Art Museum, the following statement by Cherish Parrish, positioned at the base of the pedestal that features the basket form, *Jingle Dress Dancer Study #1*, 2021:

Originating circa 1920 as an Anishinabe response to the sickness and death caused by the Spanish Flu, the jingle dress and its accompanying dance have become a traditional prayer for healing in times of need. The dresses were adorned with dangling bits of metal, which jingled with movement. Jingle dresses were introduced during a time when expressions of native American spirituality were illegal and punishable under federal law, making them an inherent symbol of resistance, resilience, and cultural pride: it takes backbone to create a dress defined by the noise it makes during such a dangerous time for America's first peoples. The dress is a prayer for that kind of courage, something we all

need in order to stay both resilient and loving in these current times. (“Interwoven Legacy”)

In Andreas Weber’s essay “Culture as Control,” he examines the inseparability of culture and nature and forefronts the idea of symbiotic relationships. He argues that the breathing presence of bodies of rock, water, flesh, and air all convey matter as an experience and a “definition of life” (Weber 9). His discussion investigates the notion of “aliveness” and *techné* and *poiésis*. “*Poiésis* is not about a language game. It is rather the element that brings forth reality”; in this context Weber considers that “any practice of aliveness can only be a poetic practice” (11). Derived from Ancient Greek philosophy, the term *poiein*, which references to act, to do, or to make, allows for the production of an object whose intent or purpose is that which is beyond its making. It also reveals that through art, as examined in the words of Heidegger at the onset of Chapter Two in *Testimony*, the artist as practitioner and theorist brings something forth into presence through the unfolding of the artwork itself, which is a condition of human existence (BW 307).

Through the lens of Andreas Weber’s essay “Being is Perceiving” wherein he examines the concept of the guideline for culture of poetic precision is to put the other’s needs first, Parrish’s artwork may be examined. Weber notes that “to understand the other ... as the source of one’s own aliveness, and at the same time to understand that one’s own being is a key to the other’s existence” (155). The *Jingle Dress Dancer Study #1*, as a traditional prayer for healing in times of need, emulates a creation of natural materials, yet Parrish’s understanding of aliveness is embedded in the tradition of the dressmaking.

Weber discusses culture in participation with natural processes that become emotional engagement, wherein he conveys there is no distinction between animate and inanimate nor

nature and culture (167). These dualities are taken for granted as distinctions in Western culture. Weber forwards that a healthy culture is a co-created interpretation of human culture and nature whereby culture echoes ecological exchange processes and nature is a process of unfolding freedom (170). Parrish's *Jingle Dress Dancer Study #1* represents the integration of Western institutional practices and natural history in a way that underscores the poiésis through the bringing to presence of the artform for the meaning beyond that of its making. The integration of culture and nature unfolds in the work as one sees culture echoed in the ecological exchange in the formation of the basketry.

Weber notes that culture, if understood as something that differentiates us, is an error (171, 172). Through his discussion, we can see that Parrish's artwork does not differentiate, but focuses on how in the way of knowing, a lifeway can be expanded, utilized, or appreciated by others regardless of the cultural background of the other. In the Anthropocene, Weber notes that if we take the opportunity, "we will succeed in re-shaping the picture of ourselves if we imagine this entanglement with the cosmos through a poetics of interbodied relatedness" (172). He further notes that elements of ourselves cannot be controlled but must be kept in self-check by our own aliveness and ability to enhance, rather than destroy, the biosphere (Weber 172). In this context Weber conveys that it is within the power of humans to take responsibility for themselves and the world in which we live. While considering the elements that cannot be controlled such as our need for natural resources, water, land, and air, how we determine to manage those are also within our power. His "self-check" would imply that we care for ourselves in a way that does not destroy care for others and the world around us.

Through the work of Cherish Parrish we see the entanglement of enlivenment that Weber refers to. The artists take time to care for the environment and nature, using nature to create

baskets, jewelry, and artforms that serve as memory pieces for cultural heritage as well as functional art that is aesthetically beautiful. Materials embed nature's form. The life-giving cycles of repurposing nature, birth, nurturing, and dying are evident in the artforms. As witness through the artwork, the process becomes shelter for traditions. According to Weber, "Culture is the interpretation of our aliveness through the medium of human beings. It implies the creative imagination of what is real" (175).

In a similar yet differing comparative examination with Heidegger's notion of what gives food for thought, Weber notes through his examination of food for thought that only the presence of the other can give life to the self, and that "we gather food for our thoughts and mental concepts from the natural world" and suggests that throughout human history there is consistent reference intellectual symbols such as the snake, rose, or tree (177). The creation of art from mental concepts derived from the natural world, according to Weber, allows one to consider Parrish as one who create baskets from the natural world that in turn become food for thought as protected and sheltered by the perpetual observation on behalf of the viewer. The viewer observes what is taking place in and with the environment that Parrish and her mother Church are in relation with.

Parrish's work addresses, historically, those who have lived outside the visual frame due to treatment through societal force or governmental pressures, fear, or necessity, which includes Colonialization, influences of the Modern era, or abuse of First Nations Peoples. American theorist Judith Butler discusses the notion of the body in political movements in regard to political demands as well as the body that needs support of media and socio-economic systems. In *Vulnerability in Resistance* (2016), Butler states that those who are "through coercion, fear, or

necessity living outside the reach of the visual frame” would benefit from “infrastructural support” of media that could facilitate “modes of solidarity” (14, 15).

Parrish’s work weaves the layers of meaning within the basketry art. The weave holds the memories that embed generational sorrow and environmental loss as well as contemporary teachings that allow for the vision of a future sheltered. Through her artwork, Parrish reinserts herself within the visual frame. She reframes for those who have been erased. The artist in the role of caretaker is able to leverage infrastructural support and recognition through her own vulnerability in resistance to the erasure of her historical existence.

Through education and the art gallery, the artist advocates for raising awareness about the devastation of the Black Ash tree. In a comparative analysis, while the tree dies from the inside, the slow death of the tree is concealed due to the fact that larvae destroy it from within. Through media support, survivors of North American Indian Schools have discussed how their traditions were taken away and that their spirit and sense of culture died on the inside from the devastation of government or religious mandates (“Canada’s Unmarked Graves”). The exterior of the trees do not reveal death until the leaves fall and do not rebloom. In a similar way, the spiritual or literal death of the children of the First Nations were concealed until there was exposure by the media for the telling of the narratives. Embedded within Parrish’s work is her care for the narratives of traditions of aesthetic beauty, as well as the death of Native lives and lifeways and hope for a sustainable future.

Santiago Zabala contends in *Why Only Art Can Save Us* (2017), that artists create artwork that allow an intervention for something present, but also as an intervention for something past. He furthers that art brings recognition to the need for reconciliation or awareness to historical actions or events (Zabala 125). In this context the basketry artworks by Parrish (and

her mother Kelly Church) are an intervention for Native heritage in the integration of historical accounts and in accordance with Zabala's insight that artists "participate in the invisible wounds, experience the ignored genocides, and proclaim the denied dispossessions" (125). In this way, through the art making, the artist considers the past and reconciles the future in the present through the process of making. Addressing land and lifeways through the practice allows one to consider various resolutions for the future while reflecting on the realities of historical and cultural atrocities suffered by a vast number of First Nations tribes within North America.

Zabala notes that indifference continues to prevail in our society. "Given the vital significance of these remnants, this intervention is not simply an alternative knowledge or a different practice but part of an existential project of transformation that concerns our future. To be part of this project is to dwell in the essential emergency, that is, to fulfill the absence of emergency" (124). It is in this context that the artwork reveals that the emergency is the absence of emergency for the notion of loss. The viewer is rescued into the emergency of understanding lost culture, traditions, and life ways that embeds within the artforms. The emergency is the absence of emergency for the disregard of artists in the role of caretakers as they attempt to resist the erasure of their traditions and heritage.

The artist as caretaker addresses the effects of environmental injustice that derives from the erasure of humans, lands, and culture. The artwork entitled *Four Directions* (2015), allows for the viewer to examine one's own relationship with the environment. In doing so, the viewer may consider a previously unexplored direction of thought.

Four Directions. In one of two large central glass display cases, four baskets in the shape of the female form are positioned in the four corners. Smaller than life-size, the open top forms appear facing toward the four corners of the display glass. Each is fashioned with Black Ash and

sweetgrass bound around the open top of the structure. Formed in neutral strands of black ash, one basket remains neutral, while three of the baskets employ vertical strands dyed with Rit colors each of yellow, red, and black (see figs. 3.9, 3.10).



Fig. 3.9. Cherish Parrish Odawa & Pottawatomi (Gun Lake Band). *Anishinabe Kwe – Four Directions*, 2015. Black Ash, sweetgrass, Rit dye. Courtesy of James Brooks. Grand Rapids Art Museum, *An Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church and Cherish Parrish*, Aug 28, 2021 – Feb 26, 2022. Photo author’s collection.

Fig. 3.10 (right). Detail, *Anishinabe Kwe – Four Directions*, 2015. Photo author’s collection.

German philosopher Andreas Weber forewords the concept that enlivenment as “life” and “aliveness” as fundamental categories of thought and practical actions (11, 12). He argues that because of the fact that we are living as “vulnerable creatures” that we can understand or “feel” nature’s forces because we are *made of them* (Weber 13). Through the lens of Weber, this author suggests that Cherish Parrish’s *Four Directions* installation is relevant to the notion of the directions of the forces of North, South, East, and West as aliveness. Often associated with the Medicine Wheel by various Native American Tribes for health and healing, the four directions

embody the forces of nature and interpretations of the directions may include stages of life, seasons, animals or plants (“Medicine Ways: Traditional Healers”).

In context of feeling nature’s forces, Weber examines nature and our relationship to it relevant to the shared biosphere. Weber states that “we are parts of an unfolding process of natural freedom” (14). He forwards the concept that as humans we can experience the aliveness because we are connected to all living organisms within this shared biosphere. In this context freedom as communion is embedded within Parrish’s basketry art. The baskets commune (communication) with the world around them. When one is naturally free, there are no constraints imposed by others, one is free to choose to consider the environment and participate with understanding that understanding the unfolding processes is an act of communion.

Each basket as a product of nature communicates as a silent artform through its presence. The communication is through its material, shape, color, and positioning within the display case. The artist is free to select the materials as well as the form of the artwork and its positioning in the gallery space. The artist feels forces of nature through the harvesting and making, while feeling other types of forces from production and display deadlines as well as forces of daily existence that pulls one toward or away from the time to create.

Although the viewer is free to move through the exhibit by choice, the trajectory of the movement becomes a subtle directional force through the guidance of gallery graphics and exhibit layout. The wall statements appear positioned to be read sequentially in a clockwise motion. The viewer moves through the exhibit, replicating the physical rotation of directions of the clockwise movement of the Medicine Wheel. The viewer considers nature, the artwork, and the artist, as well as the artist’s intent in communicating Native heritage through the artform. The baskets commune with the viewer and the other basketry, as well as provide ongoing communion

about the Black Ash tree, and the artist's narrative. The basket, artist, viewer, and artwork are all in communion within the shared environment of the Grand Rapids Art Museum.

Cherish Parrish's artwork demonstrates the freedom to choose one's direction in relationship to communion in the context of *with* that Weber references as a symbiotic relationship. Communion with the other means to be in a relationship with the other – whether family, friend or stranger, regardless of environment or circumstance, whether walking within the landscape of the natural environment or walking in the landscape of the Museum gallery. In this shared biosphere, one's freedom allows for shared discoveries, and the process of creating and of the arts unfolding. Natural freedom allows the unfolding of the origin of the other, the artform, and self. One can sense the unfolding of the other when in communion with the other.

The basketry artwork becomes self-referential directional forms. As the viewer moves around the exhibition case of *The Four Directions*, the viewer freely encircles the case in a clockwise motion. As a compass for considering in the present, the artwork communicates knowledge for the past and future. The directions of North, South, East, and West become literal as the viewer navigates around the display case to examine each basket. Woven with the natural tone, colors of red, black, yellow and white often represent fire, air, water, and earth, as well as the rising and setting suns.

Each basket emulates its location in shadows cast from the overhead lights of the institution. Within the art gallery space the viewer sees shadows cast from the spotlights that disclose meaning of blocked light in the present. If the viewer reads the artwork through selected materials, colors, or patterns, as (s)he walks past the baskets, the viewer's own shadow is observed as it encroaches on the basket's silhouette. Within the reflective glass of the encased artworks, the viewer may observe her own face within the backdrop of the institution.

The basket in the presence of the loss of Native tradition allows for the virtual presence of the force of resistance to Indigenous erasure that contributes to the renewal of tradition. The artwork reveals that the Indigenous people are still present in this space.

French philosopher, Édouard Glissant, discusses in *Poetics of Relations* (1997), the notion of force in the essay “That, That,” as he examines how relation diversifies forms of humanity in infinite ways (159, 160). In his exploration of the complexities of Caribbean culture and identity, he conveys that relation is productive as he considers relation wherein one reacts to the other. He contextualizes that culture brings to mind what it is that divides one from the other in context of community and how through relation one orients oneself to the other (Glissant 161).

In the context of Parrish’s work, knowing her cultural identity allows her to understand what it is that divides her from the other in order to allow her unity with her mother’s cultural identity through relation. Glissant discusses culture and the misperception that every culture in a societal group has to contemplate together or has to come to the same translation for all the interpretations for exactly what that culture is (162). Parrish allows various translations as she creates art, explains the interpreted meaning of Indigenous language, and references her heritage for the traditions that she is teaching and passing on. Daughter (and mother) allow for new personal discoveries from historical precedent and contemporary analysis as each uses from nature in a unique way.

Glissant notes that no one knows how future cultures will react to one another (163). Parrish’s work reveals that she is focused on her contribution to the dynamics of the world in which we live. Her traditional culture can be viewed through the engagement of learning with and growing with via the force line to her mother’s heritage in a manner that Glissant speaks of (164).

Through Parrish's basketry art of horizontal and vertical Black Ash strands, the lines become visible traces as "pseudo force lines" that Glissant explains as an almost indecipherable context of how one connects to the other as a direction of seeing the other (165). Evident in the basketry weaving, the strips and sweetgrass become force lines that authorize in a visual way, the hidden forces that inform Parrish's process. Glissant discusses the pseudo force lines in relations that become divisional or interception lines of culture (165). In Parrish's work, the force lines become visible as patterns that have led toward the uniting of others to her traditions of heritage.

In Parrish's directional journey there is gentleness in resistance as she edges toward the future and away from the erasure of cultural tradition that has already taken place. In its making, *The Four Directions* basketry artwork protects thought for that resistance through its presence. As with the Medicine Wheel, one moves in a clockwise motion to pass the rising sun and returns by way of the setting sun. The artist has the freedom to re-route, reconcile, or reconstruct her directional boundaries of experience.

Informed by Hannah Arendt, German philosopher Didi-Huberman references in *Survival of the Fireflies* (2018), the discussion of memory whereby "the past is seen as a force...and not a burden" and notes that as a force, the fireflies are sending their signals and that their clandestine community lights the "particles of humanity" through their essential freedom of movement (82, 83). Parrish is a firefly force visually represented through the diagonal (force) lines of her basketry weaving from the Black Ash tree. Didi-Huberman notes that "we do not live in one world, but in two worlds at least, the first is inundated with light, the second crossed with flashes" (83). While it is unknown what their outcome will be, one can see Parrish as a force, as is her mother, a flash of light as the firefly that lights up the environment. The pseudo and hidden force lines of cultural conditions are unconcealed within her work.

Glissant notes that “[i]nterdependencies” ... despite being uncomfortable or precarious are always worth something” (155). As Parrish is thinking and making art, she is in dynamic engagement with her mother where each can contribute to the relationship and wherein developing relations with unknown others may be uncomfortable. The creating allows for the development of relationships and intercultural understanding. The repeating patterns on the basket are Indigenous stories being told over and over again, but the stories of others that Parrish listens to embeds in the patterns. Recognizable in nature patterns include place and terrain, as well as the earth’s rhythm of lunar cycles, high and low tides, or seasons. The basket as a container of the environment (thought for the environment) allows for dialogue about environmental injustice and justice.

The basket allows for one to consider how one holds life patterns or rhythms or has responsibility for the other human or non-human. The circumference of bark strands that envelope the form, simulate the earth where landmasses and oceans are connected beyond a horizon that one cannot see. The Black Ash strips as narratives of the environment become literal containers of culture: the culture of trade that brought the emerald ash borer to the United States and the culture of oil seeping into groundwater, as well as the miscellaneous commonplace items dropped into the basket.

Weber’s theory of social practice, relationship with the environment, and understanding of the environment may be seen in the artist that experiences the landscape. From individual choices that benefit from the consequences of interacting with nature or caring for a garden path, the artist participates as a part of the unfolding process of the development of the relationship with the natural environment. The artwork becomes a process of performance whereby the audience is the environment, earth and world.

The textural lines of the basket as visual forces hold the weave of Parrish's family's heritage together as she joins with the environment, with the students and educators, and the museum curator. The artist in the role of caretaker becomes light as the firefly for those that are in darkness about the things that she cares about. Didi-Huberman closes his writing on the fireflies by posing the question "Have the fireflies disappeared?" He responds with, "Of course not" and notes that fireflies "brush against us in the night" and that they have gone beyond the horizon (87). Although Parrish as a Native artisan feels vulnerable to historical Colonialism, environmental desecration, COVID-19, and the loss of her family members, she becomes a light through her artmaking tradition. The thinking artist creates an artwork that through its silence allows the viewer the hidden process of reflection. The history of First Nations culture momentarily recedes into the shadow behind the viewer as the viewer moves toward the future into the next lighted gallery space and through the community of visitors.

AIR: 48221. *BREATHING IN MOON'S LIGHT*

“Judge him not until u walk the block in his flip flops.” Hand-painted with double strokes of green and black, the words rise above the larger-than-life pair of green, blue, and yellow summer flip-flops. Mindful of their vanishing point perspective, the flip-flops rest in the foreground facing toward the viewer. Each of the yellow straps is secured in the three points of the blue and green soles. As part of the gestural landscape of images painted on the protruding section of the six-foot-high concrete and block wall, the flip-flops become an anchor for the connecting stories that are illustrated on the length of the concrete wall. Teresa Moon, local artist, resident, advocate, living across from the Wall since childhood, invites other to stand at the Wall with her.

The summer sandals become directional footprints leading to the 1950s Civil Rights era. The woman, dressed in a stylish brown knee-length coat and cloche hat with flowers is the figure of Rosa Parks. About to board the yellow bus that brought about her arrest in 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama (“Rosa Parks Museum”).³ A man leading the crowd dressed in a charcoal gray suit and tie walks parallel to the bus as he edges closer to the passengers. The words above the peak of a line-drawn gable roof says, “Fair Housing.” The sign segues to the Wall that the imagery is painted on. Called the ‘Birwood Wall’ for the street it runs parallel with, the concrete wall was constructed in 1941 as a segregation wall on the north side of Detroit, in order to separate the black families from white families in this neighborhood. (see figs. 3.11, 3.12)

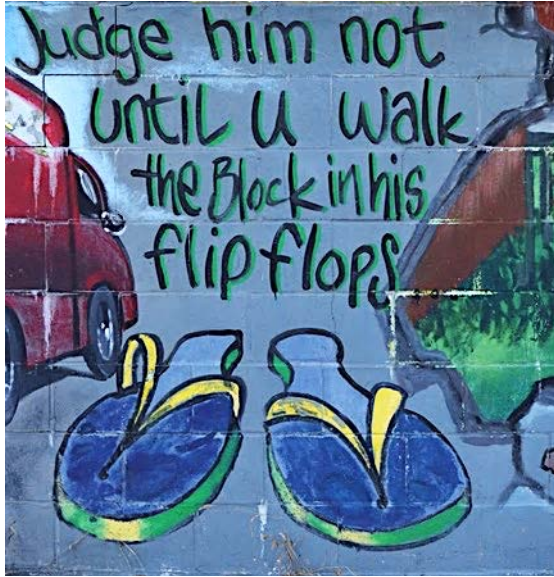


Fig. 3.11. “Judge him not until you walk the block in his flip flops.” Mural on Birwood Wall located in Alfonso Wells Memorial Playground, Detroit, MI. Mural Birwood Wall. Photo author’s collection.



Fig. 3.12 (right). Mural depicting the Civil Rights Movement that began with Rosa Parks boarding a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Photo author’s collection.

This examination considers the hospitality of Teresa Moon through the lenses of select philosophers. German American political theorist Hannah Arendt conveys in *The Human Condition* (1998) that “the smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation” (190). Within the essay “The Frailty of Human Affairs,” she notes that action is not possible in isolation, because action “acts into a medium where every reaction becomes a chain reaction” (THC 188, 190). Within this context, Moon’s act of hospitality merges Arendt with French philosophers Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle and their collaboration from a series of lectures addressed in *Of Hospitality* (2000). In an invitation and response format, they provide insight on the condition of unconditional hospitality in which one gives place to another (OH 25). This inquiry will include the perspective of German philosopher and cultural

theorist Peter Sloterdijk through his writing *Terror from the Air* (2009). His examination that focuses on the atmosphere and its manipulation by humans includes the notion that a being-in-the-world is a modification of “being-in-the air” (93).

On a crisp November day, local resident Teresa Moon stands at the Birwood Wall with two guests from outside the state of Michigan as they look at the section of the wall featuring the flip-flops. She is patient as the visitors walk along the mural imagery as the artwork segues toward the north with flip-flops leading into geometric shaped bungalow-style houses in primary, secondary, and tertiary colors. Large transparent bubbles, outlined in white and blue, hold flowers and imaginary landscapes as they drift south into the atmosphere over houses whose baseline boundary appears to ascend and descend toward stylized Detroit city scenes. The artwork on the Wall continues toward each end beyond the open space of the Alfonso Wells Park. As the artwork disappears into the shrubbery between the houses, the Wall continues its divide of neighborhood properties for its one-half mile length.

Moon welcomes visitors into the home in which she was raised most of her life. It is directly across the street from Alfonso Wells Park and the Birwood Wall that bounds its edge. Moon shares stories about her interest in the preservation of the Wall and its importance in opening new dialogue for unity in general. Her advocacy reaches beyond the Wall through her insight, acts of care, and unconditional hospitality. On the clear autumn day, Moon candidly addresses issues that give voice for the historical and contemporary social segmenting (or segregating) of air space in the neighborhood in which she has lived. German author Peter Sloterdijk refers to the “air he breathes” as humans’ “most immediate environmental resource” (29). As a self-described “griot,” Moon holds the story just as the West African troubadour-historian, in order to preserve her historical and cultural narratives. Her stories include those who

assist or deny breathing of others in spaces beyond just the historical context of her neighborhood, but in the neighborhood of humanity. The artwork on the Birwood Wall as well as Moon's role as a caretaker through her advocacy for the preservation of the Wall will be examined through Arendt's insight on the small act and its power to change and through Derrida's notion on hospitality and reciprocity of the other.

The Birwood Wall. Gerald Van Dusen writes in *The Birwood Wall: Hatred and Healing in the West Eight Mile Community* (2019) that the building of the Wall in 1941, initiated by a real estate developer, was to avoid providing FHA-backed loans to African Americans in the neighborhood. In his examination of the migrant movement of African Americans to Detroit through the first and second World Wars, he finds that there were a variety of initiatives that attempted to segregate neighborhoods, such as the installation of wood or chain fences prior to 1941 (40).

Van Dusen explains that the inherent bias of a white sociologist hired to report on the socio-economic and physical conditions of the community a couple of years earlier, was detrimental to the perception of the residents living in the area (49). The sociologist's report, which included evidence of bias, suggested moving all blacks from the area or converting the nearby area to a white neighborhood due to poverty and poor living conditions. According to Van Dusen, following this, the six-foot-high Birwood Wall was constructed between Birwood and Mendota streets to formally separate the white families on the east side from the black families to the west in the West Eight Mile neighborhood (50, 51).⁴

Moon clarifies that "people of color and not of color" at that time wanted to move out of Black Bottom and move north due to overcrowding and the high cost of rent.⁵ Named for the soil associated with the former riverbed on Detroit's near east side, Moon affirms that "there, the rent

was high: even though there were 10-15 people living in house, they could not afford the rent” and they started building their own houses in the West Eight Mile neighborhood (Moon).

