

## **COLA20 Salon Conversation #2**

Moderated By: Hirokazu Kosaka and Lynne Thompson  
With Linda Arreola, Jennifer Celio, Joyce Dallal, Bia Gayotto, Clement Hanami,  
Malathi Iyengar, Michael Pierzynski, Maryrose Mendoza, Corey Stein, and Denise  
Uyehara

00:00:07

LYNNE THOMPSON: So my name is Lynne Thompson, I'm a fellow of 2016 and I'm a co-facilitator with - -

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HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: Hirakazu Kosaka.

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LYNNE THOMPSON: So what we're, what we're hoping because they told us that this is what we should do is to make sure that everybody has a chance to participate in the conversation. Hopefully we all got the same questions. So I'm gonna kick it off and look to one of you to jump right in. The question that we have was Los Angeles has been a pre-eminent space of artistic integration of western and non-western peoples and ideas. The question is what aspects of L.A. culture and history propel this integration. Don't be shy. Who'd like to start off?

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COREY STEIN: So I was born in L.A. and so it had a huge effect on me 'cause we moved up to Seattle when I was in fourth grade and that was a huge effect because back in '72 Seattle was not what it is today. And L.A. was a lot, just, just like it is today, it was, it was a huge melting pot which I loved and when we moved up to Seattle that really affected me. It was a lot harder to find gefilte fish and there were some stereotypes about being Jewish and that, that wasn't happening down in L.A. just because there was a lot more Jewish people down in L.A.

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COREY STEIN: And my mom's side is Tlingit, is Native American and you've got a lot more of that up in Seattle than you did down here in L.A. because we were, that's part of Alaska. And I came back down to L.A. as soon as I could. I would come and visit every summer a family that I knew and I went to Cal Arts and I stayed here since and Seattle is a nice place to visit.

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COREY STEIN: Now it's got great art, but I was going to say some other things about culture that I had to take notes on because I can't remember these. And the two things that I do remember is when I was in college one of the things that they had written on your report cards or whatever your critiques was I remember them saying that my art was very native and I thought that was really great because that just meant it was really great. Then I read it about 20 years later and it said it was very naïve. [LAUGH]

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COREY STEIN: And I was, I was telling someone here about how I got this, I was buying shampoo because I just started to dye my hair and it came in an orange bottle like an orange tan bottle and it said for women of color and so I was about half way through the bottle before I realized they weren't talking about your hair being dyed a different color. So just somehow to me all of this has to do with L.A. because L.A. is just a bunch of goofy people that are all, even the ones, even the people here that are not artists in L.A. are kind of in a really good way so I don't know what else to say except I love LA..

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LYNNE THOMPSON: Let me just, just add so HiraKazu and I met briefly before this and talked about the way that the different cultures in L.A. really affected us as artists, me as a writer and he as an artistic director and, and also a visual, more of a visual artist and how those, the different cultures in Los Angeles really affects our work. A lot of, of my work is affected by the fact that I grew up partially in a Japanese American neighborhood. So that was something that he and I could really talk a lot about and how that affected us.

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LYNNE THOMPSON: And I think that's, that's one of the things that we want to make sure we, we touch on as well while we're together and I wondered if anybody else had a similar type of experience as artists.

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DENISE UYEHARA: Okay, my name is Denise Uyehara and I'm Okinawan and Japanese American and I didn't realize I was Okinawan American really until I came to Los Angeles. I started working with the Okinawan community in Gardena, but also in, in this, this little Tokyo area. And I, because of that I went in 2003 to Okinawa and learned more about my relatives there and about the battle of Okinawa and the U.S. and Japanese occupation there. I bring that up because in creating performance around it, which is what I received the COLA for I, I learned I was kind of a walking contradiction because I carried a U.S. passport.

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DENISE UYEHARA: My relatives, they received me as an Okinawan. They're like oh you've come home. And yet I felt this very strange contradiction of like I have this privilege of being from a super power and I was watching SOUNDS LIKE: Cullen Addition happen before my eyes. So coming back here I really wanted to figure out what was my place, our place as U.S. residents, as people living here. What is our connection to and our relationship to the rest of the world? Are we at the center of the world or are we just part of a large pluralistic conversation.

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DENISE UYEHARA: And that's also now led me to work with other indigenous groups in the Southwest. I now live in Tucson. Okinawans are considered an indigenous people of, of the southernmost islands of which is now Japan. And so I've learned a lot from, from being in a very culturally diverse community in, in Los Angeles where people are constantly grappling with who are we. What is our connection to the rest of the world?

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DENISE UYEHARA: What is our connection to either lineage or to places that we're occupying or, or bombing or, you know, what is, what is that and what are we supposed to do with that information and the, the situation we're in? And a lot of times I think as artists we feel a little bit helpless, but what we do as, I think that's what we're, what we're supposed to do is to create work that unpacks very complicated situations and asks difficult questions.

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MALATHI IYENGAR: Good evening my name is Malathi Iyengar. I am the Artistic Director of Rangoli Dance Company. I came here a long time ago in 1974 and then I went to UCLA and of course marriage brought me here and, and I practice Indian Classical Dance called Bharatanatyam, but I just want to touch upon two aspects of what I do and what I create and how it affects me being in California and how it affects others as audience members. That's what I, I would like to share.

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MALATHI IYENGAR: When, when I was doing my MFA I was constantly asked to deconstruct my art form all the time to; I looked at that as diluting the art form. To me, you know, because they wanted me to go to the core of things. Malathi, when you, this, this is so beautiful, but we don't understand what you are doing. But then I felt do you have to understand everything? You know in art it's okay sometimes if you do not understand everything. It's okay to maybe get a sense of what's going on sometimes.

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MALATHI IYENGAR: Maybe you understand certain mood that I created in my piece, maybe it was anger, maybe it was joy, maybe that came to you in my piece or maybe I created certain shapes, certain groups, that abstract elements that gave you joy. That's okay by me too. But then there are some audience members obviously they do understand what I'm doing so I felt that more than deconstruction I felt because I'm showing my work to a mainstream audience not necessarily all the time Indian people.

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MALATHI IYENGAR: I don't have all the time Indian people in my audience. What was important to me was because I'm here in L.A. in California that finding different ways to stage the things in multiple ways so each one of you will take away something from my work. That's what I focused on. So in other words trying to choreograph or create from an audience point of view with my own point of view. So will I sit through this for an hour or two hours, you know, and will I pay thirty dollars to get to go see this performance.

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MALATHI IYENGAR: So that's what has helped me going to introspection and examining my own work to see how many ways can I make this accessible to maybe these ten people or maybe this group of people and find different elements in, in a one hour program that I may create so maybe you take away something from it. That's one thing. And the other point that I would like to make is which is very frustrating for us classical dancers and musicians is the moment they see me visually, before for many years they thought I was doing belly dance.

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MALATHI IYENGAR: I'm not doing belly dance. I'm doing classical dance, which is like ballet. It takes years and years to get the grammar and master it and then, you know, get to a point where you feel spiritually and artistically fulfilled hopefully someday, you know. So I'm not doing belly dance. Now in the last ten years I've had to defend myself saying oh you do Bollywood? Now I don't do Bollywood. I'm not doing Bollywood either. So but nothing wrong with that, nothing wrong with either one. Neither am I offended by those questions.

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MALATHI IYENGAR: But I think it has, it is much harder for my type of art form, the classical art forms because they have such deep roots and they do not give; what I do will not give you immediate gratification. It's a gratification over time, whether you're learning or you're practicing an art form. So it, it has been a challenge to make it stand and say that this stands on its own and it works. So I, I don't want to take up too much time, but those are the two important points that I think many of us face.

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LYNNE THOMPSON: Thank you.

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HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: Thank you. I think let's keep, keep in the subject about a particular immigration of art. I think the cultural immigration to Los Angeles, how much diversity in Los Angeles. I know I, I speak myself, but I'm an immigrant here and I remember coming to the states in the '60s and, and I saw incredible amount of diversity here. I come from again a traditional family as well and the question that I think it impacted me was are you Japanese or Chinese and I never often asked when I was in Japan are you Japanese or Chinese. We all are Japanese so that type of question didn't come up.