Moon conveys that the home she lives in was her parents’ home. “My mom and dad bought this home. Before that they lived near Black Bottom with my grandmother. That’s what everyone did at one point; that is just how it was. I was six years old.” She notes that there were only dirt roads until the early 1960s, and that nothing on the other side of the Wall was developed: “it was barren” (Moon). But she thought “we had struck it rich when we moved out here in 1959” (Moon). The little house looked enormous to her as a child, and everybody had large families. Her grandmother lived two doors from her, and her “auntie” lived nearby. “It was like the best thing growing up. It was wonderful” (Moon).

The Griot. Moon states that she understood while still in her teens why the Wall had been built, but that she didn’t really know its history or the history of her community until she started researching in later years. As the “griot” Moon “is the person that holds the story and passes it on and on” (Moon). However, the stories that she passes along have existed before Moon became part of the story at six years old and before 1941. Arendt notes that in complexities of human relationships with conflicting wills and intentions that the actions almost never achieve their purpose, but that they produce “stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things” (THC 184). While historical narratives are depicted as imagery on the Birwood Wall, in 1941 the Wall itself was built in the context of stories that pre-existed in the city of Detroit’s human relationships. The hand-held signs that depict a need for “fair housing” and “jobs” give visibility for narratives that existed prior to the building of the Wall and Rosa Parks’ contribution to the Civil Rights Movement.

Hannah Arendt references the storyteller as the one who perceives, saying “even though stories are the inevitable results of action, it is not the actor but the storyteller who perceives and ‘makes’ the story” (THC 192). Arendt notes that stories continue, but “this agent is not the author or producer,” that human life tells the story, and that human history becomes the storybook of mankind. It is the combination of the actors and speakers that is the outcome of the action (THC 184). When one looks at the story of the Wall and its artwork, there is not any one person that the story is about, as Arendt suggests, nor is there any one author, but Teresa Moon and the artwork become the perceived storytellers for the Birwood Wall.

Changing Constellations. While Moon considers her role in community, it is through her care of storytelling that “bears the seed of boundlessness” that Arendt speaks of (THC 190). Moon changes constellations (attitudes and understandings) with her acts of caring for a Wall and its representation for a historical and contemporary community. The narrative that is being told is the story of the complexities of the human condition of living in the neighborhood divided by a segregation wall. It is the story of families that have a heritage of slavery and by migrating to Detroit were trying to earn better wages and build homes under difficult circumstances of inequality. The story is also about the ability to live beyond the limits of a Wall in order to thrive. Moon, as advocate and storyteller, leads the narrative from the Wall to her role and back again to the Wall where the artwork tells its own story of this neighborhood.

Standing at the Wall, Moon shares that she had a wonderful childhood where children played outside all day and had to only check in at mealtimes and that the parents and grandparents would sit on front porches to watch kids in the neighborhood play. Moon comments that neighborhood children were known by their street names, “Birwood kids” or the “Mendota kids”

(Moon). Looking around the park, one wonders how long Moon can care for the memories, the present and the future of this place. While the imagery represents the beautiful neighborhood of children playing with bubbles that drift in the wind and Rosa Parks, one may comprehend that the dove of peace taking flight over the historic march in the background, is today, still attempting to take flight. The viewer is moved by the representation on the Wall and momentarily considers what has really changed. (see figs. 3.13, 3.14)



Fig. 3.13. Teresa Moon, advocate for the preservation of the Wall, stands next to Birwood Wall in Alfonso Wells Memorial Playground located near her home. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 3.14 (right). View of Birwood Wall located in Alfonso Wells Memorial Playground. Photo author's collection.

Through the sunlight, from a distance the imagery appears as if it were a selection of saturated colors from jellybeans displayed in a candy store. The multi-colored row houses appear as in the horizontal length at bookends that extend to the right and left ends of the Wall. Replicating the shapes of the local neighborhood bungalows, the houses in line and texture work together to form the visual undulation in colors of red, blue, green, purples, and peach. Primary

and tertiary colors move across the length of the Wall. The colors guide the viewer's eye across the facades, from left to right and back again. According to Moon, the images were painted by a Detroit artist, volunteers, and families and children in the community. The images on the left end are applied with loose brush strokes in faded pastels, while on the right end the colors are saturated and tighter in application.

Drifting to the left of the centrally illustrated flip-flops, large bubbles float in the atmosphere as they pass in front of the facades. Larger than the homes they drift by the transparent forms are filled with scenery of landscapes, cityscapes, industry, and light. A man with brown skin drags a large bubble wand through the air as a light-skinned girl with two ponytails raises her arms up to catch it.

The multi-colored houses each have a central front door and two rectangular windows above. Each window has a horizontal sash and is outlined with a variety of complementary and analogous colors. The row of gabled-roof houses has a baseline that descends and ascends the length of the wall on a defined line that marks the housing boundary that in certain locations hides about half of the height of the homes.

A woman dressed in a form-fitting, mid-century, short-sleeved dress with a floppy wide-brimmed hat stands next to a 1950s stylized Bentley. Her mauve and cream dress and matching hat emulate the colors of the sunburst rays that appear to derive from behind the centrally located car and surround its blue and yellow frame. The car's oversized winged radiator cap appears as a bird in flight above the yellow grill as the car awaits its passenger in its destination that leads toward the viewer. To the viewer's left, an elongated bubble that holds an industrial building that floats over a tree-filled park where eleven stick-figure children play in the grass. A moon appears in the sky (see figs. 3.15, 3.16).



Fig. 3.15. Mural of houses on Birwood Wall. Photo author's collection.



Fig. 3.16 (right). Mural on Birwood Wall. Photo author's collection.

The Wall's painted homes, drifting bubbles, and children disappear at each end into the tangle of the overhanging ivy, shrubs, trees, and bushes of the backyards of nearby neighbors. Some areas of the Wall near the center where the man holds the wand are deteriorating, and the paint is chipping at the base of the Wall near the wet soil. Concrete supporting posts are cracking with age at the connecting segments. As one looks north, a glimpse of a mostly muted gray wall reveals residue of paint and natural stains from the leaves dropping overhead. Time reveals itself in the deterioration of eighty years of exposure to Michigan's four seasons. The Wall that runs in between the properties appears to share an unclaimed existence. Where the wall is overgrown with vines or tagged with graffiti, it becomes an obstruction of one's view.

While the artwork on the Wall carries the story of the past into the present, the viewer wonders, while standing in the sunlight at the Wall and only seeing the rooftops on the other side, if the people in the houses on either side visit the park to engage in dialogue about the

future that Teresa Moon is an advocate for. The playground's climbing equipment is painted in red and blue, with brightly painted basketball courts, picnic tables, and benches that align the sidewalks. Visual cohesiveness exists in the primary and tertiary colors.

Arendt discusses in the chapter on "Action" within *The Human Condition* the concept that speech and action "are the modes in which human beings appear to each other," and how we insert ourselves into the world discloses who somebody is that is "implicit in both his words and his deeds" (176, 177). In this context, both words and deeds can be examined from the historical and contemporary context when considering the actions of the real estate developers in their advocacy for inequitable financing and the building of the Wall, as well as Teresa Moon's advocacy for unity through understanding community through the preservation and protection of the Wall.

While examining the artwork on the Birwood Wall, the viewer sees boundary lines encroach on the baseline of the row of houses to the point that some of the facades begin to disappear. The speech and action within the government agencies as well as the real estate developer are disclosed through the mural painting of the foundational boundaries that allows for the viewer to consider the housing inequalities. Building the Wall was based on the speech and action of "redlining" a neighborhood district that was deemed to be, according to author Gerald Van Dusen, a risk or "D. Red: Hazardous" for housing loans and was included as the last of the four categories of "A. Green: Best; B. Blue: still Desirable; and C. Yellow: Declining, and D. Red: Hazardous" (39). According to Gerald Van Dusen, as part of Roosevelt's New Deal in 1933 many government agencies were developed and organized to stabilize the housing market, which later resulted in an agency's ability to circumvent the requirement of fair housing (39). He explains that "Although the term 'redlining' was not coined until the 1960s, it clearly applied in

1940 to neighborhoods with minority occupants, which were considered high risk for mortgage lenders” (39, 40).

The artwork painted in vivid colors on the Birwood Wall indicates a thriving community in the imaginary. However, the demarcation of boundary lines in 1941 served to allow the white families in the neighborhood to have, borrowing from author Peter Sloterdijk’s term, “olfactory comfort”; in this way the developers played a role in simultaneously deteriorating the “breathing economy” within the black existence (95). This is historically evident where people of color are marginalized and breathing in living spaces polluted from industry areas or are living in deforested urban centers.

According to Ardent, “In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice” (THC 179). In this way, Arendt suggests that it is the endeavor or the conduct of what someone does, not only their physical presence that reveals the unique distinction in the world. In this context the physical appearance of the real estate developers and those in the institutions that promoted the construction of the Wall would have revealed to the Birwood neighborhood the content of their character. Yet the preservation of the Wall as a historic landmark is disclosed through the actions and deeds or conduct of Moon that display her distinctness. Her willingness to invite visitors to engage with the wall and to listen to the narratives that she is able to pass on reveals her unique personal identity that Arendt speaks of.

In the context of the Wall, its meaning and purpose was an action without a name, yet as the Wall exists, it retains its relevance whether or not we know who the original developer was or the names of each of the artists from the community that have created the artworks. We have

come to know about the Wall both as the Wall itself and separately as the artwork that is painted on the Wall. While the imagery is relevant to the history of the Wall, in this context the layers of speech and action or word and deed are evidenced in its building, whereby its purpose was for segregation. Tereasa Moon and the artists of the Wall share in desiring the stories of the era and place to have meaning as an artistic and historical reference. The neighborhood as place shares in the narratives of Detroit, Michigan, and the United States.

Within Arendt's discourse, she notes that it is between people that action and speech take place and that they are concerned about what physically lies between them and their specific worldly interests (THC 182). In this context, that interest in the most literal way is something between people that can "relate and bind them together," and she conveys that most action is concerned with this in-between, which varies with each group of people in such a way that most words and deeds are a disclosure of the acting and speaking agent (Arendt, THC 182). This binding together may have a positive or negative connotation depending on the like or competing interests. In this way, the artwork on the former segregation Wall depicts the history of the residents of Detroit, the Civil Rights Movement, as well as the imaginary future; these are visual elements that reflect what binds people together in this neighborhood. Yet the stories that interest the artists in this Detroit neighborhood are stories that are of interest between other artists and communities throughout the United States.

The Birwood Wall was built due to the interest of the in-between. The action and speech that takes place historically is the concern of the in-between in such a way that the worldly interest between two neighborhoods manifests into the physical representation as a concrete product for designating separation. Although in 1941 the in-between became the representational interest, the interest that remains for the Wall embeds the historical and the

contemporary in-between: the in-between of the past and present eras as well as the in-between of property lines marked on a neighborhood map. The artwork that represents the in-between unites the artist and the viewer of the Wall as well as Teresa Moon, who as advocate stands between its destruction and preservation.

According to Arendt, in the complexities of human relationships, the notion of the subjective in-between that is not tangible in the process of acting and speaking does not leave an end product, but this type of in-between that is intangible is “no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common” (THC 183). The physical wall of concrete as an end product that is the tangible visibility of a common demarcation of properties intended for segregating a neighborhood, borders the in-between of two neighborhoods. Its tangibility holds the type of in-between that is intangible, such as thoughts, emotions, or memories for the viewer that become real in the moment of looking.

The artwork hides the in-between of the Wall’s human relationships. Between the underside of the painted artwork and the Wall’s surface, the complexities of a segregated neighborhood remain through its integrated traces. Residue from the handprints of children climbing and dirt embedded from the soles of shoes of children balancing on its top edge unite memories in common for the residents on both sides. The Wall exists in the complexities that pre-exist 1941 human relationships in Detroit, where subjectivity of one becomes suppressed opportunity for the other. The artwork discloses surviving and thriving in the historical in-between of conditional living, while simultaneously revealing contemporary human relationships through the artwork’s production that promotes neighborhood unity through the act of painting.

Each day, Moon looks out of the front window of her home and sees the painted Wall. While her advocacy addresses the contemporary results of the historical process of acting and

speaking that does not leave an end product that Arendt speaks of, the tangible Wall is a result of the intangible subjectivity that becomes real through the Wall's fabrication. The shared interest in real estate becomes a constructed wall that binds the community through its division.

Arendt conveys that as an outcome of action "each human life tells its story" and that history ultimately becomes the storybook of mankind" (THC 184). When we look at the story of the Wall, there is not any one person that the story is about, but the story that we are trying to understand is the story of the human condition and the story of a variety of human lives living in the neighborhood near what came to be known as the Birwood Wall. The story is also about the artwork that reveals the words and deeds of the development on the opposite side of a wall that was intended for whites only but has segued to a mostly black neighborhood that has lived beyond the limits of a Wall in order to thrive.

Arendt discusses the notion that the real story is not one that is made at all, but one that we are engaged in as part of the story as long as we live. She notes within *The Human Condition* in the essay, "The Frailty of Human Affairs" that action is never possible in isolation and that it is always between others (Arendt, THC 186, 188). She further conveys that "The fences enclosing private property and ensuring the limitations of each household," as well as "the territorial boundaries which protect and make possible the physical identity of a people" are of importance to the stability of human affairs (Arendt, THC 191). When this stability is disrupted, the story becomes the engagement of human affairs in order to effect change as seen in the artwork imagery on the Wall, whereby Civil Rights imagery is painted along with the implied future through the transparent floating bubbles. The Wall itself is a representation of human frailty through the context of which has been built as well as for the condition that it is in. It has eroded and deteriorated and has been weakened over time through its own existence.

Through the depiction of hand-held signs that focus on jobs and fair housing, the artwork on the Wall conveys the stories of the need for boundaries of the law that are reliable safeguards for African Americans. The Wall becomes an intangible shelter for advocacy through the artwork. While there is integration of race depicted within the mural imagery, the notion of preferential treatment of whites in 1941 in order to make the property more appealing, becomes thought provoking in the moment of viewing the public art.

In the Light. Arendt notes in discussing the inherent unpredictability of the boundlessness of action and the story that no matter the character and content of the story “its full meaning can reveal itself only when it has ended”; she conveys that an artwork’s meaning is judged when the artwork is final (THC 192). In this context, the artwork on the Wall may never be final, as it has undergone several events of painting by the community and will continue in the future. The artwork on the Wall invites the visitor to understand the history of the community in increments as if reading the ongoing chapters of a storybook. Teresa Moon as the storyteller also continues in the telling. Moon believes that the next generation will have the griot (Moon). According to Arendt, “Action reveals itself fully only to the storyteller, that is to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants” (THC 192). Teresa Moon has the unique role of being a participant and the storyteller.

In Teresa Moon’s kitchen, the visitor looks through the light of the window and sees part of the Wall that borders the Alfonso Wells Memorial Playground. Moon tells of the artist that designed and painted the murals for the Wall with the help of a local nonprofit organization, and many community volunteers. She shares narratives of her upbringing and her care for the park, from picking up trash to planting herb gardens. She tells of collecting, repairing, and giving away bicycles to neighborhood kids and feeding local kids that have arrived on her doorstep for

breakfast or lunch. As the artwork across the street discloses surviving and thriving in the historical in-between of conditional living, Teresa Moon simultaneously reveals thriving in the contemporary in-between of living for the future promoting neighborhood unity through her act of unconditional hospitality and preserving the past.

French philosopher Jacque Derrida, collaborative author with French philosopher Anne Dufourmantelle for *Of Hospitality* (2000), poses the question, “To offer hospitality, is it necessary to start from the certain dwelling or is it rather only starting from the dislocation of the shelterless, the homeless, that the authenticity of the hospitality can open up? Perhaps only the one who endures the experience of being deprived of a home can offer hospitality” (OH 56). As one considers the notion of hospitality as a result of experience of the absence of shelter, one recognizes that thoughts of shelter allows one to offer protection for the other. The protection of thought for shelter or the hospitality for thinking of the other may derive from homelessness or from always having a sense of place. Moon indicates a sense of place from her youth has been the neighborhood in which others did not want to dwell.

While Moon conveys her joy of childhood, the history of place allows her empathy for the deprivation of homes or access to housing in her community that existed prior to her move to the Eight Mile neighborhood. Her research leads her to understand redlining and the demarcations of maps into color codes of green, blue, yellow and red. She is aware that the Wall was built “in order to separate ‘these people’ from us” (Moon). Referring to the recent occurrence of the death of the African American George Floyd, whereby a white police officer was indicted for his murder due to holding his knee to Mr. Floyd’s neck, she asks. “Are they ever gonna’ get off our necks?” (Moon). Her home on the east side of the segregated airspace has been the place of respite for many neighborhood children over the years of her lifetime of

breathing across from the Birwood Wall. Children, since her own childhood, have been able to breathe in her shelter of hospitality.

Derrida discusses the notion of foreigner and other as he conveys that conditional hospitality is given to one that is known to have a name, social status, and a country, while unconditional hospitality is when one would *give place* to the other in which name and social status is unknown and for which there is no expectation of reciprocity (25). In this way, Moon provides hospitality to both foreigners and the absolute other. She welcomes those from the other side of the Wall or outside the neighborhood where there may be familiarity in differences as well; she extends welcome to others that are anonymous in familiarity. Derrida asks about the nature of hospitality and whether it begins with questions of “What is your name, what should I call you” or does hospitality begin before the name is known? (27, 29).

When looking at the artwork on the Birwood Wall and the descending and ascending baseline for the rows of colorful homes that are painted on the length of its course, one segues from Derrida’s notion of unconditional hospitality to ask, “Is unconditional hospitality due to the deprivation of hospitality?” (25). When one considers Moon’s living close to the proximity of family but her knowledge of the history of community wherein a variety of government and societal agencies were inhospitable to those living in the neighborhood, it allows the rephrasing of Derrida’s question to understand Moon’s offering of unconditional hospitality.

After viewing the colorful houses, landscape, and automobile, the visitor walks away in contemplation of Moon’s stories. As the “griot,” the narrative that she passes on and her part of the story of the Wall is as a caretaker of the stories of the Wall. She shelters and protects thought for its memory. One attempts to process the story of Moon’s experience of living across the street from the Wall and knowing that it was here that segregation took place. The history of the

wall embeds Moon's childhood memories where neighborhood children climbed over the wall to play with those from the other side. She is at home in her own thinking that remains as a light for others in the community to reconcile the future and past through personal interpretation.

Teresa Moon's advocacy allows for others to enter into thinking about the artwork painted by local artists, the future of the neighborhood children that participate in the painting, as well as the visual history that represents famous Civil Rights figures such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. The painting of the Wall continues as a community effort. Moon's advocacy and her willingness to tell visitors stories, taking them into her home, sharing her kitchen table, is an act of unconditional hospitality. Her welcoming kindness in answering questions about the Wall and personal candor allows one to understand the historical context of her Detroit neighborhood. Her warmth and interest in sharing the story of the Wall allows for others to reflect on common lived experiences.

By collecting various objects, Moon has created her own small 'art installation' on her front window seal to create memories. She notes that much of her collection is re-purposed into other works of art. Memories include living in the neighborhood since her youth, reconciling the past with the future, and learning facets of the Wall's story after becoming an adult. In context, the word and deed took place in 1941 already existed before Moon became part of the story at six years old. Since becoming the storyteller, she considers her role in community. As Arendt conveys, it is the small act in limited circumstances that bears the seed of boundlessness, "because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation" (THC 190). Moon changes constellations (attitudes and understandings) in the role of caretaker and with her hospitality. The Wall as the in-between reveals the historical context and future hopes or dreams where one stands in the present.

As one looks north, the Wall's painted neighborhood, children, and drifting bubbles appear to fade into the tangle of the overhanging ivy, shrubs, trees, and bushes. The grayed muted residue of paint, stains from leaves, and the grime become marks of time. The Wall, in deterioration beyond its highlighted painted imagery, reveals eighty years of exposure to Michigan summers and winters. The Wall that runs through the in-between appears to share an unclaimed existence. Overgrown with vines, sun-bleached graffiti, and cracked concrete, the Wall for some becomes an obstacle of view, while the Wall carries the story into the future about the events of the past and allows the past to be approachable as a dialogue for others.

Moon's story of hopefulness is derived from an upbringing filled with joy. Her relationship with the Wall was not one that was part of the violence nor riots that were taking place. But because of her memories of children playing in the neighborhood with family and friends and in relationships of her youth, she sees people together as community. Moon feels that she is part of community and "that she loves her people and her location of living" (Moon).

In the sunlight Teresa Moon reveals from her own story of light that she is a 'firefly' for her community. As a griot, she continually sheds light on the story of her history and the history of the community. The name of Moon as light and the notion of the meaning for the word 'moon' appears only we see it in the reflected light of the sun at night or during the darkness. Teresa Moon embodies Gerald Van Dusen's notion that the residents of the west Eight Mile community display self-reliance and resilience to participate in the American experience (170).

Moon conveys that as some of the newer generation of neighbor kids have grown up, they come back to say "Hi." She says, "It is very gratifying to know that it is like having the third eye, such a powerful thing to have compassion and empathy; it explodes, like a flower that keeps

opening up absorbing so much that is good for your soul and your spirit. These things I have, have been given to me” (Moon interview with author).

People ask me “Why do you go to the park every day to clean it up?” I have been doing this for seven years. Actually, what I started doing was, before the park was renovated about five years ago, there were vacant houses on the corner, there, there, there and there...four vacant houses. I would clean the curbs because I cared. ... Then others would make theirs pretty, too. I used to fill up ten bags of trash, now it is about two. Kids started helping me clean up the park. They want to help “Miss Teresa” ... and I want them to be good stewards of their lives.

Teresa said, “Move forward in spite of walls, toward dreams” (Moon).

CHAPTER FOUR

Call - The Caretaker Invites

Gentleness is what turns traumatic intrusion into creation. It is what, during the haunted night, offers light; during mourning, a beloved face; during the collapse of exile the promise of a shore on which to stand. Anne Dufourmantelle (85)

This examination of public art created in the Michigan cities of Flint, Muskegon, and Detroit, considers how three artists invite community in the call for an imagined future. Argentinian-born New York artist Magda Love, American Anishinaabe Jason Quigno, and Mexican American Elton Monroy Durán create public art that includes a flourishing landscape painted on a fifty-foot metal transportation container, a 16 ½ -foot-tall 12,000-pound Canadian carved black granite stylized totem, and a series of murals painted on buildings in a Latino neighborhood. The art addresses the effects of environmental injustice derived from a city's water crisis, the loss of Indigenous teachings, and the geographic division of a marginalized neighborhood.

The theme of 'call' derives from a series of lectures given by German philosopher Martin Heidegger in 1951-2. In "What Calls for Thinking," he suggests that the words "to call" may be a "signification that one might paraphrase approximately with the verbs summon, demand, instruct, direct" and further notes that "call" does not imply command, but rather an "anticipatory reaching out for something that is reached by our call, through our calling." He suggests that to set in motion or to get something under way, may be done in a "gentle and therefore unobtrusive manner" (BW 386).

In this context, through the artform, the artist reaches out with the anticipation there will be a response. The way in which the artwork makes the call allows for the other to consider the response before the motion of responding begins. The one who is called is invited to make an

individual decision about the action as a result of the gentleness in which the call is extended. How the public art reveals the call for future will be examined.

With an invitation from the city of Flint to participate in the *100 Murals* project, Magda Love extends her own hospitality to the residents of a community that live in homes that have become inhospitable. The contaminated water has dislocated families from within their present dwellings. She offers the shore of future through an invitation for others to paint an imaginary landscape with her at the edge of the broken asphalt parking lot. The viewer is invited to imagine life beyond the Water Crisis.