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HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: But that was very important for me. I think let's keep it in that subject, in a cultural kind of a diversity here and so anybody who's an immigrant, anybody? Yeah, that speaks to you about that.

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BIA GAYOTTO: Hi, my name is Bia Gayotto and I emigrated from Brazil in 1993 to pursue my master of fine arts here at UCLA and like you I feel that before coming here I wasn't aware where my roots were from. I wasn't concerned about that in my artistic work. And I think coming to L.A. brought that kind of aspect of interesting cultures and people and that had a huge impact in my practice today.

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BIA GAYOTTO: And I know how I am trying to actually, I'm interested in portraying different cultures and, and diversity in, in my work so it's and I actually find this is a real interesting event how we are all here and how this event brought us together, you know. And how we are all from different places and that's a portrait of our city in L.A. We are a portrait of that and so and as a person that now I consider myself an L.A. based artist. I think that I've become part of the diversity as well and my history is part of the city too, so.

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MARYROSE MENDOZA: Hi, my name is Maryrose Mendoza and my parents immigrated in '69 and we came shortly after in 1970. And I found out that I, I am a 1.5G immigrant generation. So I have found that living here has been kind of, more of an assimilation of America in that I've had to find ways to connect to actually my home country.

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MARYROSE MENDOZA: And I'm really gratified to see that after all these years with Filipinos being a majority Asian population in California for so many years are finally getting a little bit of recognition particularly with how Filipino food is starting to, to get some attention. And you know it's been; I think for me it's been more of an investigation of what have I kept as a Filipino and how I have been I guess integrating so well my American -- the influence of America and kind of deciphering through making art what is, what is my culture and or is this, is my culture just a hybrid culture, yeah. Thank you.

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JOYCE DALLAL: I'm, I'm an immigrant from the Midwest. [LAUGH] But my parents emigrated from Baghdad and I was born in Indianapolis and we were a minority of one family in Indianapolis because on top of being Iraqi we're Jewish so we were a minority in every community we belong to. And so I, but I didn't really, I wasn't really conscious of that. I mean I knew we were different, but I, I didn't know why until and then we moved here and there is a community here.

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JOYCE DALLAL: And I actually felt extremely stifled because it was a more traditional community. All of a sudden my grandmother lived with us and she had all these rules and I did everything wrong. So I rebelled against my parent culture and I thought of it as a drag and a detriment. And I went to UCLA also in 1974 and anyway ended up at USC as a grad student in the late '80s when the multi culturalism movement started.

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JOYCE DALLAL: And I was invited to be a guest. I got a student grant to go to the Vista Awards ceremony. I don't know if people remember. It was, I think it was sponsored by the Women's Building, but they honored women in Los Angeles. And one of the women they honored, I can't remember her name, maybe some of you know her. She was, she's a Japanese American Koto player.

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JOYCE DALLAL: And she, she told a story of, when she was taking lessons, she, she had to go to Japanese school and she, she, she had to learn an instrument so she learned the koto, but she asked her teacher to teach her how to play Duke of Earl on, on the koto. [LAUGH] And her story just resonated with me so much 'cause, and I was in grad school by then, but I had, I didn't ever consider my own background as something that I could draw on and combine with what I grew up with.

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JOYCE DALLAL: So then I started to very consciously investigate that in my work and that became the impetus for you know all the work I've done since then. So I think that was something about being in Los Angeles that I was, you know, able to see in somebody else something that could apply to me.

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JENNIFER CELIO: I'm Jennifer Celio. I'm a native of Southern California, grew up in the suburbs, was born in Burbank and grew up in the suburbs. And so my upbringing and my childhood was, felt very homogenous in the community I grew up in and it took me moving to Long Beach where I live now to have a much better appreciation for and experience with and exposure to a wider swath of people and I love living in Long Beach because it's, you know, just this really quirky melting pot of people.

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JENNIFER CELIO: And you know and everything from working class, really hard gravel people to you know a lot of artists and a lot of musicians and so it's, you know, it's, it's

something that definitely pushed my art even further. I mean my work has always been so much about, really about the suburbs and about the urban experience and about where nature and civilization collides and, and so but it, it really became more I think a little bit more diverse and a little more interesting at least for myself when I could, you know, see more of Long Beach and L.A. rather than what I grew up with in the suburbs. So that definitely shifted it for me.

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LINDA ARREOLA: My name is Linda Arreola. I wanted to go back a little further, maybe even pre-culture what this area, how it influenced me anyway. And as a child I'm born and raised in L.A. and I actually live in a community called El Sereno all my life just about, but the light, the ocean and this feeling of anything can happen, can happen here in this place specifically was really a predominate sensation I had as a child growing up. And thinking about the ocean, we spend a lot of time at Santa Monica Beach as a child. I'm Mexican American.

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LINDA ARREOLA: I was raised by a single parent and my father would drive myself and my brother out on weekends to the beach and there was a feeling of, sort of a birthing or maybe this is a place to nest for all types of people and places and ideas and all things to come together and it seemed to be a really unique sensation here that these cultures that and I was very aware that I was Mexican American. My neighborhood was Japanese, Chinese and Mexican American.

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LINDA ARREOLA: There was a little Anglo American and a few blacks and so I thought that was a really strong feeling of this new culture developing that was both non-western and western. And the other thing that was really significant is that we're so close to Mexico and yet it seems like such a distance away and I'm being Mexican American, didn't know anything about Mexico until I took a trip with my brother and it was just like a jumping on buses and trains and seeing the pyramids for the first time.

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LINDA ARREOLA: And I was blown away. I thought this is the best kept secret. How could I live in a city like this and not know that this existed just a stone throw away it seemed. And it was a great influence on my art developing and sort of the lightened space and simple geometries reminded me of something also very new that I wasn't aware of. So there was a combination of things that I thought was very unique to L.A. that could only happen in L.A. and because of some of the environment and demographics and, you know, history of faraway places it was actually very close.

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LYNNE THOMPSON: I just, I'm gonna pass this along to you, but before I do that listening to everyone who has spoken thus far reminded me that this melding of western and non-western cultures in this city is something I appreciate whenever I go to any other city in the states. And people, you know, have asked me well if you had to move where would you move? I said you know it would be hard not to be able to have Indian food or to hear particular kinds of music or whatever.

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LYNNE THOMPSON: And you go to other places and you think oh my god where, where are the, like the people people, you know. So, anyway just listening to all of you reminded me of that.

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CLEMENT HANAM: Well I grew up in Los Angeles. I'm a Southern California native, but I think my, my unique growing up experience is that I went to a Japanese American Catholic school in Little Tokyo and I was really surrounded by Japanese Americans when I went to school, but when I would go home I, I lived in East L.A. so my neighborhood was predominately Latino. And yeah I was at home. I played with all kids on my block [LAUGH] and it's funny because they would always call me Chino and it kind of goes to your Chinese/Japanese thing.

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CLEMENT HANAM: And I'd say wait I'm not, I'm not, I'm not Chino. I'm Japanese, why are you calling me Chino? But it was something I grew up with. I watched a lot of westerns and, you know, I grew up an American watching Brady Bunch and stuff like that. So there was always this constant evolution of my identity, we're talking about hybridity. And I think probably the most transformative experience growing up in East L.A. was; I used to be a roadie for a group called Las Ilegales and really hit on with the singer.

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CLEMENT HANAM: And I think working with them really showed me that art could make a statement. It could say something. It could be used to change the way people look at things and so a lot of my work deals with hybridity and, and how our identity, our identities are shaped by the diverse cultures in Los Angeles.

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MICHAEL PIERZYNSKI: Good morning. I'm Mike Pierzysnski. I'm a Midwestern transplant as well. I grew up in St. Louis and I had, my grandparents, once I had great grandparents on the other side were immigrants, but you know so I had the European immigrant experience and St. Louis has changed a lot, but at that time it was largely a black and white city, a lot of racism. It's, it's better now, but I lived in New York for eight years and that's a city of immigrants, but it's still very at the time anyway it seemed very European, you know.