Jason Quigno's (Anishinaabe) *All My Relations* leads the viewer's eye up the vertical elevation of carved stone toward comprehension of the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Located near the shore of Lake Muskegon in the greenway of the Muskegon Visitor Center, the Teachings invite the viewer to acquire knowledge of the spirit of an equitable environment that contributes to community. Through the artwork, the viewer learns about the Quigno's First Nations heritage that the work derives from.

Embraced by the Mexicantown community, Elton Monroy Durán visually celebrates the Latino neighborhood in southwest Detroit. From a historical and contemporary perspective, his colorful murals provide a connection to the local residents. As one views the façades of the Tamaleria Nuevo Leon restaurant or Xochi's gift store, the artwork's narratives are captured through the aesthetics of formal composition. The heart of the story is understood when viewing the murals with the artist. Conversation continues despite the incessant noise from vehicle traffic a few blocks away, where the Interstate corridor physically divides the Mexicantown neighborhood.

WATER: *LANDSCAPE OF LOVE IN FLINT*

Painted fifty feet wide and 13 ½ feet high, the brightly colored landscape of flowering green hills, potted plants, blue sky, and bright-eyed, brown-toned children provides a focal point within Flint's Civic Park neighborhood. The painted landscape adorns the side of the commercial cargo container, the kind pulled by a semi-tractor. Installed in a tree-lined residential community at the far end of an aging asphalt parking lot, the large container is parked next to Joy Tabernacle Church. The parked semi-trailer serves as a bottled-water distribution center for the Flint neighborhood.

Identified as *Mural #35*, it is the second of three landscape paintings completed by the artist, Argentinean-born New York-based artist Magda Love, in the fall of 2019 as part of the *100 Murals* initiative hosted by the Flint Public Art Project¹ in an effort to beautify the city still feeling the effects of the notorious Water Crisis. As a guest artist, invited into the community of Flint, Love extends her own invitation to the residents of the urban neighborhood that are surviving in homes that have become inhospitable. She invites the children and families to paint the landscape mural with her. While the contaminated water dislocated families from within their own present dwellings, her heartfelt wish is that, if only for a moment, families and children can enjoy her landscapes where the events of Flint Water Crisis does not exist (Magda Love) (see figs. 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4).



Fig. 4.1. Magda Love. Civic Park, *Mural #35*. Completion, July 12, 2019. 913 West Dayton Street, Flint, MI. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 4.2 (right). Detail, *Mural #35*. Photo author's collection.



Fig. 4.3. Detail, *Mural #35*. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 4.4 (right). Detail, *Mural #35*. Photo author's collection.

The following intertextual examination will consider how Martin Heidegger's thoughts on "call" as a "letting reach" and Andreas Weber's notion of *ecological well-being* intersect

with Love's landscape imagery that consistently features a beautiful natural environment and the human heart as prominent in her iconography. Heidegger examines "letting reach" through Jesus' call to others to cross the sea in anticipation of its happening as an invitation (BW 387). On the other hand, Weber explores the biosphere and the sustainability of being alive through its relation to our hearts as connected individuals (22). Through Love's landscape imagery, one can cross into the vista of a just environment to reach beyond the present into the future to see that the well-being of one's own heart is connected to the heart of the other.

By October 2019, Magda Love's painted landscapes include multiracial children and long-haired women with bright aqua-green eyes and clothing in saturated rainbow colors and stylized patterns. The landscape environments consist of emerald hills, butterflies, baskets full of fruits and vegetables, healthy plants, grasses, and blossoming flowers. In the months of June and July, Love completed two murals several blocks apart in the Civic Park neighborhood north of Downtown Flint. Identified as *Mural #23*, the painting is located on the side of a small bakery that forms the end of a set of partially vacant storefront businesses constructed together on a side street at Dayton Place. The third landscape image, *Mural #93*, painted October 2019, is located on the north end of the International Academy of Flint located at West Oakley and Saginaw Street. While on a ladder, Magda Love shares about how the people of Flint are "so appreciative" and how much she "loves the city" (Magda Love). (see figs. 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7, 4.8)



Fig. 4.5. Magda Love. Civic Park, *Mural #23*. Completion, June 6, 2019. 1333 Dayton Pl, Flint MI. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 4.6 (right). Detail, *Mural #23*.



Fig. 4.7. Magda Love. Free City, *Mural #93*. Completion, October 12, 2019. 2820 Saginaw, Flint, MI. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 4.8 (right). Magda Love painting *Mural #93*. Photo author's collection.

Heidegger references New Testament, Matthew 8:18, “And when Jesus saw many people around him, he called them to go over across the sea,” wherein Heidegger examines the meaning of the word “call” (The Bible King James Version). He conveys that in Latin *iubere* means to “wish that something might happen,” and clarifies that Jesus did not give a command or issue an order; in the Greek version of the Gospel where Jesus “called to them to go to the other side,” the term *keleuthos* “‘to call’ is used means not so much as a command as ‘a letting reach’” and notes that the same word in Sanskrit (ancient language in Hinduism) has the meaning “to invite” (Heidegger BW 387). When the viewer considers landscape imagery, one realizes the artist’s wish is that others can imagine themselves in a thriving environment. Love’s artwork becomes a mirror in an invitation for others to see themselves in a new horizon beyond the events of the Water Crisis.

Connecting Hearts. An important part of Magda Love’s iconography within her landscapes is the stylized human heart centrally located either with children surrounding the heart or with the heart located on the surface of children’s clothing. Featured as an extraordinary artist by the corporation Red Bull in “Red Bull Mavens” when she undertook painting the largest mural in New York City, she describes balancing her world as an artist, mentor, and mother. She notes that “when you can survive things in your life with a certain grace and still keep your dream, and keep smiling, and keep a full open heart, that really speaks about who you are” (“Red Bull Mavens”).²

Berlin-based philosopher Andreas Weber, a biologist and philosopher, notes in his writing *Enlivenment: Toward a Poetics for the Anthropocene* that “ecological well-being not only concerns the biosphere, but also our hearts” as he notes that we are “treating ecological, political, and economic problems with their devastating outcomes as mere technical

complications” (22). This consideration is evident in the complexities of the Flint Water Crisis, wherein changes of where and how the natural resource of water was harnessed and distributed appeared to occur for economic purposes and without consideration for a just outcome for residents. Those in decision-making roles also had appeared to be without empathy for those suffering from the conditions of the water.

Weber notes that the capitalist economic lens is blinding and that “[r]ebelling against the decline of this ecology of the heart today is taking on the form of a fundamentalist extortion of fixed order, secure roles, and dogmatic meaning, which are all caricatures of the central experiences of being alive – as being individuals-in-connection” (22). In this context Weber conveys that in trying to see through the lens of what makes us human as a focus on one another is comparable to going against the rigidity of fixed systems where there is control of the other through pre-determined language and rules. The landscapes that Magda Love creates invite the viewer to consider the future while examining the present through the imagery that reflects environmental justice of clear blue water, as well as flourishing land and clean air. Yet one is invited to see within the landscape the historical reality of marginalization and inequity through the simple red lines that appear to surround the growth of the central garden where the brown hands rupture the earth raising the sprout upward.

French Caribbean author, Édouard Glissant discusses the notion of “aesthetics of rupture and connection” as an aesthetics of the earth in his discourse on the complexities of human’s relation to environment and ecology. In Glissant’s writing *Poetics of Relations* (1997), he notes that while focusing on economy, capitalism, and the internationalized standards of consumption that decimate people and land, the aesthetics of the earth is not one of “disruption and intrusion” but is one that when one is passionate for the land (agriculture) one is also passionate for culture

(149-151). Magda Love's public art juxtaposes the environmental, socio-economic, and political disruption of this Flint neighborhood through her focus on the natural rupture and the growth of plants and the connections between humans and their natural resources. She offers reparation in her call for future through her invitation to the community not only to consider the imaginary landscape, but to paint with her.

The symmetrically balanced landscape, painted on the metal side of the transportation container at the edge of the broken asphalt parking lot, invites the viewer to see. The colorful environment consists of two multiracial children standing in front of the hillside on the right and a woman sitting in profile on the left. The young girl wears a short-sleeved white flowered lavender shirt, and the boy is in a yellow printed shirt with red ladybugs resting by his blue jean pants pockets. The rolling hills, in bloom with two potted flowering plants, are positioned symmetrically, and behind the children on the right, a basket spills over with fruits and vegetables. The woman on the left, in the pink shirt and dark blue pants sits in front of a textured pot of peach-colored flowers. With her left leg stretched out and the other bent at the knee, she looks across the central divide toward the young girl and boy standing together. From her right hand, she releases what appears to be a blue river. The blue flows and transforms into the sky to provide the daylight for the central rooted seedling that is embraced by two brown hands. The blue transforms itself again as a river flowing and reaches into the aorta of the heart painted on the front of the girl's lavender shirt with white flower motifs.

The blue sky-river appears to flow from the central sprout in the soil held in two supporting hands outward toward the hand of the female figure on the left and into the heart of the young girl on the right. The river takes shape over the backdrop of the bright orange horizon in the distant hinting of transparent cumulus clouds. A blooming flower garden envelops the

lifting hands. Delineated by a red line, the garden is contained within. In the foreground, daisies peek over the charcoal gray-and-black stones that appear as memory-markers surrounding the wrists of the rising hands. The large expressive eyes of the painted children appear to look beyond the crowd of residents in the parking lot picking up packaged water, toward the small Civic Park Centennial Pavilion across the street where the neighborhood celebrates the manifestation of the meaning in its logo, “Heritage, Healing and Hope” at its Centennial Celebration in May 2019.

In discussing identity of the other in the context of anthropological viewpoints, Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, author of *Cannibal Metaphysics* (2014), notes that “Every experience of another thinking is an experience of our own” (93). In our attempt to understand the other, we do so through our own traditions and lived experiences. While considering the Flint community, Love considers what the experience would be for the residents of Flint. The reciprocal invitation allows for understanding at this border.

In May 2020 when interviewed by Stephanie Eche of *Distill Creative*, Magda Love noted that as a child she had a “universe inside her” and now as a professional artist she has the freedom to go in and out of many groups. At home in New York City or Argentina, she feels that she lives on the “edge of the in between” (“Magda Love on Being an Artist”). Without being constrained by the belief system of a larger group, her murals are a social practice that conveys her emotion.

An artist in the role of caretaker with a heart as visual iconography as well as the vibrant environment characteristic of her imagery, Magda Love conveys that the heart is not hidden in her response to others. Through the artery one sees the notion of the connection to others through life-giving pulsation of our human circulatory system that provides life for each. She feels

responsible to present the connection between humans and the universe in the artwork that she imagines.

In the series edited by Pei Jung Wang of Polyzonic Productions for *ARTphibia*, that documents immigrant artists, Magda Love notes that “our heart is our compass,” and it directs where you go in life and “who you are going to love” and insists that in the City, “using your heart is the most honest connection between people” and that one should let the “universe bring you the crazy experiences and possibilities” (Magda Love qtd. in Wang). In this way, she brings with her the universe inside her and her own openness for others allows others to find an opening to the future in the response to her invitation to engage with her public art.

In this context, Magda Love’s willingness to expose her own vulnerability to others in Flint derives from her care for others in a community whose vulnerability is also exposed. Evident in her artwork are visual clues relevant to the environmental injustices recognized within this neighborhood such as land marginalization through redlining. Through the brightly painted colors, the memories depicted by stones segue to a new life through the daisies. While the water flows as a river to the sky, the loss of water as a natural resource for the children and families hides just beyond the landscape. Stacked on pallets in plastic packaging, the bottled water is secured inside the walls of the stationary cargo container.

Levinas notes in responses within an interview on the discussion of “Philosophy, Justice, and Love” in his writing *Entrous Nous* (1998) that the responsibility for the other, while complex, “is the essence of the human conscience: All men are responsible for one another, and ‘I more than anyone else’” (EN 107). Levinas further notes that in an asymmetrical formula that the asymmetry allows for one to consider that “justice is born of charity” (EN 107). One sees within Love’s landscape that the woman on the left is responsible as she gives from her hand of

the water that flows as the river to nourish the new growth from the earth and into the heart of the child across the divide where memories of redlining and loss are overgrown by the cultivation of new experiences painted in the center of the panorama.

Levinas' insight that "justice comes from love" and that "love must always watch over justice" allows one to consider underlying injustices in which people groups are marginalized (EN 108). In the complexities of the Flint Water Crisis, the lack of listening by, as Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring* (1962), references "control men," that have been making decisions at the city-, county-, and state-levels, have the appearance of lacking care for residents in the community that results in an ongoing crisis. Love expresses a heart for community and paints landscapes that depict love between others and the just environment for which individuals care.

In 2019 Magda Love was told by local residents in Flint that of the many artists who had come to the city to paint murals she was the only one who had invited residents to share input and join her in the creative development process. As she examines how to make new public art projects that bring joy to the community, she notes it is important to listen to the community. For the mural project in Flint, she noted that the only rule is not to paint about the Water Crisis, to not present what was already known. Her goal at that time was to bring joy to the residents. She conveyed to Stephanie Eche of *Distill Creative*, that during the Flint mural festival she considered each time how to connect, what to do and why she was doing it: "if I paint things that mean deep things to me ... then it will have emotion for others" ("Magda Love, Interview with Eche").

While the metal transportation container holds bottled water for those whose ability to safely drink, prepare food, or bathe using the water flowing inside their own homes was

withheld, the illusion provides an invitation for how to think future. From the landscape, the youthful faces appear in the moments when families are desperate to know how much lead or toxins their children have ingested. Imagery of nature, fresh fruits, vegetables, and thriving plants allow residents to reconsider the possibility that the earth intends to be nurturing and that the element water (even as a packaged natural resource) can restore health.

Andrew Brown, author of *Art & Ecology Now* (2014), explores art through his examination of how humans interact with the planet. He writes that while artists have always been interested in the landscape, contemporary artists consider the natural world not only for inspiration or as subject matter, but as an influence for action that may improve the “close bonds of mutual dependence” that we have with the natural world (6). In his proposition of what art can do relevant to environmental concerns, he asks, “What are our obligations to each other” in the face of a challenge that confronts the planet (Brown 8). Magda Love’s obligation as an artist in being open to experiences in the universe, as she states, that the heart in her landscapes represent “love and caring between humans and the universe” (Love qtd. In Wang).

Contained Landscape. Mixed emotions confront the viewer upon seeing the beautiful landscape. The artwork in the church parking lot provokes contemplation and sorrow from knowing that the cargo trailer is the destination for picking up bottled water in a neighborhood that is attempting to recover from the Flint Water Crisis. The blossoming landscape of bright colors is situated in the midst of the narrative of environmental injustice wherein the mismanagement of the city’s water source resulted in toxicity and lead poisoning of a community. Revitalization has been a focus for the Joy Tabernacle community (“About Joy Tabernacle Church”).

The mural juxtaposes the beauty of the imaginary landscape within the contemporary crisis taking place in the Civic Park neighborhood in the city deemed notorious through public

recognition for its catastrophe. Magda Love's artwork elevates a community in the process of reclamation. While outsiders may notice the warm greeting or friendly wave from a local resident in the neighborhood, the resident recognizes that the outsider viewing the mural is a momentary visitor and may still only see the resident as other, the other that was exposed to contaminated water. The artist, on the other hand, sees the resident as a guest that she welcomes with hospitality to join with her in the imaginatively painted environment. Invited into the city, she listens to the residents in an effort to learn from and create with them in community. As she is called to cross from her birth country to New York, she calls the residents to cross to the other side of the water that they have known as harmful, much like Heidegger's reference to Matthew 8:18, "And when Jesus saw many people around him, he called them to go over across the sea" (Qtd. in BW 387). She offers a shore on which to stand in an environment where one can thrive.

Hospitality. Writing in *Power of Gentleness: Meditations on the Risk of Living* (2018), French philosopher Anne Dufourmantelle conveys in her essay "Sensory Celebration II" that "[w]e cannot possess gentleness. We offer it hospitality. It is there, as discreet and necessary and vital as a heartbeat. Its carnal power goes from sensuousness to the lightest pressure of the hand; it is thought when it touches and touched when it is intelligence" (55). In this manner Magda Love's gentleness offers hospitality to her art. As she conceives, develops and completes the work that features the human heart, within her intelligence of making she would hear her own heartbeat through exertion of climbing ladders, setting up scaffolding, or pausing in silence.

The application of her paint through what Dufourmantelle conveys as carnal power that goes from sensuousness to the lightest touch aligns not only with the notion of gratification underlying the completion of the physically arduous work, but through gentleness, she offers the imagery to emerge. The pressure of the hand is rooted in her thoughts of other as she develops

the recognizable likenesses of children as they materialize through her paint. Her intelligence of understanding is evident in the visual tenderness that is depicted within the contemporary landscapes that allows others to benefit from the imaginary synthesis of being in a just environment.

Although the trailer is from the Modern era as an industrial cargo container, the image conveys hope and healing within the natural environment of the earth. While the transportation container reveals transfer of commercial products, its movement here has stopped; the motion is taking place within community. Products contained within are transported in the dark until they reach the destination, where the doors open to the natural or artificial light. While the landscape image conveys the flow of the river-sky, shifting clouds, and flowering growth, the stationary container conveys an industrial past that begins with automated transportation in the late 1800s. The presence of a dry van cargo trailer in a church parking lot implies there is a temporary need for storage for the items contained within. While automotive progress continues, it appears that the progress of this neighborhood community is stalled.

Prior to its painting, the cargo trailer had for several years appeared as a white-box backdrop within media photos for multi-organizational grassroots initiatives and events that included the response of distribution for food and water for the neighborhood. While the organizations include churches, neighborhoods, and a university made up of diverse members, the white cargo trailer conveys the message that as a white container it provides resources for surviving. Magda Love changed the narrative of the 'white' when she painted the landscape with multiracial children thriving in a beautiful ecosystem. Although the sign previously attached to the side of the trailer announcing the "Flint Grassroots Initiative" with its tagline of "Building a System Around a System" was removed prior to the painting of the mural, it speaks to the shared

collaboration of churches in providing resources for an underrepresented population in the time of the Water Crisis.

Through the 100 Murals initiative, the aesthetic collaboration allows Magda Love's Argentinian identity to become relational through the creative act of painting. While Glissant's notion of rooted identity is founded in myth of creation or community entitlement, root identity "rooted the thought of self and of territory and set in motion the thought of the other and of voyage" (144). In accordance with Glissant, Magda Love attempts to "reconcile her former and her present belonging" (143). Her former belonging in the community would have been as an artist welcomed in order to create artwork. However, the present belonging is rooted in Love's personal understanding within her own identity of the relevance of the effects of the mismanaged resource of water, and vulnerability within the neighborhood. Through meeting with residents, families, and children, it is the action of painting that allows the other (viewer or resident) to become a participant in the cultural experience.

Through the artist's invitation, the encounter of cultures is not one of intolerance, violence or subjection of the other, but one of relational reciprocity. The residents, while identifying with the neighborhood of Flint and the event of the Water Crisis as central to what would be known in any community, the notion of Glissant's voyage that is set in motion, become thoughts for new ways to consider the other through collaboration for physical, psychical, and spiritual well-being.

At the center of the landscape, two hands appear to push upward from the stones and soil in the movement toward an elevated life through broken red lines to the future of the rooted plant. The red lines, although appearing as a broken boundary, are reminiscent of the history of segregation embedded in urban neighborhoods not only in Michigan, but throughout the US. The

flower garden flourishes within the distinct red demarcation, wherein the visual narrative speaks to the resilience of the neighborhood as seen in resistance through community. Bodies resist through the action of going to the distribution center to collect the bottled water. The residents continue to face historical and contemporary challenges in moving forward while using a stationary transportation container that provides bottled water, rather than being sourced into each home from its natural location.

The imagery invites future by providing a space that allows for one to respond to the call for the vision that anticipates an imagined future. As the church and community move together to load and unload the bottled water from the semi-trailer, the distribution itself becomes a shift toward future. The bottled water is lifted into and out of the trailer and into the hands and homes of the residents. The landscape image speaks to the Urban Renaissance taking place that began in 2016 to revitalize economically distressed communities (“Building on Legacy”). The painting reveals Joy Tabernacle’s efforts in providing the vision for a rekindling of community that makes possible for families in the neighborhood to envision themselves recovering physically, mentally, and spiritually through access to the temporary supply of bottled water.

The neighborhood’s past becomes a force as it edges toward future through neighborhood action. Magda Love’s ability to use her own experiences of past to move herself toward the future compels her to use the weight of responsibility not only to address the past (her own and the community’s she is engaged with) but to focus on joy as a way to raise herself and others into the future. In this way, as caretaker, her call to reaching out (letting reach) allows others to reach out toward something beyond the present and coexist with the local Urban Renaissance Center’s revitalization efforts to “support socioeconomic empowerment, civic engagement, and health & wellness for urban youth, children, and families” in Flint (“Building on Legacy”).

Within her writing *Power of Gentleness* (2018), the essay, “Sensory Celebration III,” Dufourmantelle notes that “[g]entleness is a carnal as well as a spiritual quality” (68). She states that “gentleness connects the spiritual and the material, the most subjective intention and the world’s most objective intrusion, intelligence and ignorance, one and the other. It sews the world together like a poem that pulls back the folds of reality but without reconciling them” (Dufourmantelle, PG 69). In this context gentleness is what allows for connections between tensions. While one may not envision a bridge between neighborhoods and the social systems that undermine or promote, gentleness toward each allows for one to perceive both reality and the ideal. While one may exist with tensions between the spiritual and material, one may exist within the intrusion that derives from lack of wisdom.

Magda Love realizes the Water Crisis exists and may consider those in bureaucratic systems who intentionally ignored the residents. She does not need to understand how the Crisis happened, only that she can help address its effects through her art making. Through the process the artist examines how to construct an artform that invites one to anticipate future. Love uses knowledge of other communities that she has worked with who have experienced despair to imagine a future for the children and families of Flint.

She becomes the thread that allows the stitching together of the narratives. She encounters those who have experienced environmental injustice and other social injustices throughout the globe. Through the materiality of paint and her gentleness in the process of creating the visual imagery with community, she allows others in the midst of turams to address their own vulnerability without acceding to its exposure.

American cultural critic Judith Butler, author of *Vulnerability in Resistance* (2018), writes in her essay, “Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance” about the discourse of the body as dependent within and upon structural social and material conditions, saying,

In this way the body is less an entity than a relation, and it cannot be fully dissociated from the infrastructural and environmental conditions of its living. Thus, the dependency of human and other creatures on infrastructural support exposes a specific vulnerability that we have when we are unsupported, when those infrastructural conditions characterizing our social, political, and economic lives start to decompose, or when we find ourselves radically unsupported under conditions of precarity or under explicit conditions of threat.” (VIR 19)

In this way the residents of Flint, through their dependency on the provision of the natural resource of water by a city agency that demonstrated decay in its processes, are a body of people that become an entity, contingent on the individual body’s (biological person’s) association with that very infrastructure. The effort of overcoming the water crisis by joining others in collaboration, persistence in raising awareness, or the act of pursuing restorative measures becomes an effort of one body, each as an individual, to become the group as a body related as the agency for change.

Depth of Field. Considering Magda Love’s painted landscape in context of Modern art, one examines French philosopher and historian Paul-Michel Foucault’s discussion within *Manet and the Object of Painting* (2009), on Edouard Manet’s painting, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergere* (1881-2). The oil on canvas confronts the place of the viewer relevant to the disorientation from the disruption of the Renaissance perspective that the viewer perceives when looking at the work. The image of a woman behind a bar with the large mirror behind her reveals a circus-like scene.

The viewer attempts to orient self as to the location in which the viewer is comprehending the view. The following is a comparative analysis between Manet's landscape painting that provides an illusion in which the viewer becomes disoriented and Love's environmental landscape in which the viewer maintains the orientation of place.

In Manet's work, the large mirror behind the woman allows for the appearance of a shallow background and the illusion of depth. The viewer does not see what the woman at the bar is looking at beyond the viewer. Foucault suggests that while Manet's painting is illuminated from the interior as represented in the picture, the illusion is that the lights that are in the scene behind the woman would theoretically come from outside of the picture space behind the viewer (74).

According to Foucault, the illusion in Manet's work of art is due to that which is outside the picture plane (beyond the foreground). The representation in the reflection of the mirror (in the background) becomes the representation of the physical distortion between "what is represented in the mirror and what must be reflected in it" (Foucault 75). The man seen at the bar, as reflected in the mirror, looks at the woman from outside the classical point of view. Foucault discusses the position of the viewer and the painter, but within Manet's landscape, the painter and viewer may shift from left to right and back again to become oriented to the image. Foucault notes that the viewer is invited to view simultaneously from incompatible places just as the painter who "must be here and he must be there" (76). Manet would have painted the scene at eye level as if on a ladder while the viewer, situated below, looks at the scene above eye level. Manet makes a representational play of the properties that as Foucault notes are real, material, and physical (79). The disruption of the viewer's place of viewing is relevant to imagery defined compositionally by the Renaissance one-point perspective.

In Magda Love's *Mural #35* landscape painting on the side of the cargo trailer, the work is also limited in the depth of field. Behind the landscape metal ridges protrude from the container's walls to become part of the illusion. The viewer also does not see what the two figures on the right are looking at beyond the viewer. Differing from Manet's woman at the bar, the two children in Magda Love's painting do not look away. In her panoramic scene, the female figure on the left looks directly at the children on the right. The lighting of this landscape is also determined by the light that appears beyond the foreground of the image, in the reality of the atmospheric light of day and the dim of night.

From a distance one sees this landscape as an image near the horizon; however, the closer the viewer walks to the painting, the more elevated the artwork becomes. When standing near the landscape, the viewer must look up toward the image. The artist painted from an extension ladder, however, the viewer's gaze ascends, while the painter's gaze descends to create the environment. Love invites the viewer to look up into the scene from the distance of one's individual perspective.

Foucault notes that Manet counters classical painting's system of lines, perspective and vanishing point wherein the viewer's place was assigned for the viewing in attempt to "play" with the material properties of the canvas (79). While Manet's efforts resist tradition to convey an invention of the time, Magda Love creates a work of art that also plays with real, material, and physical properties on a metal support in a contemporary way.

Love's new way of painting uses materials on a variety of canvases that are not traditional but are made of a fabricated metal wall, the broken boards of an abandoned building, or the aged brick of a city high-rise. Her landscape paintings draw attention to the economy and environment as well as the pictorial narrative for which the painting addresses. The viewer is not

disoriented when viewing Love's landscape painted on the side of the cargo container. Oriented when standing outside the painting's frame, the viewer's sense of place never leaves the parking lot in in the community of Flint.

LAND: *NIIKONII KIINAA (ALL MY RELATIONS)*

As one walks from the historical Muskegon Union Depot, the sculpted column comes into view. The 12,000-pound Canadian black granite rises vertically 16 ½ feet. Positioned on its formed trapezoid base, the four-sided tower appears as a segmented trace of an ancient tower. The carved rock at the four edges appears as stylized undulating triangles connected in a shifting flow. From the corner view of two sides, the triangles appear geometric and organic in the interconnections that progress over the edges to the top of the form. On each of the four sides, seven convexities ascend, surrounded by the spiraling motion of the carved form. *All My Relations* by Anishinaabe artist Jason Quigno, appears as a formidable on the grounds of this Michigan visitor center.

Installed October 2018 the public information plaque includes this description:

Niikonii Kiinaa (Née-co-nee Kee-naw), or *All My Relations*, is an abstract sculpture created by Anishinaabe artist Jason Quigno. This contemporary sculpture has been carved to convey the spirit, stories and values of the Anishinaabe, the native peoples of the Great Lakes who migrated west to Michigan from the eastern areas of North America as early as the 1st century. ... Quigno is proud to be a direct descendant of Chief Cobmoosa, known as the Great Walker, one of the most recognized and revered nineteenth-century Grand River Ottawa leaders. Quigno is also Chippewa and a member of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. (*Niiknoii Kinaa* Installation Plaque, Muskegon).

This intertextual examination will consider select authors whose insights converge with the granite sculpture *All My Relations*, 2018 by Anishinaabe artist Jason Quigo and the North American landscape and Seven Grandfather Teachings that he pays tribute to. German philosopher Martin Heidegger's investigation on thinking and what calls one into thought will

merge with German American political theorist Hannah Arendt's notion on art as cultural prominence and American art critic and activist Lucy R. Lippard's discussion on land art.

Within his 1951-2 university lecture on "What Calls for Thinking," Heidegger investigates the question "What is it that directs us into thought and gives us directives for thinking?" wherein he proposes that what must be thought about turns away from man and that, "caught in the draft of what draws," it is the withdrawal that attracts man's pursuit (BW 374). Arendt notes in *The Human Condition* (1998) in the essay "The Permanence of the World and the Work of Art" that it is through art that "worldly stability had become transparent in the permanence of art" in such a way that the notion of immortality, "achieved by mortal hands, has become tangibly present" (THC 168). American art critic, Lucy R. Lippard examines in *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West* (2014) the relationship between Native cultures, land, and art. Referencing Aboriginal earthworks of petroglyphs and pictographs, she notes that "rock art quietly absorbs us into its place, even when we understand very little about the message we are getting" (Lippard 91).

When observing *All My Relations*, one contemplates the directional flow of the carved incisions that dissipate into the sky and counts the seven circles representing the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Inspired by the collective representation of Anishinaabe core values needed for community – Love, Respect, Honesty, Bravery, Truth, Humility, and Wisdom – one considers the urgency of learning. The importance of this work of art becomes evident as the rock art absorbs one into its place of land and one in which the viewer may come to understand the broader cultural landscape of not only Michigan, but of its relation to North America.

Reminiscent of a Coriolis force, the linear motion of pulls the eye of the viewer into both clockwise and counterclockwise directions. The air swirls toward each center as the north, south, east, and west winds slip through the crevices cut into the stone. The symmetrical, four-sided totem finds its stability and balance through its own gravitational pull that rejoins it to the earth. Four natural stone benches, carved by the artist from boulders in western Michigan, rest on the east and south sides of the sculpture. With the shore of Lake Muskegon in the background, thoughts of waves that rise and fall in cadence with the moon intersect with memories of multi-colored kites that strategically lift into the sky. Sitting on the southern side, the viewer contemplates the form's movement as water and wind while considering how this artwork, carved from land, has a relation with environmental injustice. (see figs. 4.9, 4.10).



Fig. 4.9. Jason Quigno Anishinaabe. Niikonii Kiinaa *All My Relations*, 2018. Canadian black Granite, 16 ½ ft high. 12,000 lbs. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 4.10 (right). Detail, *All My Relations*. Photo author's collection.

In his lecture on thinking, Heidegger examines memory as “the gathering of thought” and focuses on the “‘call’ that compels us to think about what is most thought-provoking” (BW 367).

In this way, Heidegger conveys that poetry requires an elusive sort of “thinking, whose object steadily withdraws” and can have meaning only if it pays attention to its “own movement and direction” (BW. 367). It is this way the Seven Grandfather Teachings as viewed through the artwork allow for the compelled thinking about the Teachings themselves as well as considering through memory the meaning of the core values and the recollection of outcomes for those values as experienced in one’s life.

Internal and external relations through heritage of parent, grandparents, siblings, cousins, as well as all those encountered outside of one’s familial or cultural boundary in one’s lifetime, become part of the narratives in *All My Relations*. Traditions found in texture, materials, or hand-made artifacts become fragments of memories and of indigenous generations. Simultaneously this outside reference to traditions (the rock sculpture) is integrated into the land of the Muskegon visitor center and greenway. Knowledge, ritual, and social norms intertwine and embed within the granite form. Influence of family, friends or others that are or are not biological in relation with the artist, yet are wise people that become as relations, contributes to the sharing and passing of knowledge through teaching. The belief systems are affected by government or political events that have negated tribal ties to one’s family, community, or cultural heritage.

Historically, the cultural outsider’s (external) attempt for control of the internal has been due to lack of understanding that segues to assimilation in the external lifeway to appease colonialist constructs that have prevailed for centuries and yet are prevalent today.

French-Caribbean writer and philosopher Édouard Glissant claims in his examination of cultural relations in *Poetics of Relations* (1997), that “[e]ach particular culture is impelled by the knowledge of its particularity, but his knowledge is boundless” (169). He conveys in the essay “Relinked, Relayed, Related” within) that culture cannot be broken down into prime elements,

that its limit is not defined, “since Relation functions both in this internal relationship (that of each culture to its components) and, at the same time, in an external relationship (that of this culture to others that affect it)” (Glissant 169). In this manner, one can recognize that the limitlessness of culture is, according to Glissant, due to infinite interactions that take place between the “two movements” or the internal and external relationships (170, 173).

According to Glissant, Relation is a “synthesis-genesis that never is complete” (174). In this context, through the lens of Glissant in the genesis of Relation, there are no bounds in the relationships that form internally or externally to one’s culture. The relations are physical as well as intellectual and are acquired through the boundlessness of existing with others. The beginning of Relation for Quigno was not complete from his own beginning nor will it be complete during his lifetime. His ancestral heritage is before his known past. As a continual movement, time and the beginning of relation evade rest, therefore it is through time that Relation synthesizes without ever being finalized.

One imagines the genesis of Relation in a distant known century, yet relations can be imaged as before that. The current relation (synthesis) made up external relations that are never complete. Always evading rest and definition, the relations continually change within and without (exterior to) cultures that are embodied in mental, physical, spiritual and cultural well-being as well as the traditions in physical form that contribute to the facets of well-being through the practice of the tradition.

Cultures expand, evolve, grow and change as morphing adaptations. This movement also happens before the present time and before known time. The movement of the Seven Grandfather Teachings is an event of thought that transcends through generations and becomes new variations in the adaptations of assimilation in the cultural synthesis. The outward flow of

knowledge continues in limitless boundaries. Quigno's own legacy is a beginning for future generations that will allow for the telling of his narrative of heritage to his Native traditions of relations that began before his own beginning.

According to Heidegger, "[w]hat must be thought about turns away from man. It withdraws from him" (BW 374). While the actual stone carving is awe inspiring, the Seven Grandfather Teachings are the thoughts that escape by withdrawal as they fade from limited passing via teaching. This knowledge base of the wise teachings withdraws over time, due to generational loss, or limited encounters with the wise teachers. Thoughts of ancestors withdraw through the arrival of future where memories fade. The Teachings withdraw in the deprivation of the very values that are distorted in the intrusion of future as they dissipate with time, noise of life.

Quigno in the role of caretaker becomes a learner to become a teacher in his conveyance that the knowledge exists. In the conveyance the values reveal themselves through the art form in the carved granite that collectively represents thought for each. Teaching through gentleness and the care with which the artists create is seen in relation to the elements of the environment as earth, air, and water, as well as the relation to the community of children and families that he connects with through the artform.

Heidegger, in referencing the cabinetmaker's apprentice who is learning his craft of building cabinets, provides the example of the importance of relatedness to materials wherein he conveys, "In fact, this relatedness to wood is what maintains the whole craft. Without that relatedness, the craft will never be anything but empty busywork, any occupation with it will be determined exclusively by business concerns. Every handicraft, all human dealings, are constantly in that danger" (Heidegger, BW 379).

Seven Grandfather Teachings. Through the granite form, one considers how that the artist addresses the Seven Grandfather Teachings is revealed through his handicraft. *Love* for ancestors and future generations is realized through the making of the form itself in effort, diligence and energy of desire to form the visual story; *Respect* is shown for heritage and the other, with the artwork as tribute and representation of universal humanity as well as attentiveness to the proficiency in his craft for the story that is worth the telling; *Honesty* is seen in his authentic desire for cultural understanding through the authenticity of flaws or imperfections, remaining pencils lines and markings that reveal the process; *Bravery* shows in the development of a form that is exceptionally grueling in the process of making as well as the risk in his own calling as an artist to invite others into the dialogue for future in understanding the stories of the Anishinaabe.

Facing the stone through persistence and overcoming its challenges through the creative process whereby the stone is larger than self is an act of bravery; *Truth* is seen in the forthrightness of knowledge about the Anishinaabe that will last through his artwork for the next thousand years as well as the facts of the geology of the stone as it carries the history of its own existence without falsehoods or deception; *Humility* is evident in his gratitude of saying “miigwech” (‘thank you’ in Anishinaabemowin or Ojibwe) to others for giving him a chance to create the artwork as well as understanding that the larger story is more important than the one (artist) caring for the telling; and *Wisdom* is demonstrated in the intellectual complexity of the design of the artform, the intention to create a long lasting artwork for the future of others as the passing of wisdom through the art that will pass into time. Although teaching and learning are names for the activity, it is through the process that one develops a relation with the other.

Quigno’s artwork reveals his care in focusing on the Teachings that allow one to make decisions for community that are fundamental to interconnected relations and that allow for

“conveying a deep respect for the people that were first on this land” (*Niiknoii Kinaa* Installation Plaque, Muskegon). This respect embeds the care of the land by those who learn from those who teach the ways of the Anishinaabe. While the effects of environmental injustice and past sociopolitical events burden Quigno’s heritage as it has other First Nations People within the US, his focus remains on relations with one another. Knowing others as “all my relations” becomes the foundation for the future of a just environment wherein society feels connected to the other.

Carrying the Prayers. Within the open space of the park, the visual emphasis of mass and volume of the sculpted tower is realized whereas the 12,000-pound granite is significant in its isolated stance. On each of the four vertically carved sides, seven rising abstracted shapes morph in formation at the corners to transect implied paths that lead to each adjacent side. The organic triangles spiral toward seven ocular voids. The black polished stone juxtaposes outlines of gray unpolished textured stone almond shape centers. The stone form is static and dynamic in its organic carving, continually adjusting to the light’s cast shadows that settle into the voids and reflect off the polished surface. Invisible trade winds become visible though ascending and descending lines.

Standing on the greenway, the movement within the work is both tangible and ethereal. The lines of the column, as implicated crevices, flow to the vertical edges and open to the wind. The edges confront the environmental surrounding that is invited to become a part of the form. The granite mass provides lyrical motion that appears as a formation of abstracted musical notes that rise vertically in compositional form. The linear movement ascends and descends as a drift of air currents and the familiar surface waves that cross from the shore of Great Lake from Muskegon to the shore of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The abstract shapes form the stepped pattern that flows upward on the polished granite. Impressions repeat as a rhythmic dance that keeps

time in moments of seven that become twenty-eight ocular centers in the four-sided tower. With Lake Muskegon in the distance, the viewer gazes toward the northwest toward the Visitor Center housed the historic train depot. Built in the late 1800s in the Richardsonian Romanesque style named after American architect Henry Hobson Richardson, it is known for the large stones and mason work informed by the ancient Romans.

Unlike Trajan's Column in the Trajan forum in Rome, *All My Relations* is not a chronological upward spiral in its narrative, nor does it honor a single emperor in military victory. It honors a people through the translation of words enacted as values contributing to the life of community. Deciphering Quigno's low relief form may be imagined in the ascent or descent in the visual reciprocity. Its contours merge at 90-degree angles. The abstracted squares and triangular shapes appear in organic synergy and are symbiotic in their vertical flow. While the Canadian granite changes in saturation from black to charcoal as it reflects and absorbs light, the mixed surface texture emphasizes its polished and rough contours.

The textural surface of the column continues upward. The visitor information plaque references the flowing lines that connect the circles as "representing the smoke from the sacred pipe and the sacred fires carrying the prayers of the people to the Creator" as well as indicating the paths leading from one's own life choices (*Niiknoii Kinaa* Installation Plaque, Muskegon). The notion of sacred smoke and fire is emphasized by the sun's movement highlighting and casting shadows on the stone. Four base spotlights are positioned in the ground aimed in the direction of the sculpture ready to shine on demand and that would reveal the emulation of smoke from morning fog.

Hannah Arendt, writing in *Between Past and Future* (1968), discusses an object, whether consumer good or art, as a shaped thing that appears which allows one to know that it is a thing,

as she notes that “[a]mong the things which do not occur in nature but only in the man-made world, we distinguish between use objects and art works, both of which possess a certain permanence ranging from ordinary durability to potential immortality in the case of works of art” (205). In the context of immortality, the work of art as an object that is man-made in the world reveals the actual duration of the thing and/or one’s perception of the duration of the object. As with a stone sculpture, it would seem that the duration may be forever.

While the actual duration of artworks such as stone sculptures may last for thousands of years or for generations beyond those in which the artwork is created, the art holds meaning for not only the culture that created the art but meaning for cultures that evaluate the artwork in subsequent generations. The artwork, as an object in the world, is understood as a physical object. The potential immortality that embeds the original meaning of the work does so in such a way that the premise on which the work is made is that which becomes immortal. Although ‘J Quigno “2018”’ is carved by the artist into the lower granite base on the north side of the sculpture, the viewer understands constructed meaning beyond the physical stone to consider the thought of humanity that continues through generations. The immortality of the artwork is the human’s thinking that continues through time beyond the death of the artist and subsequent generations.

As one sits on the various stone benches, one repositions from the corner angles and vertical symmetries. Sounds of the outdoors, birds, wind, and traffic moving along the Lake Muskegon shoreline in the distance provide distraction. In the sun’s cast shadows in the morning light, the west side of the sculpture is cool to touch, the east side is hot, and the viewer can see self, reflected in the polished granite. The incised crevices feel almost soft to touch. Close observation of the granite reveals gold flecks within.

The four stone boulders as benches cast moving shadows in the morning light. Each is uniquely carved by the artist. The first stone bench on the east side (in counterclockwise rotation) is textural at its base and sides, smooth on top as if the stone were cut in half and polished with the bottom half appearing as a cut diamond. The second, is reminiscent of a formed gray seashell wherein the carved indentations stair step as incremental lines bisected by a crevice as an intentional sculpted formation, while the back side of the stone appears with its natural concavity. The third boulder appears as a triangle shape layered with ripples that recall the sand on the shoreline. The stone's pink is highlighted on its smooth upper surface while the textured sides are carved with rough vertical cuts (see figs. 4.11, 4.12). The fourth boulder appears in a natural surface texture, in warm neutral tones with a carved section polished on each side to appear as bookends of the stone that provide concave and convex counterbalance.



Fig. 4.11. Jason Quigno Anishinaabe, *Bench*, 2018. Boulder from western Michigan. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 4.12 (right). Jason Quigno Anishinaabe, *Bench*, 2018. Boulder from western Michigan. Photo author's collection.

Relevant to One's Place. According to Hannah Arendt, religious artwork traditionally in cathedrals, “secularizes” as it transforms into an “objective, tangible, worldly presence” that in a sense all art does this (BPF 205). She suggests that art represents that which is outside our worldly presence whether it is perceived as a religious beyond or within one’s heart (Arendt BPF 205). In this way the viewer may consider self in context of the artwork relevant to one’s place in the spiritual realm. The art allows one to think beyond what the art is representing, in such a way that when it becomes understandable by the viewer or common person, it no longer carries the sacred weight that only a clergy can decipher. Arendt notes that while artworks are “superior” in durability and are the “worldliest of all things,” they are not fabricated for men, “but for the world which is meant to outlast the lifespan of mortals, the coming and going of the generations” (BPF 206). In this context, the Quigno creates art that continues in existence beyond the artist’s lifespan. When created with care in quality and detail, the artwork reveals the care and attentiveness of the artist. The narrative of the granite embeds the narrative of the artist not only through the quality of its design or longevity but, that it continues to exist. Quigno’s stone sculpture will last through the passing of future generations as its beauty that transfers the Seven Grandfather Teachings to the next generations, becomes a cultural object that Arendt speaks of through its endurance.

The installation for *All My Relations* sets in motion an annual as well as generational ceremony for the artwork by the local community and for the viewer from outside the city, as well. The viewer may begin a new direction of creating a future ritual of visiting the city of Muskegon and the waters of the Great Lake and of standing on the land in which the rock art allows the viewer to be quietly absorbed into its place. The Seven Grandfather Teachings allow for the celebration of messages and a life that one continually seeks to understand.

The Stones. American art critic, Lucy R. Lippard's examination within *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West* (2014) reveals connections between land, earth, and place as she investigates the cultural history and geography of land considered sacred by Native people and land undermined by financial profit. She forwards the notion that gravel pits in the American Southwest are a microcosm of cultural and social change whereby the connections among land, water, and Native culture have been dismissed through colonization and inadequate federal oversight (Lippard 10, 50). Lippard's discourse on the complexities between the use of gravel as an indication of Modern progression found within the gravel pit's negative space as "the reverse image of the cityscape it creates" and the inherent meaning of rock for Native people provide a framework for interpreting *All My Relations* (10).

Rock, known as a backdrop for drawing (ancient petroglyphs and pictographs), becomes a memorial, ceremony, or directional marker when strategically placed. Lippard notes that "rock art quietly absorbs us into its place, even when we understand very little about the messages we are getting" (91). In this manner, Quigno's abstract rock art becomes memorial, celebration, and a directional marker for the viewer.

Lippard notes that stacked stones as "cairns" are "the oldest known human mode of memorializing" (128). As she examines gravel pits as graves in the landscape, she considers the cultural landscape through which the destruction of land is recognized by stone tower memory markers. The location of the first atomic bomb test site in New Mexico, referred to in 1945 as Ground Zero, is marked by a small "almost abject" obelisk-style monument made of mortared stone, whereas the location of another Ground Zero is marked differently (Lippard 128). The location of the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York City (2001), is recognized by the architectural design of 1 World Trade Center. Rising above the New York skyline, and

constructed with concrete, glass, and recycled steel, Lippard notes that it recalls the cairn in its ascent next to the footprints of the former towers where the water falls into the excavated ground of memories (128).

According to the statement on the installation plaque next to his sculpture, Quigno desires to represent all ethnicities and cultures through the sculpted stone as monument that “is a lasting tribute to the shared humanity within us all”; the artist’s hope is to remind us how we are all connected as we interact with each other, while beautifully conveying a deep respect for the people that were first on this land” (*Niiknoii Kinaa* Installation Plaque, Muskegon). Stones used as memory transmitted by forefathers cross, just as Quigno hopes, the bounds of culture and land.

As a conduit of memory, American Jewish historian, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi cites that the making of the covenant is marked with stones as a biblical appeal to remember; the covenant is made, as Deuteronomy 29:13-14 says, “not with you alone, but both with those who are standing here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with those who are not with us here this day” (10). Joshua commands each of twelve men to pick up a stone, carry it on his shoulder, and place it down on the other side of the Jordan River; each stone serves as memorial and representation for each of the twelve tribes. Hayim Yerushalmi notes, “Not the stone, but the memory transmitted by the fathers, is decisive if the memory embedded in the stone is to be conjured out of it to live again for subsequent generations” (10). Joshua conveys, there will come a day “when your children will ask you in time” ... “What mean you by these stones?” (Hayim Yerushalmi 10). Quigno’s “rock art” allows for children to learn the teachings of tribes not only from near the Great Lakes, but also from other waters and lands while learning how we are all interconnected in our shared humanity.

The Seven Grandfather Teachings invites remembering for building community through relations with one another. Through teaching about actions originating from the core values of the Teachings, the ensuing dialogue can provide insight to the positive outcomes where values have been the directional guide, as well as lessons that serve to reveal the outcomes of events where the Teachings have been ignored.

Hayim Yerushalmi's assertion that biblical narratives are filled with the actions and deeds of men and women (13) aligns with Lippard's exploration of the actions of creating art in the American Southwest. Land artists created earthworks that embedded "[r]eligious undertones and the nineteenth century 'sublime'" in which the work then becomes an attraction in its coexistence "with the place it creates" (Lippard 87). In her discourse, Lippard notes that the artworks by land artists are still relevant today.