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MICHAEL PIERZYNSKI: And when I moved, I've been here since '89. I've lived in the same apartment in Korea Town for that, that long and you notice the difference right away here. The, the Asian communities here are huge compared to New York and, and also the Mexican, Central American influence, it just feels more non-western from the start because of the immigrant communities.

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MICHAEL PIERZYNSKI: And, and building on what you said Linda about the, there's just an openness here too compared to New York to just within the art world it's not as competitive

and there are more people maybe because it's more spread out and you spend more time at home and you don't go out drinking as much as you do in New York. [LAUGH] You, I think people tend to make more personal and idiosyncratic and less commercial work maybe, not everyone.

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MICHAEL PIERZYNSKI: But and it's not as competitive, the artists aren't as competitive. You have more space to work, more light. I don't know, I just think it makes for, I prefer it here, you know. It makes for a better working atmosphere for me.

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LYNNE THOMPSON: And how does it impact your work specifically?

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MICHAEL PIERZYNSKI: I don't know that it has really, but I just find it easier to work here. I was socializing a lot more in New York. [LAUGH] I was younger too. [LAUGH] But and my wife is, she's also from St. Louis because she's Japanese American. Her father was from Sacramento and she does not want to move back to St. Louis at all. She was one of, at that time there were only a handful of Asians there. So you know I have a half Asian child and he's just, they're more comfortable here. [LAUGH]

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LYNNE THOMPSON: I was thinking kind of as a follow up to what you were saying Linda; some of you spoke about it a little bit, but I was wondering how this environment which we all seem to agree has affected us at least personally how if at all its manifested in your art, whether you're, I think most of you are visual artists, maybe some writers as well. And I was just wondering for any of you that want to respond how this melting pot of western and non-western cultures in Los Angeles has affected your work, if it has.

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JOYCE DALLAL: I, I have worked with the history of Los Angeles in my work. One of the first projects I did when I came out of grad school, it was also funded by the city of L.A., an

individual artist grant to create a piece called home site, home city and for that I worked with another artist Loren Kazmer and we created like sort of a structure that we invited people to fill and we showed it in various public places.

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JOYCE DALLAL: And every time collected things from the public. They looked like these really huge doll houses or cabinets of curiosity and we made like little boxes and gave them to people, to, to artists, a lot of artists. And they would fill them and give them back to us and they became rooms in the house because I had the experience when my youngest brother was in high school and I was the family chauffeur so I had to pick them up and drop them off.

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JOYCE DALLAL: And he was at his girlfriend's and his girlfriend was Japanese American and I went up to pick him up from his girlfriend's and went in to the house and it was like every other house on the block. And you open up the door and you walk in and it's like you're in Japan, like mats on the floor and screens and it was, it just struck me so much that if you could take the walls off people's houses and look inside how different, even though they look the same on the outside. So that, that did really strike me and it actually was the impetus in making that piece.

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MALATHI IYENGAR: Yeah, just quickly I, I feel if I didn't live in India I would only live here [LAUGH] because I feel California is, you know, I feel it's a country by itself although it's a state, you know. And I do feel at home like all of you so I wouldn't think of myself anywhere else and I'm thankful for that for my citizenship.

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DENISE UYEHARA: So for the past ten years I've been, I've been living in Tucson, Arizona and it's diverse in different ways. There's a huge indigenous community and a Mexican American community. I feel like I'm maybe one or maybe one of two Japanese Americans of, of my generation there. So I really realized how much richness there is in Los Angeles in

particular because there, there are reference points for, to reflect back who you are or maybe your community so that you don't have to represent the whole community for one thing, but you can also, there's also a real encouragement to exchange, exchange ideas and cultures.

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DENISE UYEHARA: And I had the experience of working here with the Sacred Naked Nature Girls which is a culturally diverse experimental group. And we were African American, white with some working class, poor background, Asian American and some are from Taiwan in our group and Jewish American and it was, it was, we did a lot of really heated work, very experimental, but also a lot of laughter and exchange of ideas and really talking about how we were different, but also where we had points of intersection.