Arendt conveys in *The Human Condition* (1998) that as it relates to a work of art that "[n]owhere else does the sheer durability of the world of things appear in such purity and clarity" and notes that "[i]t is as though worldly stability had become transparent in the permanence of art, so that a premonition of immortality, not the immortality of the soul or of life but of something immortal achieved by mortal hands, has become tangibly present, to shine and to be seen, to sound and to be heard, to speak and to be read" (THC 168). The worldly stability that Arendt forwards as becoming transparent through the permanence of art also allows for the world's instability to become transparent as well. The stone or rock art allows one to see the art in context of the world as both stable and unstable in the present viewing.

Cultural Art. When one views earthworks, land art, or rock art, one senses the stability of life as a durability in human history, while the art continues in the presence through the duration of time. In this context one perceives the artwork as developed by humans to become part of one's

tangible world. Observing or touching the artwork and discussing it or contemplating its meaning allows one to consider the place of the artwork and one's relation to the place. While on the other hand, one also recognizes the instability of life when one considers the place of the art.

Surrounded by ruin or fragmented artifacts, one can evaluate if the community has been historically enhanced by the artwork or if the artwork represents the deterioration of culture through the absence of care for the land and one another.

According to Hannah Arendt in the essay, "The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Political Significance," within her text, *Between Past and Future* (2006), mass culture is a growing concern (194). She conveys that culture in a society is threatened when all worldly objects and things are produced to fulfill only a need or function for life processes (Arendt BPF 204). She notes that the judgment of things as cultural objects is relevant to the extent in which their durability lasts through the centuries and eventual immortality; if the object transcends need and function, it is then removed from processes of consumption and outlasts man's lifespan (Arendt, BPF 199, 205). In this way the culture is evident in the artwork relevant to what is revealed within the art such as belief systems of myths or religion or iconography that lasts over time, whereas consumable objects are generally meant for the function and used up and discarded in the process of daily living. However, if a consumer product outlasts the lifespan of man, it is often the result of materials that are not biodegradable, which provides insight into the cultural use of products rather than an object of art as a cultural object.

In this context when one considers Lippard's discussion on art and land, one recognizes that rock art as petroglyphs are cultural objects of not only ancient people, but contemporary artists (or vandals) who wish for the meaning of the mark to be understood as a contemporary presence or as one that may transcend man's lifespan. Art carved into stone as two-dimensional

or three-dimensional form allows future generations to consider the societal lifeway of those whose existence can be seen through the permanence of the art.

Arendt notes that “culture” in word and concept derives from the Roman “*colere* – to cultivate, to dwell, to take care, to tend and preserve” where used in context of man in connection with nature (BPF 208). She notes that complexities of art in the public realm, evidenced since ancient Greek and Roman societies, indicate that art and politics and the inherent tensions are interrelated and mutually dependent (Arendt BPF 215). In this context, approving or funding a work of art for a public space can be a laborious, long, or contentious process in many cities. The approval of artwork is defined by the scrutiny of those involved in the approval process that include funding organizations, government agencies, or private donors.

Arendt notes that mediation of conflict occurs between the artist when the man of action is one whose criterion is beauty and not something for themselves (BPF 215). In public spaces, the artist’s work must be analyzed and scrutinized often by those overseeing the committee or organization deciding on the public art. In some cases, the “man of action” that Arendt references (director) may lack knowledge of art aesthetics or neighborhood perception whereby the artwork falls short of community expectations. Once the artwork is installed or placed in the public space, the community will either accept or tolerate the work by allowing it to be or that will support its removal. If the community does not agree to tolerate it, as was the case of *Tilted Arc* (1981) by Richard Serra. The large controversial steel sculpture installed in the Foley Federal Plaza in New York City blocked the movement of pedestrians across the plaza. The artwork was dismantled, removed, and placed into permanent storage (“Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc*”).

One considers rock art today that Lippard examines in her study, as that which is undermined by industry, damaged by vandalism, or modified for tourism in locations that become “secular society’s sacred spaces” (97). As national or state parks provide inconsistent support for locations bearing cultural art, Lippard notes the illusion of the “Land of Enchantment” for tourism becomes the “Land of Entrapment” through the money-making term advertised as “culture” (94). Although Quigno’s *All My Relations* is installed on the land of the Muskegon Visitor Center and there are local attractions for the natural resources of water and sand at Lake Michigan’s shoreline and military history on the WWII Naval Ship Museum, the Old Train Depot ground allows for quiet contemplation without the need to purchase an entry ticket ahead of time.

Glissant’s examination of cultural “creolization” in the Caribbean, sees relation as a new dimension as an inclusion of language and ideology, he states that “the landscape of your word is the world’s landscape”; and that totality within self is approached “through the accumulation of sediments,” wherein one’s sediment begins with the country that one begins in (33). Quigno’s art invites the Seven Grandfather Teachings to become a sharing of cultures that begins with the sediment of where Quigno is from.

As Quigno pays tribute “while beautifully conveying a deep respect for the people that were first on this land,” he invites the viewer to consider the words and the meaning of the values listed for that which is being taught, whereby the viewer may excavate one’s personal landscape that include sediments of “conditioning and prejudices” that Quigno speaks of. (*Niiknoii Kinaa* Installation Plaque, Muskegon). Adopting the words that become values from the Seven Grandfather Teachings allows the landscape of words that Quigno shares to become one’s own world landscape.

While the generational Teachings are as evolutionary as the Earth wherein the Anishinaabe first migrated into Michigan, the words have meaning in Native and Western culture. Learners can share cultural understanding. Values conveyed through written or oral means in part reveal Glissant's theme of "poetics of relation" in that it is through thought of multilingualism, balance between present and duration, and questioning that include imaginary constructs that allow for relation to emerge at all (35).

The sculpture, exposed on the greenway in the city of Muskegon, stands on an undermined reconstructed environment. Located between streets paved with gravel, stone, and oil, the sidewalks are formed of concrete, the invention from the ancient builders of Rome. Stone and brick buildings border the view. As the sculpture changes continuously in the light, the viewer may consider the skills of another stone sculptor. Michelangelo, the brilliant craftsman, embodied life in his marble forms. As the sunlight filters through moving clouds from the skylight above Michelangelo's *David* (1501-04) where the sculpture now stands in the Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, Italy, the marble form appears to breathe. The towering figure contains and reveals the intellectual, psychological, and spiritual acumen of the Renaissance artisan. The Canadian black granite sculpted in the form *All My Relations* appears to have the acumen of life as well.

The articulation of Quigno's intellectual understanding of his Native American heritage and sacred traditions allows the viewer to believe that the Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers are being whispered through the dynamically carved form. As one studies the sculpture, the words of the Teachings, *Love, Respect, Honesty, Bravery, Truth, Humility, and Wisdom* are revealed in the stone.

Arendt notes, “Because of their outstanding permanence, works of art are the most intensely worldly of all tangible things; their durability is almost untouched by the corroding effect of natural processes”; and notes that the “permanence, the very stability of the human artifice,” is one in which it “achieves a representation of its own” (THC 167, 168). *All My Relations* becomes a representation of its own through its existence. While one may not encounter the artist in his lifetime, one will encounter the meaning of the artwork as an intentional work meant to be beautiful in the material in which it is created in a future lifetime.

The permanence of the work due to its material and form will allow future generations to contemplate the work whether or not the Visitor Center information plaque in Muskegon is still in existence. The aesthetic form will serve as its own representation in which the viewer or archeologist will find meaning. The dynamic lines of movement will be understood as the dynamic flow associated with natural resources of air, water, and land just as has been analyzed in discoveries of prehistoric art carved into rock.

Wave of the Future. The pattern of shapes and the ascent of the dynamic flow within the form imply hierarchy without reference to specific representation of the ancestral relation by name or identifying feature. As with ancient forms, the material trace allows the identification of original place. The rock relocated from Canada shares its own granular beginning in the duration of the narrative. While the face of the other is not carved into the form, as one sees self in the reflection of the polished stone, one may envision the face of the other sharing the Teachings. The curvilinear interstices allow directional thoughts to pass, spiral, surface and hide in the crevices of this abstracted towering form.

The artist’s use of materials of the land to tell the story of his heritage invites the stone to tell the story of the land of North America. The earth, location, and water from which it is

formed, provide insight into its geological past and therefore the past of those who have brought it to its form as a work of art. Standing on each of the four sides of the sculpture allows the viewer to stand in the four directions of the wind. Believed to be sacred by Indigenous people, the directions include medicinal and spiritual lifeways. Shifting or changing where the viewer stands while studying *All My Relations*, allows the viewer to physically consider the other in the contemplation of the artwork. The other may be a family member nearby, a stranger passing in the distance, or one imaged in thoughts.

The four directions allow one to consider the duration of four seasons. Wind, rain, and snow may briefly change the backdrop of the artwork and erode the stone over the duration of time, but the natural elements reinforce the meaning of the work through the viewer's proximity within the sculpture's environment. The seven spiraling circles on each side allow for Seven Grandfather teachings to be heard as four seasonal directives or the seven directives for a lifetime. One may listen to the Teachings of the forefathers multiple times on one's journey. The Teachings allow one to consider the perpetual nature of the Teachings through the duration of the stone.

Like ancient Roman columns of Carrera marble have stood for more than 2,100 years, Quigno's granite sculpture *All My Relations* will endure for future generations to find their own meaning within its teachings. "Quigno believes his purpose in life is to tell the stories and beliefs of his people through his art with stone so that hundreds and even thousands of years from now future generations will know the beautiful values and way of life of the Anishinaabe" (*Niiknoii Kinaa* Installation Plaque, Muskegon).

Since the sculpture is located near Lake Michigan, the continuous undulating lines flow in reflection of the movement of the natural environment that surrounds it. The ebb and flow of

water are waves that meet the Lake's shoreline or the rivers that carve through landscapes of the local terrain. According to Arendt, in *Between Past and Future* (2006), "The first thing to be noticed is that not only the future – "the wave of the future" – but also that the past is seen as a force" (BPF 10). In this context Arendt suggests that man, when seeing himself in the interval between past and future, does not stand in a continuum but at the point of the gap where, from his viewpoint, he sees the directional flow of past and future (BPF 10). Nature provides evidence of past forces that allows one to see how paths were paved through the environment from the continues movement of the elements. Water flows through the land, releasing stones, it creates new tributaries. The future anticipates changes in geographical landscape with each new season. It is as if the land is thinking about where it will re-locate.

From this point where man stands, Arendt suggests there is a diagonal force from the clash of the two opposing forces and that it becomes the "perfect metaphor for the activity of thought" and further suggests that within the mental phenomena, this may "be the region of the spirit or rather, the path paved by thinking" in which "the activity of thought" as "trains of thought, of remembrance, and anticipation reside" (BPF 12, 13). The thinking happens in the present as one considers the past and future. Remembrance materializes in the present, such as in the author's Grandmother teachings, that allow for the segue toward the future by thinking of how to be. The force begins a forward motion, if one is compelled to move at all.

Unlike culture, the activity of thought cannot be passed to the next generation; each new generation must discover it by inserting "himself between an infinite past and an infinite future" to pave it anew (Arendt BPF 13). The activity of thought allows the viewer of *All My Relations* to consider the gap or the space of standing in remembrance or anticipation. Quigno's artwork

allows the viewer to create personal meaning as a pivot point in the present as a personal “Ground Zero” wherein one may find meaning previously not considered.

Jason Quigno’s artwork knows no borders nor boundaries. The landscape of his artwork is an excavation of contemporary issues that include relations to others and land on a global scale. The region of the spirit in which Quigno brings his art to the public, derives from his activity of thought that includes remembrance. Quigno calls for future by considering the past. The past allows for one to consider a time when First Nations People lived in community with the land, believing places were sacred spaces and were caretakers. Quigno, in addressing preconceived notions of Native imagery through abstracted form, invites the viewer to be reminded of our shared humanity through *All My Relations* that reveals the Seven Grandfather Teachings – *Love, Respect, Honesty, Bravery, Truth, Humility, and Wisdom*.

AIR: 48216. *BREATHING IN THE GOOD*

The large wall mural, illustrated with near life-size figures in the foreground, appears as a celebration of people in a city street known as Bagley Street. In the central foreground two couples dance, while in the middle ground community onlookers join the festivity. A “Michigan Welcome Center” sign hangs on the front of the building that makes up part of the Detroit skyline. The built environment recedes into the horizon below portraits of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo observing from the heavens in ethereal blue. The Mexican husband and wife artists appear to look toward and beyond the viewer. Atop four vertical poles in the distant left (north in the scene), raised flags flutter in the breeze symbolizing the United States, the state of Michigan, and the countries of Canada, and Mexico.

The mural is painted in the Mexicantown Plaza del Norte Welcome Center, located on the lower west side of Detroit next to the interchange of Interstate Highways 75 and 96 in the lower peninsula of the state of Michigan. On a brisk autumn morning, the artist arrives, retrieves the hidden key from a strategic location, and invites visitors inside the lobby to see the first of nineteen murals that he has painted for the Detroit community of Mexicantown.

Elton Monroy Durán’s artwork derives from the artist’s lived experience as an immigrant relocating to a city that has been both hospitable and hostile. He continues creating art as a call for an imagined future through the importance of unity and cultural understanding. Inspired by the murals of Diego Rivera and with gentleness of heart, Durán paints murals in an effort to reunite a Detroit community divided by a network of Interstate highways. Geographically bisected, the center of the Latino community is affected by environmental injustice. Living with the sense of absence of place in the midst of noise and air pollution, the Mexicantown community continues. Durán paints murals for the purpose of creating a revolution through his

artform that initiates dialogue for understanding, reunites the heart of a community, and builds relationships.

The following analysis will consider how the mural artist Diego Rivera's essay on revolutionary spirit and French philosopher Anne Duforumantelle's notion of inner revolution as forgiveness intersect with Elton Monroy Durán's concept of change through art in Detroit's Mexicantown neighborhood. In 1932, Mexican artist Rivera proclaimed in his essay "The Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art" that "Art is a social creation" (Rivera 422). Within Harrison and Wood's *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (2003) Rivera's essay conveys that art should be for the common people and that the artist must be attuned to the revolution in culture as it relates to art and politics (Rivera, 424).

The community that Durán paints in the mural is diverse. Depicting Mexican influence, the colors are painted in hues of complementary muted blues and subtle oranges and saturated reds and greens. The lead dancing couple characterized as movie stars features the male wearing a celery-green suit and brown fedora as he swings the female dressed in a tangerine three-fourths length shirt and pleated skirt. Her ankle socks are mint-green, and both wear leather saddle oxford shoes that recall the popular style of the 1950s. Flowered hats pass as one's 'Sunday best,' while Western-style cowboy boots and red Chuck Taylor All Stars point to cultural fashion. Distinct residents within this neighborhood include clergy wearing black vestments, construction workers, businessmen, Mariachi dancers, and women wearing aprons (figs. 4.13, 4.14).



Fig. 4.13. Elton Monroy Durán. *Bagley Street* mural, located in Mexicantown Plaza del Norte Welcome Center. 48216 Detroit, MI. Inspired by Diego Rivera *Detroit Industry* Murals. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 4.14 (right). Detail, *Bagley Street* mural. Photo author's collection.

Buildings that line the street are made of brick and stucco with facades of warm peach, sepia, and gold. At the base of the mural, a vintage film strip running horizontally forms the bordered hedge that allows the viewer to enter the scene as if walking through an open gate made from the separated splice. Six still-images in monochromatic blue and frozen frames of grass-green provide a sequential historical narrative about breathing in the heart of this community.

French philosopher Dufourmantelle, author of *Power of Gentleness*, writes in her essay “Justice and Forgiveness” that “forgiveness is conditioned on gentleness” and notes the need for drastic change wherein she conveys that “without inner revolution forgiveness is merely wished for” (33). Through gentleness, he creates public art that embodies humanness as well as an internal desire in his own heart for forgiveness for circumstances and for those that have historically marginalized brown and black communities.

Revolutionary Development. Diego Rivera's essay in *Modern Quarterly New York* in the autumn of 1932 included in Harrison and Wood's anthology, was written while he was working on the *Detroit Industry* murals located within the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1932-33 (Rivera 422) (figs. 4.15, 4.16).



Fig. 4.15. Diego Rivera, *Detroit Industry Murals*, 1932-33, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 4.16 (right). Detail, *Detroit Industry Murals*, 1932-33. Photo author's collection.

Rivera writes, “Art is a social creation” after he had begun a mural program in Mexico (Rivera 422). His belief that murals should represent the proletariat (labor or working class) as a social movement is in opposition to the notion of easel art promoted by bourgeois values. He writes that “[t]he man who is truly a thinker, or the painter who is truly an artist, cannot, at a given historical moment, take any but a position in accordance with the revolutionary development of his own time” (Rivera 422). This revolution is seen as the actual occurrences in society that take place socio-politically as well as artistically. Although Rivera is influenced by Communist ideology, his focused interest is in the ability of the working class to have access to

art that represents them. He contends that art is revolutionary when it becomes pivotal in representation of political and social therefore cultural change.

According to Rivera, “We can establish it as a basic fact, that the importance of an artist can be measured directly by the size of the multitudes whose aspirations and whose life he serves to condense and translate” (Rivera 422). As Durán gathers images of others from the local historical society and the community, he imagines the community of Mexicantown physically, geographically, and relationally united. He contends that recognition and remembrance through the painted images represent the community and individuals connected to Mexicantown as part of greater Detroit. A male dancer in the foreground, dressed in a light blue suit holds a single stem calla lily, named after the Greek word for “beautiful” symbolizes rebirth and life for the community.

The community depicted in his work is not as a photograph, but it is telling the story of the people and preserving it somehow through the artform. He notes that while the people in this mural are from the community, many are historical, and in wanting to convey their significance, he paints them like movie stars celebrating with the community. This becomes a connection for those who look at the mural that they are also significant and that their identities are not being erased (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021).

Rivera notes that “[t]he social struggle is the richest, the most intense, and the most plastic subject which the artist can choose”; and further conveys that “one who is born to be an artist can certainly not be insensible to such developments” and clarifies that he is referring to the “constitution or make-up his eyes, of his nervous system, of his sensibility, and of his brains. The artist is a direct product of life” (Rivera 422). Emphatic, Durán says, “I was born to be an artist.

Since I was about four years old, I have been dreaming about being an artist.” (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021).

Rivera notes that someone who is born an artist must be a receptor, condenser, transmitter, and reflector of aspirations for the desires and hopes of his age (Rivera 422). While Durán pays homage to the artists Rivera and Kahlo in his artwork in the Plaza del Norte Welcome Center, he admires Rivera’s notion of how a true artist performs. As an artist in the role of caretaker that is addressing the hardship caused by an environmental injustice in his community, Durán embodies the attributes Rivera speaks of. Yet, his artwork excels in composition and design, not only as a reflection of his skill, but in order that those represented are depicted with excellence in attributes.

Durán asks, “Do you know why the mural tour is important? The mural tour is not only about art but about humans, about community, the people, and their hearts; you can feel it, you know; it’s the energy” (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021). Having painted over thirty murals in Detroit, with nineteen located in the Mexicantown area, Durán transmits (and translates) the stories through the murals. He organizes and conducts tours for schoolchildren, others in the community, and tourists. The tour is an invitation not only to engage with the public art through visiting the murals, but more importantly for the visitors to meet residents and store owners as well. On the tours, designated stops become celebrations of culture not only through viewing the art, but from the exchange of introductory hugs and sounds and smells through blended languages, music, and the aroma of food filling the air. According to Durán:

There is something interesting about this particular space and what inspired the mural here. It [sic] is because when they were building the 75 freeway, they were dividing the community. Very curiously, the main street was the heart of the community; it was

heartbreaking news that the community was going to be divided into two ... as a poor community they did not have a strong voice to say ‘we do not want you to destroy our community.’ (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021).

He continues to explain the historical context. Through “community benefit agreements” the city gave funding for the community building that became the building for the Secretary of State as a location where people pay taxes. When Durán learned of the history, he painted this mural inside Plaza del Norte Welcome Center that connects both sides of the Interstate as the community existed in the past. The Welcome Center is on the east side of the 75 (and Interstate 96) freeway; the viewer studies the celebration in the street as if viewing from the west looking east. From this vantage point the viewer does not see the environmental divide. Durán notes that “the mural is an illusion” not like a photograph; the composition, made up to unite the community, “is inspired by what used to be there” (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov 2021). (see figs. 4.17, 4.18)

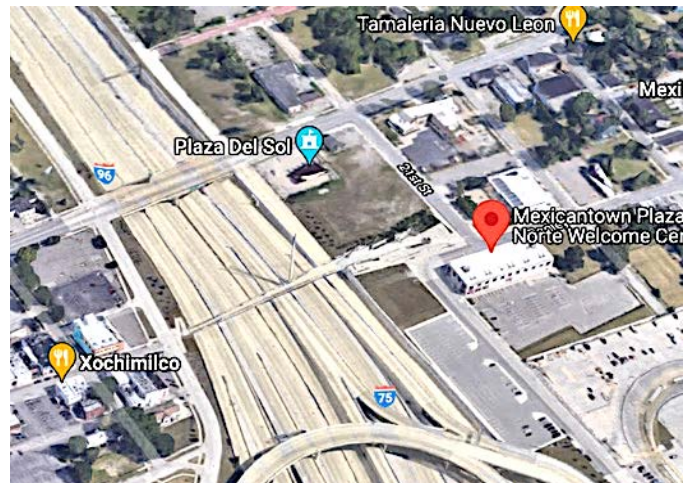


Fig. 4.17. Satellite view of Interstate 75 and 96 that divides the Detroit Mexicantown community. Google Earth, google.com, www.google.com/maps/place/Detroit,+MI.

Fig. 4.18 (right). Detail, satellite view of Interstate 75 and 96.

Durán explains that “for a long time, the people in the community felt they were invisible. For a long time, they were considered separate from Detroit.” He conveys that there is the implication that people who live in Mexicantown are not from Detroit, and even those born in Detroit with Mexican heritage are invisible. He creates visual art to “make the people visible”; when he hears people say “Yeah, but people don’t know how to speak English,” he realizes how important it is that people understand that he is trying to communicate the fundamental need for people to be a part of community. He notes that while “there are people speaking Spanish all through the community” and that “some people tell me I don’t belong here” he emphasizes that he believes understanding history helps in understanding the contemporary community (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021).

As he points to the train station on the left in the Bagley Street scene, he offers that as he understands local history, in 1920 after the Mexican Revolution, people in Mexico were trying to escape for new opportunities. Detroit was promising work, and people made the journey by train from Mexico north to Detroit. Once they arrived at the train station, people felt like, “We’ve arrived, we’ve made it!” People from Mexico have wanted to establish community here since the 1920s. Due to the history of people being sent back to Mexico during the Great Depression and because of what the community has experienced since, the encouragement for equality and people’s rights continues (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021).

According to Dufourmantelle in her essay “Justice and Forgiveness,” within, *Power of Gentleness* (2018), “Forgiveness is conditioned on gentleness. Without inner revolution, forgiveness is merely wished for, it does not become real, it is disabled by pity, courage, abdication, or envy, it frees nothing and only deepens a gaping wound” (33). In the Mexicantown neighborhood, the experience of living also includes the experience of forgiving. In the context

of Durán, gentleness embodies his bestowing of forgiveness toward others for acts that have been committed against community that he is a part of, whether the acts are from an historical or contemporary context. While sensitive to the insensitive acts of others as well as the suffering that has occurred in a community that is still feeling the effects of perceived insignificance, Durán notes that “I believe that I have a purpose in life and am sure that I am gifted with this ability so that I can spread out a message of love, and when I paint for this community, it is an act of love” (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021).

Dufourmantele suggests that “gentleness takes a unique inflection, denoting the possibility to remove an offense between humans and not just an offense from the gods toward humans,” which from Greek thought becomes the “capacity to forgive” (PG 33). She conveys that Derrida sheds light on the paradox of forgiveness as she notes that “it only makes sense in the face of what cannot, must not be erased nor ever forgotten”; that “to forgive is an act that gives gentleness to the one who can bestow it as well as the one who receives it” (Derrida qtd. in Dufourmantele, PG 33). When one engages with others that have faced inequality, prejudices, or misunderstandings, one must find inner strength to move forward with remembrance, yet it is the unbearable that must be forgiven in order to move forward.

Durán understands the context of circumstances within the community’s history as well as the context of using art for good as a way forward for others. He continues to create art through gentleness that allows for remembrance and understanding, while providing others the opportunity to build new relationships within community. He notes that he is “not an activist,” but conveys that there have been situations locally of trying to rid Mexicantown of its diversity as is happening with other urban areas where gentrification erases the current identity. “A

community makes us feel safe and protected and [gives us] a sense of belonging” (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021).

In the introduction of *Power of Gentleness*, Dufourmantelle considers the notion of love and joy that have essential affinities with gentleness (3). In this context, Durán notes that he paints for this community an “act of love” and that he wants it to be a reflection on others (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov 2021). This thought merges with Dufourmantelle’s words wherein she poses that childhood holds the enigma of gentleness and notes that “gentleness shares with childhood a kind of natural community but also a power; [i]t is the secret lining, or where the imaginary joins the real in a space that contains its own secret, making us feel an astonishment from which we can never entirely return” (PG 3).

Detroit Dream. Durán notes that his dream since childhood of becoming an artist is being realized in Detroit. He emphatically claims, “Detroit is my destiny” (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov 2021). As he creates the public art, the energy becomes the power that embodies the gentleness of his constitution. He explains that it is not just that the viewer knows or understands the composition or is aware that the art has a certain style or tendency, but that there is a moment when the viewer connects with the art. As he reflects on the notion that “art is powerful,” he explains that “there is something that is called an aesthetic moment; it is a very intimate moment, when someone is looking at art, the moment when there is a connection. People tell me, ‘I like driving that way [past the art], because every time I see your mural, I feel happy’” (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021). He is inspired by the community response to his art. The imaginary that joins the real space, that Dufourmantelle suggests, is the development of community that Durán wishes in wonderment for.

Dufourmantelle merges again with Rivera using the term “revolution” within her essay “A Gentle Revolution.” She notes that “[i]t is sometimes inadvertently that a revolution takes place” ... [a]n effect of “extreme gentleness, barely different from other moments” take place then inexplicably “life suddenly catches fire” (PG 103). It is “[a]s if suddenly you were taken by the hand along a precipice and needed not only to walk along the edge but to dance, and yes, you dance without fear or vertigo as if the very space took refuge in you, and then as if, upon arriving on the other side, everything had changed, but without violence” (103). She asks if this is the intimate revolution.

Through this lens, one may feel oneself on a journey wherein living on the edge continually brings fear of falling or failing. When one suddenly feels in control or without fear, once feels the dance of celebration. That the radical change has informed the sense of well being. Having the confidence to move forward with the help of another allows for the sense of accomplishment for the journey. Durán’s creative dance is without fear and is with courage as he walks along the edges of city streets and sidewalks in the development of relations by leading others along the landscape of community.

Durán’s Mexicantown Bagley Street mural scene depicts a vibrant community dancing together in celebration of each other. Without environmental injustice of a land divided, Durán’s painting is a visual revolution in which a community can breathe as a united neighborhood. In his scene, the land is not scarred, and the community finds restoration and healing. Absent in the imagery is exhaust-filled air and the sound of the echoing drone that reverberates from the never-ending traffic on the Interstate.

Dufourmantelle continues that the revolution is as a spiral that leads one into “an unexpected height” and into “an elevation that creates a need for air” as she conveys that the

revolution as gentleness is a “return to self that invents a future in the image of the spiral,” wherein she conveys that the revolution based on power allows on to break free of lies of the past, many of which are generational (PG 104). In this context the artist experiences an intimate revolution that allows the artist to feel like he is walking along the edge of a very high place without fear of making a wrong turn, but with the understanding of the idea that the space needs the artist more than the artist needs the space.

Durán, living in Detroit, experiences new opportunities that allow him to explore beyond that which he already knows about self. As a skilled artisan, he examines new materials and processes while considering how best to use the materials to condense, transmit and reflect the narratives of community. His understanding of the cultural complexities derives from his own search and return to self as he forwards his vision for understanding past embedded prejudices in order to continue the dreams for future that he envisions for himself and others.

The artist reconciles his art through the intimate revolution that takes place, according to Dufourmantelle, as a return to self as a spiral that ultimately leads the artist to that which is already there (PG 104). In this context, Durán’s revolution is embodied in the artist and when he courageously admits to self that the extreme gentleness is also an inner turmoil that may lead to new heights; his desire to dance comes from this reconciliation of an inner consciousness that is conveyed through the community dancing in Bagley Street.

The artist dances or gestures through the art toward and into one’s own reconciliation of life’s circumstances. The inner revolution for the artist allows, as Dufourmantelle suggests in her essay “A Gentle Revolution” “a possible opening to the unexpected” may be viewed through the image of the spiral where the repetition leads to a return to self (PG 104). In this context others may also experience an inner revolution through the art in how a community may be viewed.

Durán notes if somebody says “You don’t belong here” that one must consider that “we are all native to the Americas and to this land; we are created the same and all have a right to be here.” Dufourmantelle notes in regard to this revolution, “Gentleness is what allows us to reach out to this stranger who comes to us, in us” (PG 104). The stranger that may come to us may be self of the past or the perceived self of future. As one considers the revolution or change that one makes or is continually involved in as an evolution of sorts, one may not be accustomed to the new face, language, or thought, but as a stranger often seen, the face becomes familiar. Over time one develops a relationship with self after the familiar. This is also done in context of community. The familiar becomes relation over time. The murals for Durán provide the opportunity for familiarity to become relation within location.

According to Durán, there is a sense that newcomers or residents living in Mexicantown remain seen as foreigners by others that live outside of Mexicantown. If their names are not known or if they converse in broken English, they are treated like foreigners, not residents of Detroit, the state of Michigan, or as citizens of the United States. Anne Dufourmantelle and French philosopher Jacques Derrida collaborate in the writing *Of Hospitality* (2000) wherein the interwoven texts combine Dufourmantelle’s insight as the “invitation” in the dialogue juxtaposed with Derrida’s two lectures as the “response” in the dialogue. Derrida forwards the notion of conditional versus unconditional relevant to hospitality offered to a foreigner; how hospitable relations are extended to the foreigner is either limited or prohibited (Derrida , OH 25).

Derrida addresses hospitality when it is offered to a new person where the family name or social status is known, then the hospitality is deemed conditional as the offered hospitality is on the preconceived notion of who the particular foreigner is (OH 25). When unconditional or “absolute” hospitality is offered, the foreigner may be anonymous without condition of identity

in name, location, or social status; it is in this context, according to Derrida, that one opens up one's home and will "give place" to the foreigner, letting "them arrive and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names" (OH 25).

While assuming the foreigner is a visitor to see the murals in Mexicantown, Durán provides absolute hospitality to those coming into the community. In his willingness to welcome others into his home environment, he "gives place" to them as he invites them to meet his extended family through the artwork of the murals as well as the real people in his life that also extend hospitality to foreigners. Through the lens of Derrida, the hospitality that Durán offers would be considered unconditional (OH 25). Durán does not need to know who the person is or their name or where they are from in order to share his art through his invitation.

Although new residents coming from Mexico are welcomed through invitation, they are treated with conditional hospitality by those who already reside there. The condition, this author suggests, allows for a guide for building future through established relationships. The newcomer (new resident arriving from Mexico) may have had similar lived experiences, family relations, or similar social status that may provide conditional place making for social integration as a type of neighborliness.

Durán, like Rivera, through invitation arrived in Detroit. However, the person who invited him knew him as a child and later moves to Detroit from Mexico. The condition on which the invitation rests is similar as well, to Rivera's invitation. The friend's purpose is to allow the artist to fulfill his calling as an artist, by creating art in Detroit.

Acoustic Illusion. Dufourmantelle notes in the essay "Invitation" within her collaborative work with Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, that she will try to "concentrate on listening to the particular 'how'

of Derrida's thinking," wherein she explains that according to German philosopher, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, "[t]he philosopher needs a double hearing, in the way that one may have the gift of second sight, in other words the most subtle of ears" and further conveys Nietzsche's thought "[f]or what one lacks access to from experience one will have no ear" (Dufourmantelle OH 18, 20). In this context when one has experience of something regardless of what that something is or has been, the experience allows one to become conscious of circumstances that also lead up to the phenomenon. One recalls the incident or circumstance that appears familiar. Where one is familiar, one is also aware of the previous outcome, whether positive or negative. There is sensitivity to the outcome and one's place in relation to the outcome, whether one had control in the past or one has control for the future outcome.

Dufourmantelle continues examining Nietzsche's thought of imagining the first exposure to an experience where one doesn't recognize the experience where he suggests "in that case, simply, nothing will be heard, but there will be the acoustic illusion that where nothing is heard, nothing is there" (Dufourmantelle OH 20, 22). In the context of the Bagley Street mural in the Mexicantown Plaza del Norte Welcome Center, the visual imagery creates the visual revolution for the historical acoustic illusion that took place. Durán, in saying that those in Mexicantown had no voice in the decisions about the super-highway that divides the community, converges with and addresses the "acoustic illusion" that Nietzsche refers to. The agencies tasked with listening to the community's response about the intended bisection of the neighborhood operated within the realm of acoustic illusion.

Those designated to listen had no ear for the residents of Mexicantown and therefore heard nothing and proceeded as if the residents were not there. In this context, while the complexities are many that surround decision-making in the terms of progress, it would appear

that those listening had no experiences of environmental displacement, life way disruption, nor exposure to continuous air and sound pollution caused from Interstate traffic. Those who had “no ear” did not have the experience of waiting forty years or almost two generations for the pedestrian crossing bridge “Bagley Street Pedestrian Bridge” that allows families to again reunite by walking to each other’s homes, local restaurants, or neighborhood parks.³

The experience of viewing the mural on the Community Center Plaza del Sol at Vernor Highway reveals another kind of acoustic illusion wherein Durán attempts to convey hospitality in an unjust environment. Durán has an ear for that which he has experience, and in that he gives unconditional hospitality or “place” to the visitor (figs. 4.19, 4.20).



Fig. 4.19. Elton Monroy Durán. Mural, Plaza del Sol, 3041 Vernor Hwy, Detroit, MI 48216. Photo author’s collection.



Fig. 4.20 (right). Detail, Mural, Plaza del Sol. Photo author’s collection.

Landscape design of family and Mariachi dancers and musicians appear in the foreground with the sun centrally located. At the center, formally dressed dancers capture the attention of the onlookers. Student musicians play in the background. Of the four large circles the left purple and orange circle frames the Basilica of Sainte Anne de Détroit; the next, the sun, provides the

backdrop for the silhouetted student musicians, and the far-right circle in deep violet frames the Ambassador Bridge. The models for the children and adults are all from the artist's family. As community members, they represent Mexican heritage and tradition as well as their love of Mexicantown and Detroit as they sit and stand watching the celebration.

The giving of the use of the building by the organization that oversees the Bagley Street Bridge, on the other hand, appears as conditional hospitality in the offering of an inhospitable place. The small community building sits in the middle of a crumbling parking lot next to the concrete acreage of the United States Border Patrol. However, visitors to the Community Center are unable to discuss the mural while viewing it from its westside exterior. The continuous sound of the Interstate car and truck traffic makes conversation almost impossible. The atmosphere is one in which the viewer may feel both joy and sorrow: joy for the aesthetic of the public art and sorrow for a community that for years has been living conditionally.

The platform for teaching the Mariachi (dancing) and playing music is placed on the ground near the building's west wall. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching takes place outside. The music attempts to muffle the traffic sounds. The Community Center inhibits participation as a community-building endeavor through its physical dislocation and the inability to verbally communicate due to its proximity to the expressway (see figs. 4.17, 4.18).

Durán's prior experiences allow an ear for a new series of experiences relevant to Mexican culture and to newcomers to Detroit. He hears the voice of community members and conveys their significance through public art. The imagery painted on the wall is a representation of his own family. The scene alludes to the desire for unity and connectedness. This "illusion" is situated where the ability to join family in the space of the outdoors of a community center is surrounded by a peaceful landscape of beauty, not a barren, treeless parking lot in need of repair.

The healthy exchange of moments from viewing the mural is retained when one enters the building. Relationships develop in the interior space. While echoes from the depths of the concrete highway below disrupt one's thoughts, within the interior space one finds hospitality and refuge. One recognizes that the artist has an ear for the inaudible while standing in the place for the assumption "where nothing is heard, nothing is there" (Dufourmantelle OH 22). The affiliated agencies did not hear the voices of the Mexicantown residents and appear to be without the experiences of Mexican heritage, culture, or the understanding of what it is to be a community in that place.

The parking lot at the edge of a concrete highway and Border Patrol Plaza reminds one of the separation or bifurcation of a community steeped in beautiful aesthetic traditions through visual art and music. The artist attempts to bring family to this location in order to represent a gathering of joy and celebration, and yet the disconnection remains through the sounds of traffic that permeate the atmosphere.

Durán, highly aware of disconnections as he continues creating public art, has an ear for the subtleties of those living outside of Mexicantown, those that see residents with Mexican heritage as foreigners. He realizes that speaking Hispanic is a tribute to community as well as when speaking in broken English; that too is a tribute to the depths of one's heart in trying to speak in the native tongue of the new homeland. The mother tongue engenders acceptance and rouses prejudices. The murals allow for gentleness to arrive at the intersection of language.

Derrida discusses the notion of the foreigner deemed as such by birth, whether by land or blood, in relation to hospitality and one's mother tongue. In the essay "Step of Hospitality" he notes that German American philosopher Hanna Arendt's conveyance that she felt German in language only would appear as a "*remains* of belonging," where Derrida poses, rather that it is

language that carries one from birth to death, and asks, “Doesn’t it figure the home that never leaves us?” (Arendt qtd. in OH 89). In this context, outsiders of Mexicantown may consider the language as the remains of people speaking in their native tongue. The language itself seemingly creates not only a language border, but a physical border for the lack of willingness to stand in the presence of another with cultural differences. The physical and collective unity is created through the artwork that allows for understanding through casual encounters in the place of hospitality.

Derrida notes that language is the “most portable condition of all mobilities” (91). Language allows one to be recognized as an insider or outsider, depending on who is standing in what location. When looking at Durán’s mural, the Mexican iconography is translated into the mother tongue of the one doing the looking. There is no border or barrier projected from the visual imagery. The language of the viewer is at home during the looking; therefore, the viewer feels at home during the looking. In this way Durán’s ear for understanding differences and similarities is revealed in the role of caretaker as he navigates through the nuances of language.

No matter where one goes, one never leaves one’s place of origin. There is no confrontation nor a moment of unease with the figures in the imagery. The mother tongue gives one a sense of identity such that the viewer is always oriented in communication through one’s mother tongue. Durán says of his art “It is a tool to communicate ... this community is showing how wonderful it is by embracing my effort” (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021). In this way the murals allow the artist to invite new dialogue with residents and visitors as well as for the residents and visitors to invite new conversations with the artist. The identity within community is recognized in one’s ability to speak in the language of the land in which one

dwells. Durán knows that their (and his) identity is called into question by others if the English is not easily spoken in this new place of relocation.

French-Caribbean author Édouard Glissant conveys in *Poetics of Relation* (1997) that the notion of “the land-beyond turned into land-in-itself” (8). Glissant writes about Africans being deported via slave ships to the Americas without knowledge of what they were going to be experiencing or facing. He states that “and [t]his undreamt of sail, finally now spread, is watered by the white wind of the abyss. Thus, the absolute unknown, projected by the abyss and bearing into eternity the womb abyss and the infinite abyss in the end became knowledge” (8).

Glissant’s account tells of Africans transported on ships where slaves as cargo were thrown overboard weighed down with ball and chain to become as underwater signposts (6). He notes that signposts reveal themselves when one moves from one cultural context to the next. In context of Durán’s move to Detroit from Mexico, his personal signposts become markers from lived experiences that include memories as well as aspirations.

Durán creates visual signposts for community through public art. Although literal signposts (street names, retail signs, or Interstate markers) allow one to find destinations, public art allows one to see the trace of the other through material, form, and meaning. Durán creates signposts for cultural understanding. He makes visible those in the community that are seen as foreigners in the land of Detroit. His murals are way markers for those who live in and outside of the urban location.

Glissant’s notes that, “Relation is not made up of things that are foreign but of shared knowledge” (8). Those in Detroit share knowledge with Durán, and he shares his knowledge with others. Durán’s murals contain codified types of expression that honor and promote

Mexican culture within the Detroit cityscape that include colors, iconography, and specific imagery.

Frida Kahlo. Codification of visual language is evident in the painted mural of this famous artist.⁴ Frida Kahlo is well known internationally, and her painted image allows for a dialogue about art that within various cultural modes, whereby languages from all backgrounds can be shared. Although, outside visitors may not be at first comfortable with residents that speak Spanish, when participating in casual conversation about a famous Mexican artist allows for connections on a common topic of art. The Kahlo mural is situated near the top of Xochi's Mexican Imports, a brick building that faces Bagley Street (see figs. 4.21, 4.22).



Fig. 4.21. Elton Monroy Durán. *Frida Kahlo* mural. Xochi's Gift Shop; 3437 Bagley St, Detroit, MI. Photo author's collection.

Fig. 4.22 (right). View from Xochi's Gift Shop looking toward Mexicantown Plaza del Norte Welcome Center. This is the inspiration for Durán's mural in the Welcome Center. Photo author's collection.

Highlighted are the colors of the Mexican folk art sold inside Xochi's Gift Shop. Kahlo as an advocate, promoter, and defender of the art indigenous to Mexico is remembered through Durán's incorporation of the deer as the connection to Michigan, butterfly for migration, and the

jaguar (like Detroit Lion), which he notes that it symbolizes multiple connotations of strength, power, and a deity that can move between two worlds. Durán conveys that Michigan derives from Michoacán meaning “place surrounded by water” and that it is connected to a region in Mexico (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021).

It is at this location where one stands facing east as Kahlo does, looking toward the Bagley Street Bridge, that one becomes part of the mural scene painted in Mexicantown Plaza del Norte Welcome Center. One sees the colorful storefront signs on the building facades that provide visual hospitality welcoming all to come inside. From this position, one does not see the Interstate and can imagine as Durán does a flourishing neighborhood with an environment not geographically divided. As Latino music fills the air and diners return to parked cars, the sound of progress remains as a continuous undertone of traffic noise that reverberates from the concrete highway one block away.

In this context Durán’s, root identity allows for him to consider family heritage, beliefs, and myths, as well as his relational identity that allows new experiences with Detroit cultures. He examines the hidden filiation without keeping the violence associated with keeping the root (identity), but instead focuses on the gentleness that segues into relations. Integrating into the Detroit life while rooted in Mexicantown, Durán finds affiliation and familiarity with his heritage. Durán is not one to think of land as Glissant writes “as a territory from which to project other territories, but as a place where one gives-on-and-with rather than grasps” (144). It is not necessary for Durán to grasp or understand another as it is for another to understand oneself or community through the artwork in such a way that one can just be. He participates in relation identity in the way that he is engaging and integrating within the context of the arts and language and community. He promotes gentleness through his artistic and cultural experiences, not just as

relations for him and others, but for what is beyond: Mexicantown, Detroit, and the state of Michigan as it relates to cultural understandings.

Aesthetics of Community. Glissant discusses the larger process of exchange and products being produced by large corporations, as he mentions that while international parameters come into the relationship of the concept of working the land “a man involved in agriculture is inevitably a man involved in culture: he can longer produce innocently” (149). In this context the relation to land or environment is evident in Durán’s mural representation of the fruit worker titled *Dream Picker*. It represents not only a Mexican as a celebrity and Durán himself; it represents his knowledge of what is at stake for human relationships in a community that includes ecology, the creative and performing arts, religion, business, commerce, friends, and family. (see figs. 4.23, 4.24).

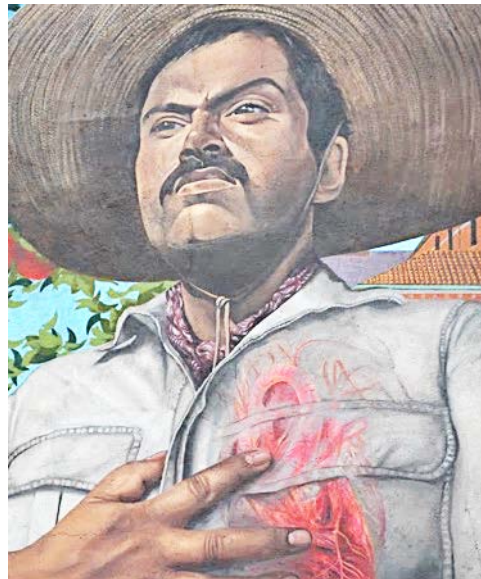


Fig. 4.23. Elton Monroy Durán. *Dream Picker*. State Farm Insurance Agency building, 5602 Vernor Hwy, Detroit, MI. Photo author’s collection.

Fig. 4.24 (right). Detail, *Dream Picker*. Photo author’s collection.

While Durán pays honor and homage to the Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and his wife Frida Kahlo and their connection to the cultural arts of Detroit, more importantly, Durán recognizes those in his community that are from all walks of life. Whether undocumented (living in silence or fear), the laborer or professional working class, or those within city agencies, his murals represent the diverse members of the community he cares about.

In Detroit, the place from which his invitation derived and a place he now calls home, he paints narratives with recognizable faces where others may see their own reflection.

Mexicantown is where Durán lives and is called to care for the community's shared dreams.

While painting *Dream Picker*, Durán would start in the early morning and work long days. He includes the Holy Redeemer Church, and in the procession, his parents as well as other members of the community, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and himself as the figure holding the apple.

Glissant suggests that communities must revive an “aesthetic connection with the earth” in such a way that humans take responsibility for agriculture and culture that is an idea of “love of the earth,” which is not defined by territories that ultimately lead to its destruction (150, 151). Durán considers the historical context of both American and Mexican territories, heritage, and the significance of individuals that he makes visible in his painted communities that speak to the aesthetics of beauty through art. Glissant suggests that through the aesthetics of the land and how we care for the worker and produce responsibly, is pivotal in the poetics of relation (154).

The concept of beauty goes hand-in-hand with Durán's public murals that become pivotal for the way relations could be. The public art gives voice for how one can invite unity with another, preserve culture, or communicates care for the environment. The painting on a building allows a façade to appear refreshed and cared for; whereby the surrounding environment becomes the landscape cared for. While the air is filled with pollutants and people live in an

atmosphere that may not be deemed healthy, the promotion of beauty and good through the murals allow viewers to perceive the visibility of community.

Diego Rivera's laborers in the *Detroit Industry* series work anonymously in unison for the accomplishment of the task of progressively moving the automotive parts forward in the process of machination. Durán's dancing figures in the Bagley Street celebration, while emulating the positions and gestures of the auto workers depicted by Rivera, are visible and recognizable as past and present members of the community. While Durán's mural depicts dancing and celebration as the viewer perceives the event, a viewer familiar with the history of the Mexicantown would recognize a united landscape when viewing the Detroit skyline beyond the Bagley Pedestrian Bridge. The walls that arise from the concrete Interstate below that bifurcates the neighborhood are no longer present in the scene.

A Heart of Good. The letter that Pope John Paul II wrote in 1999, "Letter to Artists," was introduced to Durán by the local priest while painting the *Dream Picker*. "I was up in the crane, and one of the priests came over and we started talking about the 'calling'; he brought over to me the letter that was written about the calling of the artist." Durán conveys that the letter is about a comparison to God through contemplation and creation. If the artist contemplates art and considers that God created everything that in His contemplation, He saw Creation as good. "Good is related to beauty." Durán says, "when you are doing good things, they are beautiful. When it is good it comes from your heart, because you want to connect, you want to express, and when you create an impression, then it is working. My name is an artistic name. Elton Monroy Durán. Elton comes from a name of the town in Mexico that means a soldier of God. My purpose is to be an artist." (Durán Personal Interview, 20 Nov. 2021). Focused on uniting community Durán continues as a caretaker of an imagined future.