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DENISE UYEHARA: And I think because of that, that was something I felt really happened because we were living in Los Angeles, that highway performance space in particular. And there was a real community that encouraged that kind of dialogue and they said we know it's going to be hard, but the 1992 uprising just happened and now you get, this is your turn. What can you learn from putting yourselves in a room together, creating performance naked around these issues? By the end of the work we weren't naked anymore for some reason.

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DENISE UYEHARA: We decided to be clothed because I think it was because it was the nakedness of our, of our, of who you are. We were more naked that way. We, where you could just kind of be vulnerable and say I don't know everything about you, but it's okay. We can kind of have a relationship and find that middle ground and that was something that was unique to Los Angeles and I think it continues to this day and that's really exciting.

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HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: So how about you? We met a couple times and, and she has some incredible background and I think I'd like to hear your story about your background.

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LYNNE THOMPSON: I am a native Angelino, but my parents emigrated from the Caribbean in the 1920s. And growing up, coming of age in the '60s I struggled with trying to convince my family that we were black and my mother kept saying we are not black. We are Caribbean and I kept saying what are you talking about? It just, it just didn't make a lot of sense to me, but as I started really pursuing writing, poetry specifically more seriously I really wanted to explore that connection that they maintained while very much wanting their children, I'm one of five, the youngest, the prettiest. I have four older brothers.

[LAUGH]

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LYNNE THOMPSON: Why it set them apart and also started to understand how it set me apart being very much a children, a child of what they had experienced and, and what it was for them to be here as immigrants. My mother never really wanted to go back. My dad always wanted to go back so that was always a point of, of contention, but now in my poetry a lot of it circles around my parent's immigration and how what they went through and how that impacted all of us.

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LYNNE THOMPSON: But I think maybe Denise said it, maybe we all said it in one way or the other, I do find that I use bits and pieces of different cultures in my writing because it's so rich and it's there and it's not everywhere else. So I kind of wanna celebrate it and almost use it without being aware that I use it and I, I suspect listening to all of you even when you think it's not really in your work, it's in your work if you don't want to go back to St. Louis or wherever, wherever it was, but I also think that Hirakazu has an interesting story because he's back and forth to Japan and I think the group would like to hear about that.

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HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: I'll speak on behalf of everyone here. I think Los Angeles is incredible; the scale is so different than other countries. I think; let me explain to you the scale that I belong to. In Japanese we write vertically. English we write horizontally, but I think English

written horizontally, but I think we speak very vertically. In Japanese we write vertically, but I think we speak horizontally.

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HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: They're not so much yes and no and black and white. They are called in between space and I think I grew up in that situation. When I came to I think Los Angeles I saw that kind of scale, different between a grammatical difference, for example A and D, the conjunction between two entities. In Japanese there is none. Everything is conjoined and oneness and the void is very important.

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HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: So I think in my work and I think many of us here perhaps we are lingering in that subject of the scale. I mean we don't get rain, we get, we get sunshine all the time. And the scale and perhaps in your space is much bigger than some areas. I talk about a Japanese scale in some sense that Los Angeles is like rat in a shoe box, but in Japan they're an elephant in a match box, that kind of scale.

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HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: And I think maybe you could talk to us about that kind of sensitivity of how you work in this incredible Los Angeles scale perhaps - - Clement.

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CLEMENT HANAM: I always like listening to HIRAKAZU because he's a very, he's like a mentor or a lot of us younger artists, not that, I'm, I'm right behind him. We're not, we're not that much different, but gosh how do you follow, how do you follow; the only thing I would add to that is I think as, as the Japanese, I, I work at the Japanese American National Museum and in many ways we're like a small ethnic specific museum with big aspirations like, like I think the elephant in the match box.

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CLEMENT HANAM: I think, you know, many people look at us and think we just show the work of Japanese Americans, but I think what I have been able to bring to the museum with

my experiences is the hybridity of, of projects that like right after the riots when the museum opened we started to work with self-help graphics and watch towers and Plaza De La Raza and as many institutions as we could. Joyce was in one of the shows too. Just talking about how people's histories are told through their art from different cultures and mixing these artists up into different institutions so that other people could see, begin to see like they would come to the Japanese American National Museum and say why is this Charles Dixon here, this black artist here.