CONCLUSION

In this examination, I sought to focus on the figure of the artist engaging in public art in the emerging role of ‘caretaker.’ The inquiry, framed by Martin Heidegger’s proposition that “What calls on us to think demands for itself that it be tended, cared for, husbanded in its own essential being, by thought,” includes his question “What makes a call upon us that we should think and, by thinking, be who we are?” (BW 390). I have argued that the artist confronts the juxtaposed complexities of the private life with the public realm through contemplation of the materials and the creative aesthetic process that leads to the development of the artform. Entering into the narrative of the effects of environmental injustice on community, the artwork discloses that which is making a call upon the artist to think.

The artist’s individual experience through the interpretive form is introduced into the public space. In doing so it bears witness to the artist’s private thinking and reveals ‘who we are’ not only an individual, but as a reflection of ‘who we are’ as a community such that, environmental injustice needs to be thought about at all. In examining how the artist observes, tends to, and cares for, that which is to be thought about in the in creating the artform, it is in the method of response that reveals the role of caretaker. The responses include artists engaging through artforms that not only address the effects of environmental injustice but invite consideration for an imagined future through shared knowledge, collaborative experiences, and participating in community.

While public art juxtaposes complex historical and sociopolitical narratives that contribute to environmental injustice and the resulting effects within community, this examination demonstrates how aesthetic practice and form bears witness for the artist’s care. In posing the question, *How does public art bear witness for the artist in the role of caretaker?*, I

have argued that the artwork reveals the role of caretaker through the artist's 1) aesthetic practice, 2) gentleness in form, and 3) particular elucidation that personifies 'caretaker' as assessed through aspects of *Witness*, *Testimony*, *Shelter*, and *Call*, whereby the four categories become markers within the art for attributing the artist's relational experience within community.

As a Michigan resident or as an out-of-state guest invited into an urban neighborhood, each of the twelve figures within this study reveal care for community through a unique cultural lens. Cultural backgrounds include African American, American Indian (Anishinaabe and Ottawa/Pottawatomi), European, and Latino, whereas the relationship to communities through art or advocacy is also shared through commonalities of geographic location, heritage, as well as affiliation through church, or educational and art institutions, and for ten, residency in Michigan.

Although governmental policy or decision-making at local, state, and federal levels contributed to the environmental injustice relevant to natural resources of water, land, and air for the communities in this study, the public art addresses the impact on the community rather than focusing on the origin of the injustice. This examination included public art that addresses the effects of a city's water crisis, eco-system damage, loss of Indigenous traditions, and the inability to breathe unconditionally within certain neighborhood Zip Codes.

Through aesthetic practice, the artist's relation with community is revealed. While, environmental injustice leads to human suffering and loss, artists interpret their own anguish through the creative process. In an effort to keep personal anguish contained through the artform, the artist embeds the anguish that is witnessed within the community. It is the expression of the imagined future that invites thought for a just environment. While not all artists that deal with environmental injustice would embody the role of 'caretaker,' the artists in this study participate in community in such a way that relationships with others within the community continue to

expand through experiences related to the public art they are associated with. Although the artists do not self-assign this role, the depth for which they consider the effects of the environmental injustice on community continue beyond the limited exhibition run or the permanency of the installation.

Artists in this study continue addressing the interconnectedness of a just environment through developing new artworks and cultivating new relationships from multifaceted community encounters. The artists regard the community with sensitivity and do not feature sensationalized experiences of the other, but through gentleness in form, the artworks reveal the artist's personal relationship to the experiences of the effects of injustice. In several cases, artwork is made through collaboration whereby the artist facilitates the making, not as a prescriptive form for response, but through protected thought for interpretive thinking about the subject that the art is addressing, as well as inviting consideration for an imagined future. As a member of multifaceted communities, the location of the artform invites expansion of the artist's community through the interaction or response of viewers.

The examination of Vincent Van Gogh's *Shoes* (1886), whereby German philosopher Martin Heidegger probes where and how art occurs relevant to its relation to the artist, contributed to this inquiry on the role of art and the artist. While noting that neither is without the other, the artist, according to Heidegger, "remains inconsequential" compared to the work (BW 166). In this way, the artform bears witness for the artist in the absence of the artist, in the presence of the viewer. Heidegger states, "From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth" and further conveys "in the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth," (BW 159; BW 161). This allows for the investigation into the reciprocity that occurs between the artist and artwork, whereby the art invites the viewer to consider the

counterplay of the earth and historical world through the art form that the artist has also considered. This counterplay reveals the interrelationship between the environment (earth) and the injustice (world) that has occurred.

The artworks become a reciprocal revelation of care for the world through focusing on the earth as sustenance or shelter, yet this focal point invites the viewer to consider the world that is as Heidegger conveys, a “self-opening” revealed through the broad paths of decisions “in the destiny of a historical people” (BW 174). While he conveys the counterplay of the earth and world as seen within Van Gogh’s *Shoes*, whereby the artwork is transported into openness of beings, the more simply it transports us into this “openness” it simultaneously transports us “out of the realm of the ordinary” (BW 191). The viewer is invited to consider the truth of happening in the public art, not as correct representation of the shoes, for example, as Heidegger notes, but as the unveiling of the counterplay of the earth and world that one begins to apprehend through reflection of oneself in community.

While aesthetic practice discloses the artist’s gentleness as evident in the resolution of the artform, I argued that the artist’s interpretative work imbues gentleness and in silence, invites viewer reflection. Considering French philosopher Anne Dufourmantelle’s perspective within *Power of Gentleness: Meditations on the Risk of Living*, (2018), wherein she states that the “symbolic force of gentleness as an act of resistance” is perceptual sensibility and intelligence (43), I suggested that the artist in the private space of the studio creates art as an act of resistance to the effects of environmental injustice. This sensibility and intelligence connect the artist to the evolving narratives wherein the artist contributes uniquely to the conversation of a just environment through the dialogue that the art invites.

In articulating the four aspects, *Witness*, *Testimony*, *Shelter*, and *Call*, through which the public art in this examination personifies caretaker, the aspects were assigned as category markers within the art for attributing the artist's relational experience within community. While the experiences are distinct as well as multifaceted, the artworks personify various attributes for each artist. Through personal experience the artist sees the effects of environmental injustice, says the consequential effects exist, protects thought for reconciliation of future and past, through the present, and invites reflection for an imagined future. While the aspects overlap within the artist's broad experience, aesthetic practice, and are multi-present in the artworks, categorizing the examination into four 'aspect' chapters aided in simplifying complexities for the limited scope of this research.

In this context, *Witness* is the aspect through which the artist sees the effects of environmental injustice within community and creates public art that addresses that which is observed. This is done as one who has proximity from personal experience. Next, *Testimony*, wherein the artist gives voice through form including evidentiary materials (artifacts) derived from natural resources. The third aspect, *Shelter*, protects thought that allows reconciliation of future and past, through present collaborative interactions with community. The fourth aspect considers *Call*, wherein the artist invites community to think about an imagined future. (See "CARETAKER, COMMUNITY, AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE " for more discussion on 'aspects' categories for each artist.)

CONSIDERATIONS / QUESTIONS

It was through the public art, *PLUMBUM*, by Mark Bleshenski, that I began to see the role of the artist as caretaker emerge. This installation (series) addresses the effects of the Flint Water Crisis in such a way that as a viewer, I am invited to witness what the artist is witness to. This artwork

became pivotal in the development of this research in three ways. First, in the moment of viewing the glass installation in the lighted gallery of the church, I become aware of the devastating effects occurring in a community nearby due to the mismanagement, by government agencies, of the natural resource, water. Secondly, through materials and process, the artist addresses the injustice as it is occurring. Lastly, I am deeply moved by what I perceive as the artist's gentleness in form that reveals care for the community.

Liquid-filled glass containers represent people whose lives have been altered by the Water Crisis, while the labels reveal disturbing facts of lead in water, denied by officials. While the glass containers would have been carefully transported and gently positioned on the shelves, I imagined that the artist expressed anger in the process with the breaking of glass on his studio floor. Yet, the work does not appear angry. It appears gentle in its silent resistance to distortion. Surmising that the artist resisted his own anguish in making art about this injustice, curiosity leads to the examination of the artist's relationship to artwork, materials and process, while addressing the impact of a community in crisis.

From the initial encounter with *PLUMBUM*, questions began to surface that I sought to answer include: *How does the contemporary artist in the role of 'caretaker' create art for the public in the context of community? How does the artist, when confronting historical and sociopolitical complexities of environmental injustice that contribute to its contemporary effects, reconcile personal angst or anguish during the creative process?*

Differentiation, Resistance, Dialogue, and Shoes. In the Introduction, relevant considerations included the differentiated role of the artists in this study, how the artist reconciles personal angst through resistance to the injustice, how the public art invites dialogue, and how the viewer is transported into an "openness" as one is when viewing Van Gogh's *Shoes*. While Artists in this

study do not consider themselves as models or examples that fulfill a defined role, however, the art and advocacy invite understanding for the layered meaning of the art and the environment with which the artists engage.

Artists do not resist personal angst or anguish but resist the injustice that coincides and drives the effort of bringing the art from the studio to the public during the creative process. The artist keeps making art regardless of the surrounding circumstances that the artist is personally facing that may include loss and grief. These artists do not try to resolve the origins of the injustice, but address, through the artwork individual interpretation of its effects.

The art becomes a catalyst for change through its invitation to dialogue about new narratives. The artist addresses evolving narratives by focusing on an interpreted future whereby the viewer may also imagine. The artists as ‘caretaker’ invites understanding not only for the effects of environmental injustice, but for just relations between one another for an imagined future. The artist continues dialoguing with community beyond the event of the art’s public display.

Informed by Heidegger’s notion that the counterplay of the earth and world as seen within Van Gogh’s *Shoes*, whereby the artwork transports us into the “openness” as it simultaneously transports us “out of the realm of the ordinary” (BW 191). The viewer is invited to be transported into the extraordinary through the artist’s presence of thought.

Through materials, process, and form, the thought keeper according to Heidegger, responds with artwork that speaks both *to* and *for* the letting of something “arrive and come to presence” (BW 388). The ‘something’ coming into presence is not only the artwork itself, but the artist presence of mind wherein thoughts about the art allow the development of the form in such a way that the process of thinking and making bring forth the work of art that reveals the artist’s

presence of thought. Manifested within the art are the attributes that disclose the artist as caretaker wherein the artist sees self in context of community, the community comes to presence through the artform.

Implications include that artists often experience doubt or personal stress in the process of bringing the art from the private to the public realm, and the circumstance of the ongoing effort in creating art often becomes all-consuming. The artist continues forward in the creative process due to personal experience that influences determination as well as empathy for others in seeing the effects of environmental injustice. For some, the proximity for the effects embeds within heritage and traditions, and for others, there are other environmental injustices that are literally close to home. As Michigan residents, the artists face concerns of contaminated well water, as well as chemical toxins found in riverways and land, and urban air pollution with communities throughout the state.

CARETAKER, COMMUNITY, AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE

As a member of multiple communities, the artist engages in community relative to where the artwork is displayed. Public art in this study includes permanent outdoor installations as well as temporary gallery exhibitions. While the artwork addresses specific communities the interrelationship of community, as a body of people considering the artwork, expands through the number of viewers that engage with the art. This may include gallery, educational, or museum staff, or an audience that listens to an artist talk, or viewers that see the artwork and share its narrative with others.

Through conversations with the artists in this examination, a variety of perceptions were conveyed anecdotally that are relevant to the view of the artist's role. Artistic focus includes the role of the artist as one who interprets the changing natural environment, advocates for

restoration of the natural environment, provokes accountability for the care of people and eco-systems, conducts environmental intervention through art, as well as promotes the advancement of art as culture in blighted neighborhoods. While some artists faced personal hardship due to health or family loss, conversations about the art were reflective, thoughtful, and candid in discussing the materials and processes, as well as providing insight into anguish about the injustice. Others have faced multifaceted public criticism from those that harbor skepticism of the art's value.

The following summaries consider the artist in context of community, the artwork, as well as art that continues in development. Artists aligned in the natural resource category of WATER, Mark Bleshenski, Desiree Duell, Jan Tichy, and Magda Love continue to create work beyond their initial connection to the Flint Water Crisis. Their public art continues to address environmental issues and the development of art in places and spaces that encourage community. The artists associated with LAND, Brenda Miller, Kelly Church (Ottawa/Pottawatomi), Cherish Parrish (Ottawa/Pottawatomi), and Jason Quigno (American Anishinaabe), continue to create art that dwells on the fragility of natural eco-systems, and invites new understanding of Indigenous traditions. Artists coinciding with AIR, Tyree Guyton, Leslie Sobel, Teresa Moon, and Elton Monroy Durán continue resisting the erasure of narratives about historical inequities through public art that allows for advocacy, research, and the promotion of new atmospheres where neighbors can breathe unconditionally.

CHAPTER 1. WITNESS – THE CARETAKER CONTINUES TO SEE - Featuring Mark Bleshenski, Brenda Miller, and Tyree Guyton.

According to Mark Bleshenski, creator of *PLUMBUM*, his work has been received positively within the communities that he has exhibited in that include various locations in

Michigan's Lower Peninsula. In context of community, he participates with other artists in art organizations such as art galleries and educational venues whereby he exhibits and provides artist talks. He is witnessing changes in Flint as initiatives move from the immediate challenges of the Water Crisis to the long-term effects on the community. While to-date, not all lead pipes have been replaced, there are new narratives for Flint.

Bleshenski's recent solo exhibition in 2021 included a new display for *PLUMBUM VIII*. As media coverage for the Water Crisis subsides, Bleshenski's glass containers will become contained in wire and wood crates for the future. As he disassembles the artwork, he gives the distorted glass jars and bottles to others in order that the memories of the Flint Water Crisis will not be forgotten. (see figs. C.1, C.2)



Fig. C. 1. Mark Bleshenski, *PLUMBUM VIII*. As the media coverage fades on the Flint Water Crisis, *PLUMBUM* enters a new journey of containment. Photo author's collection.

Fig. C. 2 (right). Detail, *PLUMBUM VIII*. Photo author's collection.

Bleshenski's new work focuses on the environmental intervention. Recalling bamboo grass, 12-foot-tall sections of PVC pipe with over 1,000 Monster Loca Moca drink cans are

stacked on top of the other, as if beaded over the plastic canes. Titled *Monster Nature*, this art considers environmental intervention through the use of discarded consumer products. Each ‘stalk,’ once dismantled from the initial indoor installation will be installed in various environmental locations to intervene in pedestrian pathways. Intended to illustrate an invasion of and an adaptation to mother nature, locations in Michigan will include the Sand Dunes along Lake Michigan, forests, and farm fields. They will ‘live’ for only a day in their location and will continue to exist in photographs, video and drone footage. (see figs. C.3, C.4) He continues to watch as groundwater and soil continue to be monitored for toxic chemicals derived from military installations and a landfill near his home.

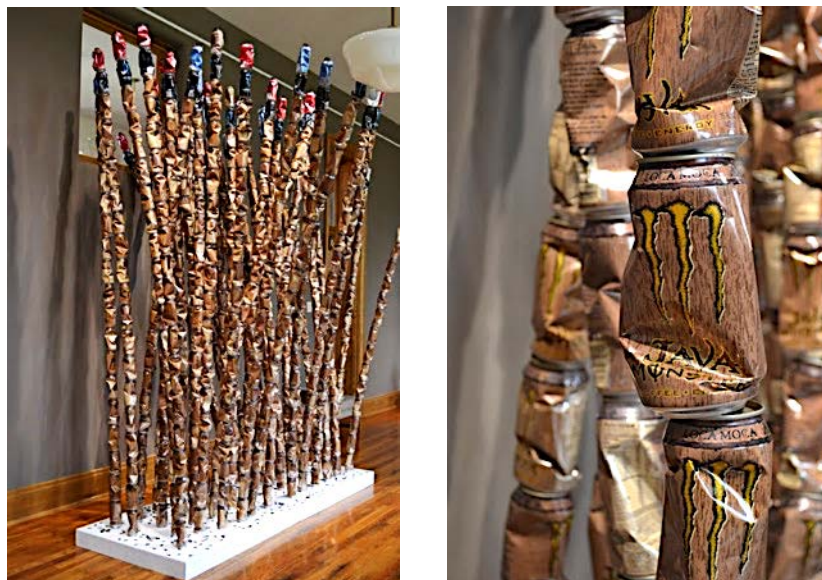


Fig. C.3. Mark Bleshenski. *Monster Nature*, 2021. Over 1,000 Monster brand Loca Moca cans. First exhibition, Grace College, Winona Lake, IN, August 25- October 14, 2021. Designed as an environmental installation intervention. Photo author’s collection.

Fig. C. 4 (right). Detail, *Monster Nature*, 2021. Photo author’s collection.

As a career graphic designer, Brenda Miller’s art created from vintage maps is positively received in the locations where her work has been shown, including botanical gardens, academic and independent art galleries. Her community includes local artists and professionals in the

design field as well as those who are addressing issues of eco-system damage to land and waterways. As she crafts precision-made collages, litigation also continues surrounding the aging Enbridge Line 5 oil pipeline under the Straits of Mackinac. Simultaneously she watches events unfold within her residential community of Ann Arbor, where the toxic chemical dioxane has been discovered in local water wells. Her solo exhibition in Fall 2021, featured nineteen artworks from her *Ecology Collages* series at small college in northern Indiana.

In Detroit, Tyree Guyton continues envisioning the future of the Heidelberg Project and invites others to breathe unconditionally in his neighborhood. His community includes the local neighborhood, local residents that support (or tolerate) his outdoor art, and K-12 and university students, as well as the thousands of visitors that spend time at the Heidelberg Project each year. Having historically experienced 13 arsons and mayoral-directed demolitions attempting to rid the neighborhood of his public art, he continues working with urban youth for the advancement of creative art.

Guyton creates new art as he dismantles the outdoor installation in his promotion of a future community. He and Jennene Whitfield are developing a Cultural Arts Center in the Heidelberg Street neighborhood. In 2021, the City of Detroit publicly recognized Guyton and the Heidelberg Project with Detroit's inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award.

CHAPTER 2. TESTIMONY – THE CARETAKER STILL SAYS – Featuring Desiree Duell, Kelly Church (Ottawa/Pottawatomie), and Leslie Sobel.

Flint artist Desiree Duell risked criticism from agency power that denied there was lead in the water. While the *Body of Water* installation, as a collaborative community effort, was received positively by the public in its various locations, she anticipated criticism for *America's Heartbreakers*. She recognized prior to its public performance, that she would be criticized for

graphic nature of the art on the hazmat suits. Her intent through activism was to give voice for the wrong conducted by city agencies that resulted in women miscarrying from ingesting lead-contaminated water. Her community consists of other artists in and beyond Flint, family and friends, her church, and others personally affected by the experience of the Flint Water Crisis.

Desiree Duell endures the effects from her experience of the Flint Water Crisis. She continues in her pursuit of establishing *Sanctuary Art Park*, a restorative ecosystem with the goal to reclaim the city-owned abandoned golf course by transforming it into a community space for the creative arts for healing through nature. The artist has conducted a series of ‘Art of Gathering’ workshops, drum circles, and other on-site participatory activities. In 2019, Duell led the ‘Cultivating Joy’ workshop where she, along with other artists and participants created an art installation that featured an isolated aged tree and a seasonal design derived from a variety of plants, flowers, and berries, gathered from within the park (see figs. C.5, C.6)



Fig. C. 5. Desiree Duell, placing flowers and seeds creates an aesthetic installation during “Joy of Cultivating” environmental workshop, Sanctuary Art Park. Flint, MI, 2019. Photo author’s collection.

Fig. C.6 (right). Detail, “Joy of Cultivating” environmental installation. Photo author’s collection.

Kelly Church (Ottawa/Pottawatomi) experiences community through heritage and tradition, as well as collaborative workshops, art museum and educational venues, invitational talks, and teaching. Her community also consists of the viewers of her artwork. The art titled, *In Case of Emergency Break Glass*, maintains an unconditional relationship with an anonymous community that cares about the future of the environment whereby a member responds to the emergency by breaking the glass. The artist's works are viewed through public exhibition, and private collections and institutional settings.

Her workshops include the Native tradition of 'Birch Bark Biting.' This author, having purchased a Black Ash bracelet from the artist, received with the bracelet, a gift of a Birch Bark Biting of a Turtle. Unfamiliar with this tradition, I subsequently participated in a Birch Bark Biting Workshop hosted by Church and GRAM during the "Interwoven Legacy" exhibition run in 2021. Church continues teaching in art venues and academic institutions. (see figs. C. 7, C.8)

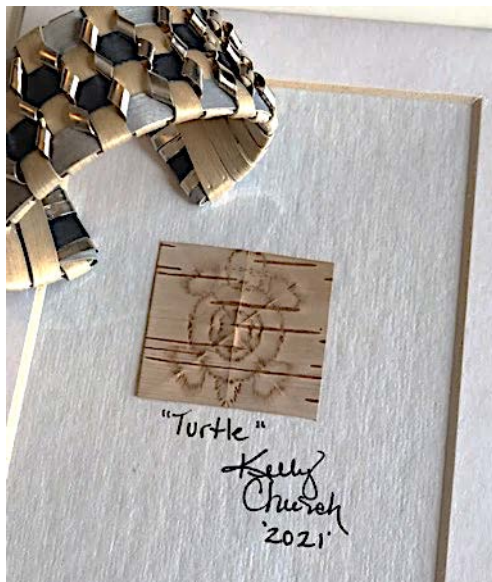


Fig. C.7. Kelly (Church Odawa & Pottawatomi), Gun Lake Band. *Turtle*, 2021. Birch Bark Biting artwork and custom bracelet, 2021. Photo author's collection.

Fig. C. 8 (right). Detail, Custom Bracelet. Photo author's collection

Leslie Sobel's work confronts environmental issues through scientific research that leads to her photography, mixed media, as well as statistical data points. While her work is met with intrigue from those who are interested in evidentiary data for environmental justice or climate change, her work is an expressive attestation to what she is witnessing relevant to observable and measurable data through aerial photography and experiences of seeing deforestation in urban landscapes. Her community also includes artists, scientists, academic institutions, and students. Her neighborhood includes those that care about the chemical dioxane that has been discovered in local water wells in her Ann Arbor community. She along with other Michigan residents continues to give voice for the ongoing monitoring of numerous locations throughout the state for groundwater and soil contamination derived from hazardous chemicals.