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CLEMENT HANAM: It doesn't make any sense because like well what we're trying to do is show the content of the work and understand that what we're talking, we're all speaking the same language, it just has different perspectives. And for us I think it's, it's this thing about truth and history and how there's this linear history that we all sort of learned growing up in America, but it's the diversity that makes the truth even stronger and harder to break or tumble down and I think that's something that we only have in Los Angeles; well not only in Los Angeles, but I think that's the strength of America is the diversity and as long as we can strive for that, I think that's what will make America stronger.

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BIA GAYOTTO: I think you both mentioned two words that are really important and present in my work, hybridity or hybridism and the spacing between because I always felt like I am a hybrid of two cultures. I'm not there. I'm not here. I am somewhere in between. And that, that kind of premise is in myself led me to pursue this series of video work that I did which actually started here with the COLA grant that I went to the Azores to explore my own roots.

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BIA GAYOTTO: But I think my, my work is place based art and, and the idea of exploring how we, people like me navigate or circulate between two or more places and cultures and how that is manifesting their every day life. So I'm really interested in, in addressing that sense of culture, sense of place and cultural identity and, and the way that I do that sometimes is not very, I do use ethnographic approach, but then I, I use also non-

linearcratic ways to address that so the work itself is somewhere in between and it's not like this little translation of place. So anyway I just felt like that inspired me to say this.

00:40:26

JOYCE DALLAL: I just want to say that the project that Clement talked about finding family stories was, that, that was probably something about being in L.A. in, in the Japanese American Museum starting that where they collaborated with other kind of I guess what you would call ethnic museums or community art museums that they had a specific orientation to a particular community and that was really interesting 'cause we got to go and meet the community and show in those, those museums and work with other artists.

00:41:04

JOYCE DALLAL: It was, it was really interesting 'cause we went to Santa Barbara and we worked with indigenous artists and we got a private tour of the collection at the Museum of Natural History and yeah it was, it was a really wonderful project and I, I think probably indicative of what happens here.

0:41:29

LINDA ARREOLA: I'd like to say something about activism in L.A. and it seemed to be a place where we get activated politically charged. You know L.A. wasn't always a great place of diversity. There were times when we were all living in separate communities and I remember that as a child. And there's still some of that around, but I think there's a mindfulness of breaking down barriers, getting activated to fight that.

00:41:59

LINDA ARREOLA: You see it in the artwork I think. What's so unique is the diversity of just this group here and if we probably looked at each other's art you could see that there's that, you know, that little pushing and trying to find something new, create something different with all this that we have here.

And I think that's really a wonderful combination of things that happens only here in L.A. I think anyway.

00:42:24

COREY STEIN: Oh god, yeah. Again it's all based on the food, no. [LAUGH] We have all these wonderful ethnic backgrounds in the music and the food and the art. And I've gotten in the past ever since I won the, the 14 and a little bit before that, a lot into my Native American background and working with the Audrey and I never knew about that. Like I, I was saying earlier when I was reading that word when I was in school as native and I really was naïve.

00:42:59

COREY STEIN: I mean I wasn't thinking of who I was or you know I was some white girl with a Jewish dad and we were raised in the Unitarian church because my parents; my mom said she wanted to put water on us so we wouldn't get mad at her when we got older and say how come we didn't go to church 'cause she was raised Catholic and my dad was raised orthodox Jew and so we were raised basically as going to art school on Sunday and 7/Even if they didn't want to teach art.

00:43:31

COREY STEIN: And so that to me was, I don't know somehow I know that has to do with here and why I do art because we did art on Sunday school so L.A. rules.

00:43:46

MICHAEL PIERZYNSKI: I'm nothing other than what I already said about the space and, you know, I think what I meant when I said I don't think it really influenced my work. I, I think I was already more interested in kind of non-western and, and ancient art objects and, and cultures before I moved here and more than and I see, I do a lot of ceramics and I, I think of it as something that's gonna last for thousands of years and I like to think of it as part of it, you know, a 15,000-year tradition and not as contemporary art so much.