As she continues her research of the environment and atmosphere beyond *Detroit Data*, she conducts on-site interdisciplinary investigations focusing on environmental justice and climate change. She enjoys breathing in the Yukon atmosphere of sub-zero temperatures and has continued her investigative research by traveling with other artists and scientists on a Tall Ship to the Arctic Circle in Fall 2022. Her series *We Are Alone Together*, is informed by the intersection of COVID-19 pandemic and her environmental and planetary studies. (see figs. C. 9, C.10)

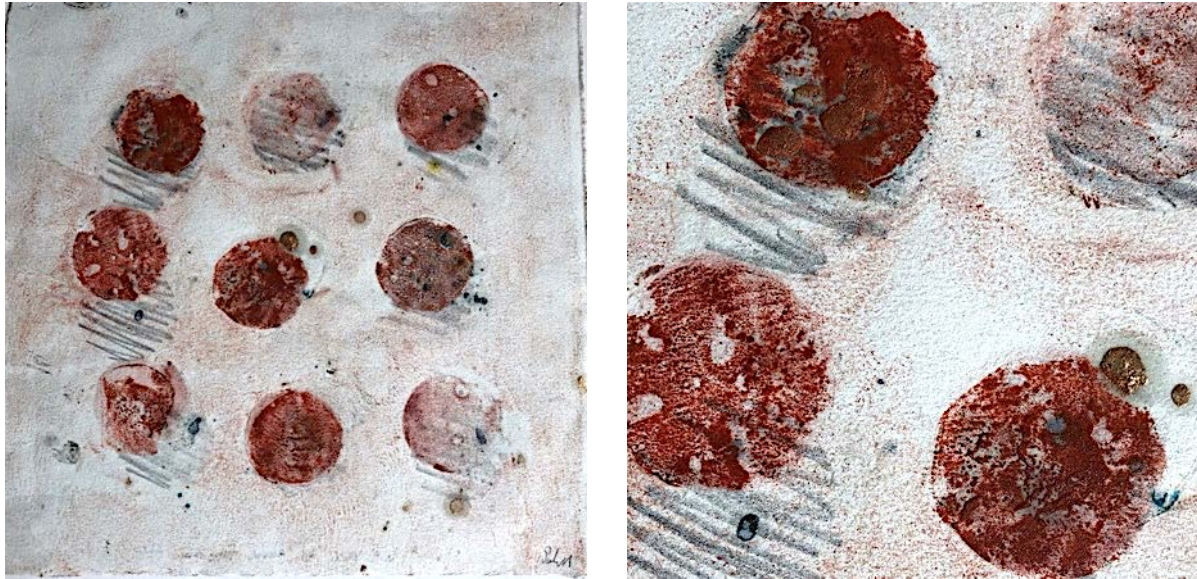


Fig. C.9. Leslie Sobel, *We Are Alone Together*, 2021. Mixed media on paper including encaustic monotype. 9 in x 9 in. Photo author's collection.

Fig. C.10 (right). Detail, *We Are Alone Together*, 2021. Photo author's collection.

CHAPTER 3. SHELTER – THE CARETAKER STILL PROTECTS – Featuring Jan Tichy, Cherish Parrish (Ottawa/Pottawatomi), and Teresa Moon.

Jan Tichy works in a variety of communities that include Chicago and other locations. The installation, *Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint*, derived from his collaboration with local youth and teachers experiencing the Flint Water Crisis, created new community through art. As an invited guest to Lansing and Flint, Tichy, a professor of art, has as his community, students and colleagues in K-12 and higher education. His community also consists of family and friends both in and outside of the US. Through his digital archives, made available as academic resources, his community expands to teachers throughout the US and other virtual locations for his contribution of care for collaborative artmaking experiences that may be used as teaching tools for the classroom.

As an art professor in Chicago, his recent collaboration involved students and teachers in Dallas, Texas, for the purpose of developing artwork for cultural understanding between students in two elementary schools, one with and the other without refugee populations.

Cherish Parrish (Ottawa/Pottawatomi) experiences community through heritage and tradition, as well as collaborative workshops, art museum exhibits, art talks, and educational teaching. While *Jingle Dress Dancer Study #1*, addresses the resistance to injustices toward First Nations People that includes, spiritual, cultural, and environmental, her work invites community through understanding Indigenous history and tradition. Her work joins the community of private and institutional collections. Since exhibiting at GRAM, Parrish continues teaching Native cultural practices through artforms that inspire the next generation of not only artists but all who seek understanding of Indigenous culture.

As an artist and ‘griot,’ Teresa Moon, known for her advocacy for the preservation of the Birwood Wall, continues to paint two-dimensional artworks and collect found objects in her neighborhood. She persists in advocacy for the Birwood Wall and its mural artwork that juxtaposes both the environmental injustice of segregation and unity. According to Moon, when neighbors or friends have questioned why she advocates for a segregation wall, she responds “it is to remember history.” Her community remains since childhood, the family and friends that live nearby, as well as neighbors that live on both sides of the Birwood Wall. Known as ‘Miss Teresa’ by neighborhood youth, the home that she was raised in continues to be a safe haven for anyone in her community needing a place to breathe unconditionally.

Her advocacy continues beyond the local community as she encourages others to appreciate the history of place and space in which her childhood memories are located. She advocates to create a neighborhood of unity where children are not aware of environmental

racism, not because of being shielded from it as she was in her youth, but because it does not exist. Her wish is for a global neighborhood where everyone can just breathe (Moon).

CHAPTER 4. CALL – THE CARETAKER STILL INVITES – Featuring Magda Love, Jason Quigno, (Anishinaabe), and Elton Monroy Durán.

Magda Love, as an Argentinean-born New York-based artist, was warmly received by the Flint community where her imaginary landscapes are painted. The community of Flint, its neighborhood families and children embraced her with hospitality. Her community is broad and includes friends and family from her hometown and New York home, as well as students and teachers in classrooms where she creates, and other artists in the cities and countries where she paints.

After creating her landscapes in Flint, Magda Love continues artmaking for future mural installations and exhibitions as she travels between Argentina and New York City. She continues selling her signature artwork through her online store.

Anishinaabe Jason Quigno is part of the community of not only his Indigenous tribe, but of Grand Rapids where he lives and works. *All My Relations* invites community to its permanent location in the city of Muskegon. As a stone sculptor, Quigno works with educators and students to share knowledge about his heritage and artmaking and invites others into his studio to learn of the Seven Grandfather Teachings. His work is received by a community of collectors for permanent installations in city parks, academic, and corporate institutions, and gallery representation.

His ongoing stonework includes carved granite blocks referred to as ‘Infinity Cubes.’ The smaller cubes weigh several hundred pounds, while the larger cubes are several thousand pounds

in weight. He continues to complete commissions for a variety of private, academic, and corporate clients. (see figs. C. 11, C. 12)



Fig. C.11. Jason Quigno Anishinaabe. Artist in studio in Grand Rapids, MI. Smaller *Infinity Cube* sculpted by the artist weighs several hundred pounds. Photo author's collection.



Fig. C.12 (right). *Infinity Cube* weighing several tons, in process. Photo author's collection.

Detroit artist, Elton Monroy Durán has experienced environmental injustice as he addresses those that are marginalized in Mexicantown through its division by an interstate highway that allows for continuous traffic, noise, and air pollution. While his outreach includes those living in and outside of Detroit, the murals, all of which represent the local culture serve as a dialogue for a united community. His community also includes K-12 students and teachers that paint with him, city and government agencies that commission and permit his work, as well as tourists that participate in viewing his murals. While he is connected to family and friends from his hometown in Mexico, his strong relationship with the Latino residents living in Detroit, promote cultural understanding as he discusses Mexican heritage and his vision for the future.

As Durán works with students in Detroit and Lansing, he is designing new public art for the city of Detroit and the Mexicantown community. He continues hosting tours and advocating for unity in his urban neighborhood. When this author viewed six of his murals with him in Mexicantown, meeting community members where his murals are located became a significant part of the experience. His warm hospitality allows for dialogue that promotes the Latino community's history and culture.

The Cultural Record. Hannah Arendt suggests that a cultural object is such only if it lasts through the centuries. However, many of public artworks in this study are not intended for permanency. Much of the public art will remain as historical accounts through archived photographic, digital, or literary means. Arendt notes:

“No doubt what is at stake here is much more than the psychological state of the artists; it is the objective status of the cultural world, which, in so far as it contains tangible things – books and paintings, statues, buildings, and music – comprehends, and gives testimony to, the entire recorded past of countries, nations, and ultimately mankind” (BPF 199).

In posing the question, *Who is responsible for archiving the records of the public art?*, it is revealed that it ultimately belongs to the artist. According to Jan Tichy, he felt a responsibility to maintain the records for his community collaborative artworks; and noted that museums or galleries advertise the artist's work or exhibition, they do so in context of budget constraints which effects the ability to maintain the exhibition archives (Tichy Personal Interview 9 June 2020). The artist has a vested interest in maintaining the archive whether physically or digitally, or as oral tradition.

While the artwork has the potential to outlive the injustice, it often is contingent on policy, institutional change, or community advocacy. However, certain artworks, for example

those made of natural materials may not physically endure beyond the long-term effects that result from environmental injustice. In these cases, the artwork's visibility and access continue only through protection, preservation, and the archival process.

What is at stake here, it is my contention, that in addition to the communities of Michigan, the archives provide both witness and testimony for all communities. The discourse on public art will have an accounting that the artist interested in environmental injustice created art in the role of 'caretaker.' This legacy of care will disclose that within the lifetime of these artists, there was a culture of care. The cultural record must show that the contemporary artist cared to create public art during the ongoing narrative of the injustice despite personal anguish or angst. With the force of gentleness, the caretaker creates public art that, provides an invitation for dialogue for an imagined future. The thought for future, therefore, becomes a catalyst for change.

CHOOSING TO SEE

The artist in the role of caretaker creates the artform through observation, tending to, and caring for, that which is to be thought about in the artmaking. The method of response whereby the artist continues to create in the presence of the ongoing events, allows one to understand that the artist, while addressing the evolving narratives, seeks to understand 'who we are' in order to address the complexities of the immediate or long-term effects of environmental injustice.

Lucy R. Lippard conveys that place-specific artists are working within community politics for infrastructure improvements such as zoning and water rights that serve to address social disparities, and that contemporary artists hope to appeal to a broader audience (184, 188). While discoveries through this research at times felt daunting, it appears that the artists are tireless in their persistent efforts for an imagined future. This persistence expands on Lippard's notion that those with a vision for future can lead toward a just environment.

T.J. Demos defines the term ‘political ecology’ as environmental matters that are “inextricable from social, political, and economic forces” wherein environmental stresses can be a “driver and consequence of injustice and inequality” (7). His notations align with Lippard’s observations, that environmentally engaged art allows for the examination of politics and art’s relation to ecology, and that the future is open to more activist-artists that will have visibility in media coverage as they confront ecological destruction by governments and industry (10, 11).

This study supports Demos’ suggestion that there are new opportunities for artists to gain significant visibility relevant to addressing the effects of environmental injustice. While many of the artists in this study work with art institutional and academic communities, there could be a much broader audience initiated by these institutions. New collaborative efforts with artists, relevant to teaching K-12 and higher education about the relationship between eco-systems and self, would entail administrative support for extending invitations to artists that work in a variety of media. Consideration for a variety of spectrums could include Indigenous culture, environmental health justice, natural resource policymaking, eco-art, environmental art, environmental intervention, integrated climate studies, and urban reclamation.

In communities where opportunities exist for teaching and learning through public art, adopting the notion of ‘caretaker’ of the environment and of each other, could be a catalyst for new dialogue for change. If the artist does not care, then it will be as Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring* (1962), noted in her examination of harm to the environment (human and nonhuman) from toxic chemicals. If, we do not stop to do what we can, we too will be “like the priest and the Levite” in the biblical narrative that “choose to pass by on the other side and to see nothing” (86). In this study, artists in the role of caretaker choose to stop and to see. In doing so, invite others, through the public art, to also stop and see.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. As early as 1970s, the terms ‘aesthetic justice’ and ‘aesthetic welfare’ were used by Monroe Beardsley in his examination of environment relative to societal wellbeing. For more information see “Aesthetic Welfare, Aesthetic Justice, and Educational Policy” by Monroe C. Beardsley. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 7, no. 4, Special Issue: The Arts, Cultural Services, and Career Education, Oct., 1973, pp. 49-61. U of Illinois P. Also see, Hanna Mattila’s “Aesthetic justice and urban planning: Who ought to have the right to design cities?”* *GeoJournal* 58, 131–138 (2002). doi.org/10.1023/B:GEJO.0000010832.88129.cc.

For more information on public art and trauma that includes memorialization or participation, see James Young’s, *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces in Between*, U of Massachusetts P, 2016. Also see Mary Schneider Enriquez’s *Doris Salcedo: The Materiality of Mourning*, Harvard Art Museums, Yale UP, 2016.

2. The Flint Water Crisis began in April 2014 when the city government mandated that the city’s water supply source switch, for economic reasons, from Lake Huron (via Detroit) to the Flint River. The corrective treatment measures were not used to prevent the infrastructure of supply pipes from corroding. This resulted in the contamination of the city’s drinking water. The water supply ‘switchback’ took place in October 2015 after the lead levels had been made public by the Virginia Tech Research Team in September of 2015. City officials were later indicted for covering up their knowledge about the levels of lead in the tap water. Public art that addresses the Water Crisis continues beyond this writing, as the story of the community continues to unfold. For the timeline of events, see CNN’s editorial research publication, “Flint Water Crisis Fast Facts.”

3. As early as spring 2015, artist Desiree Duell, aware that the water was making residents sick, utilized contaminated tap water from local households as form, material, and process for her public art. She was unaware at the time that lead had already begun leaching into the water supply pipes, since that information had not been publicly disclosed. Her efforts were in an attempt to raise public awareness and to protest the unsafe drinking water. Later it was revealed that lead had leached into the city's drinking water for more than a year.

CHAPTER ONE. WITNESS – THE CARETAKER SEES

WATER: *PLUMBUM*

1. Developed in 1927, Kool-Aid® is a registered trademark of Kraft Heinz, Chicago, IL. Urbandictionary.com references the 1978 cult mass-suicide in Jonestown, Guyana, whereby Jim Jones (from California), the leader of the group, convinced his followers to commit suicide by drinking grape-flavored Kool-Aid laced with potassium cyanide, in what is now commonly called “the Jonestown Massacre.” Jolene McDonald of San Diego State University notes that although Kool-Aid was depicted in Jonestown promotional films, the grape-flavored drink primarily used for the mass suicide was the similar brand, Flavor Aid. She notes the term “Don’t drink the Kool Aid” in popular culture references the tragedy, while the Urban Dictionary indicates the phrase means don’t believe a particular philosophy or perspective too strongly (McDonald, “Kool Aid/Flavor Aid: Inaccuracies vs. Facts Part 7”).

2. For more information on Fountain Street Church, Grand Rapids, MI and Artprize International Art Competition, see “Art at Fountain Street Church,” *fountainstreet.org* and *Artprize.org*.

3. For more information on Mona Hanna-Attisha, et al., peer-reviewed publication, see “Elevated Blood Lead Levels in Children Associated With the Flint Drinking Water Crisis: A

Spatial Analysis of Risk and Public Health Response.” February 2016, vol. 106, no. 2, *AJPH* (*American Journal of Public Health*).

4. For the Complete Dataset, also see, “Lead Results from Tap Water Sampling in Flint, MI.” FlintWaterStudy.org, Dec 1, 2015. flintwaterstudy.org/2015/12/complete-dataset-lead-results-in-tap-water-for-271-flint-samples/

5. In the book of Luke 10: 29-37, the parable of the Good Samaritan recounts the story of Jesus being asked “Who is my neighbor?” But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? / “³⁰And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. / ³¹And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. / ³²And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked *on him*, and passed by on the other side. / ³³But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on *him*, / ³⁴And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” (*The Bible*. King James Version. 4th ed., Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publisher, 2010)

LAND: *BRIDGE 5 LINE 5*

6. For more information on the oil painting *Birth of Venus*, 1485, by Sandro Botticelli, (Firenze 1445 – 1510) see “Birth of Venus,” Le Gallerie Degli Uffizi Uffizi, Florence. uffizi.it. www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/birth-of-venus.

AIR: 49207. *BREATHING IN A DETROIT ZIP CODE*

7. Also see, “How George Floyd Died, and What Happened Next,” *The New York Times*, 19 May 2022, www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd.html.

CHAPTER TWO. TESTIMONY – THE CARETAKER SAYS

WATER: *A BODY OF WATER*

1. For more information on *A Body of Water*, see desireduell.art. *A Body of Water* was the first community arts installation in response to the Flint Water Crisis. Between 2015-2016, the installation traveled to various sites throughout the city of Flint, functioning as an alternative platform for protesting. *A Body of Water* was awarded a Share Art Flint grant in 2015 and 2016 by Greater Flint Arts Council with generous funding from the Ruth Mott Foundation and was also featured at Flint Public Art Project's Free City Festival 2016 through support from the Andy Warhol Foundation. *A Body of Water* continues to be shown upon request.

2. Meaning of lavender according to color psychology: "This psychological association is confirmed by the color's historical use within the Christian faith as a symbol of Easter. In that sense, lavender represents the part of the psyche that, untouched by the weary and troubles of years, retains the vigor and vitality of youth. This encompasses such emotions and mental thought processes imagination, creativity, and because of its association with springtime, the optimistic beginning of new stages in life. ... The ancient Hebrews ascribed holiness to lavender, using it as a key component of ritual anointing oil, a fact attested to in the biblical Song of Solomon. Lavender has a number of medicinal properties, from aromatherapy to value as an antiseptic. Because of this, along with its religious connotations, the color is mentally associated with healing, relaxation, cleanliness, and purity." www.colorpsychology.org/lavender/. Accessed 28 Nov. 2020.

3. For more information on the writing of the *Woodstock* lyrics by Joni Mitchell, see, jonimitchell.com. Woodstock. Siquomb Publishing Co., 22 October 1969, jonimitchell.com/music/song.cfm?id=75.

4. For more information on America's Heartbreakers peaceful protest see Jake May's article and photographs, "Women in Flint protest water crisis with 'die-in' outside treatment plant." *mlive.com*, May 16, 2016, www.mlive.com/news/flint/2016/05/ten_women_protest_in_die-in_on.html.

5. For more information on Nakiya Wakes, see "The Flint Water Crisis." *Anglican Theological Review*, vol. 100, issue. 1, Winter 2018, 143-149.

LAND: IN CASE OF CULTURAL EMERGENCY BREAK GLASS

6. *An Interwoven Legacy: The Black Ash Basketry of Kelly Church & Cherish Parrish* was exhibited at Grand Rapids Art Museum "GRAM" from Aug 28, 2021- Feb 26, 2022. The mother and daughter artists practice the Anishinaabe tradition of Black Ash basketry. For more information on exhibits, see www.artmuseumgr.org/past-exhibitions.

7. For more information on the invasion of the introduced Emerald Ash Borer, the disappearance of ash trees in the Great Lakes Region and initiatives for reforestation, see "National Ash Seed Collection Initiative." *Association for Temperate Agroforestry*. aftaweb.org, www.aftaweb.org/latest-newsletter/temperate-agroforester/98-2008-vol-17/june-no-2/73-national-ash-tree-seed-collection-initiative.html.

AIR: 48325. BREATHING IN DETROIT DATA

8. Since 1972, the joint NASA/ U.S. Geological Survey Landsat series of Earth Observation satellites have continuously acquired images of the Earth's land surface, providing uninterrupted data to help land managers and policymakers make informed decisions about natural resources and the environment. See, www.usgs.gov/core-science-systems/nli/landsat. For more information on District maps for the City of Detroit, see Interactive District Maps located at detroitmi.gov/node/24951.

9. For information on COVID-19 hotspots in Detroit, see Khushbu Shah's "How racism and poverty made Detroit a new coronavirus hot spot: The rising death toll, disproportionately among black residents, has led Michigan to create a racial disparities task force." 10 Apr. 2020, www.vox.com/identities/2020/4/10/21211920/detroit-coronavirus-racism-poverty-hot-spot. Also, for a COVID-19 timeline, see *Detroit (ABC) WXYZ*, "Interactive timeline: The major moments COVID-19 pandemic in Michigan after 2 years," www.wxyz.com/news/coronavirus/interactive-timeline-the-major-moments-covid-19-pandemic-in-michigan-after-2-years.

10. For more information on the painting, *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso see Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia. www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/guernica.

11. According to Sloterdijk, what transpired after they called the "[t]he faces of survivors imaged a new form of apathy: 'Hiroshima masks' stared out at the remains of a world that a light storm had removed from them only to reconstitute as a radioactive dessert" (58). "After black rain fell on Japan, this nameless evil manifested itself for decades through all sorts of cancers and profound psychic disturbances. US censors in Japan forbade all public mention of this until 1952." See footnote 9, page 58 referencing the estimated number of victims in 2001.

12. While Sloterdijk references catch-terms as *atmoterrorism* (1), *atmotechnic* (23), as well as "air-sphere" in his reference to Johann Gottfried Herder (48), and scientific terms such as atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, cryosphere, and pedosphere (86, 87), the term "atmo-sfear" is the spelling of the author's, intended for the sound of the term to be same-sounding as atmosphere. Inserting the word "fear" in the spelling depicts fear that one lives with in the age of COVID-19, the place or neighborhood of exterior boundaries, as well as living with the fear that one feels when seeing environmental injustices (ultimately social injustices) taking place in the world where people in a struggle for their life say, "I can't breathe." Note: other variations of the

spelling of “atmosphere” are recognized as names for video games, music sites, amusement park rides, and a variety of music bands.

CHAPTER THREE. SHELTER – THE CARETAKER PROTECTS

WATER: *BEYOND STREAMING: A SOUND MURAL FOR FLINT*

1. For more information on the Eli and Edythe Broad Museum of Art on the MSU campus, see broadmuseum.msu.edu/about. Eli and Edythe Broad, MSU alumnus, provided the gift of \$28 million to create and support the Broad Museum at MSU. Their gifts include other endowments to MSU, as well as to UCLA and other cultural arts institutions in Los Angeles where they resided.

2. For more information on the artist’s collaboration with youth from Chicago and students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2011, see Jan Tichy’s “Project Cabrini Green,” www.projectcabrinigreen.org.

AIR: *48221. BREATHING IN MOON’S LIGHT*

3. For more information on the restoration and exhibition of the Rosa Parks bus see henryford.org, “Creating and Preserving the Rosa Parks Bus.” [www.thehenryford.org/explore/inside/rosa-parks-bus/Rosa Parks bus](http://www.thehenryford.org/explore/inside/rosa-parks-bus/Rosa-Parks-bus) – Henry Ford Museum. Accessed 10 May 2022.

4. For more information on the history of the Birwood Wall see “Built to keep Black from white: Eighty years after a segregation wall rose in Detroit, America remains divided. That’s not an accident,” by Erin Einhorn, *NBC News*, and Olivia Lewis, *BridgeDetroit*, July 19, 2021. This article was published in partnership with BridgeDetroit, a nonprofit community news, information and engagement media service. www.nbcnews.com/specials/detroit-segregation-wall/. July 19, 2021. Also see “Transcript: A Detroit neighborhood stands in the shadow of a segregation wall built 80 years ago. The full episode transcript for 8 Mile 4 Life.” *Msnbc.com*,

July 29, 2021, www.msnbc.com/podcast/transcript-detroit-neighborhood-stands-shadow-segregation-wall-built-80-years-n1275388.

5. Teresa Moon references “Black Bottom” as an area in south Detroit. Encyclopedia of Detroit states, “Black Bottom was a predominantly Black neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan demolished for redevelopment in the late 1950s to early 1960s and replaced with the Lafayette Park residential district and a freeway. Located on Detroit’s near east side, historically, the area of Black Bottom was part of the riverbed of the River Savoyard ... the marsh soils of its bottom are the source of the area’s name.” Detroit Historical Society. detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/black-bottom-neighborhood. Accessed 16 Dec 2021.

CHAPTER FOUR. CALL – THE CARETAKER INVITES

WATER: *LANDSCAPE OF LOVE IN FLINT*

1. For more information on the *100 Murals Project* see “The Flint Public Art Project 100 Murals by 2020” interview with Joe Schipani, by Peter Hinterman, *mycitymag.com*, August 1, 2019. www.mycitymag.com/the-flint-public-art-project-100-murals-by-2020/.

2. For more information on Magda Love’s murals and artwork see, “Magda Love: A Colorful Career” by Nicole Gordon, thirdrailart.com/blogs/news/magda-love-a-colorful-career; cargocollective.com; and kickstarter.com/projects/1876753185/artphibia-web-series/description?lang=f.

AIR: 48216. *BREATHING IN THE GOOD*

3. For more information on the opening of Bagley Street Pedestrian Bridge see, “Bagley Bridge,” bridgestunnels.com/location/bagley-bridge/.

4. For more information on Frida Kahlo, see “Frida Kahlo, introduction” by Maya Jiménez, www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-1010/latin-america-modernism/surrealism-latin-america/a/frida-kahlo-introduction.

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