00:44:29

MICHAEL PIERZYNSKI: And, and I feel more comfortable doing that here, but I think I was already kind of doing that before I came here, but I, I, I found a lot more acceptance for it here. Let's put it that way.

00:44:44

LYNNE THOMPSON: I think that, I, I was thinking Linda about what you were saying about moving around this very large city and I tell friends from outside of the city that people don't really mean the city of L.A. when they say L.A. They mean Long Beach and all these out, outlying communities that make up the greater Los Angeles area. And I wonder and suspect that part of it is economics that, that broke up some of that segregation and made people move to different neighborhoods for different reasons.

00:45:21

LYNNE THOMPSON: And then learned to appreciate oh I never had a Korean neighbor or I never had a Portuguese neighbor or whatever. And in the course of just regular living and food, always food, came to appreciate and find kind of an irony in L.A. of it explodes every 20 or 25 years ago or so for, either for racial reasons or economic reasons. Now we have arguably political reasons that people want to explode.

00:45:55

LYNNE THOMPSON: But really appreciate what we have; like I said when we go to other areas that just don't have the mix certainly in the artistic community I think that we do. What do you think?

00:46:08

HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: Yeah. I think one of the most important I think to all of us, I, I read some of your resumes and I, I seen that many of you were educated here. I too, I went to a school called Chouinard Art Institute in MacArthur Park and there was the Otis Parsons and Otis School there and Art Center was on I believe it was on 7<sup>th</sup> Street or something and it moved to 3<sup>rd</sup> and it moved to Pasadena, but all this educator were not so much a teacher, but they were artists at Chouinard Art Institute, I mean people like Manray was teaching there and, and not in my, my era, but I think that too and again you're talking about historical viewpoint.

00:46:59

HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: I think my period too was the Vietnam War was going on and I think the activists and, and artists were creating not the word performance, but it was called body art and myself and Chris Burden and Wolfgang Soko, we did some kind of an activist performance at Pomona Art College. And I think that, that too was a part of history in Los Angeles. I think PST, the, the Getty Foundation did an incredible job at creating period exhibition and things that happened in the '60s and '70s and I think next year is again PST on Latin America.

00:47:49

LYNNE THOMPSON: That's Pacific Standard Time.

00:47:50

HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: Pacific, Pacific Standard Time, yeah. I think again, I think there's very important things happening here in Los Angeles, but I think for me education was one of the most important period of my life. I'm a Chouinard artist, it was a very small tiny school with 75 students, but look what happened. It just exploded to a different culture.

00:48:14

LYNNE THOMPSON: It's Cal Arts.

00:48:15

HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: Cal Arts now and they have an incredible student body there now, a lot of Asian communities coming into art field and I think - -

00:48:28

MICHAEL PIERZYNSKI: I would - - I would like to echo that. I work at Otis and just the student body there is the most diverse I've ever seen, you know. A lot of Asians, but also a lot of Latinos coming through now which I don't think there were a lot; in my day there weren't, you know. And so and I think that's what also is making the art community here so lively, you know. There's, there are a lot more people participating now.

00:49:01

HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: Yeah, I think it's future artists here in Los Angeles, I think. I mean not, not just art schools, but university as well, UCLA, USC, Cal State, you know, Long Beach, all that and become an educational sort of hunting ground for artists.

00:49:27

LINDA ARREOLA: I wanted to ask how do we define western and non-western and how do we learn that? Are we indoctrinated through a school in the books we read? Are you guys sort of tackling that question? I just sort of want to throw it out there.

00:49:41

LYNNE THOMPSON: I went to Scripps College out in Claremont, part of the Claremont Colleges and a long time ago. And I, when I was there all of the, I was interested in studying art history even though I wasn't an art history major and it was all; I think I can say pretty exclusively European based. So for me personally when I think of western and non-western I think of Europe and then everywhere else is, is non, non-western. And I remember asking the professor, you know, it's all European. I mean it's fine, I like Monet, but what about and so she said to me.

00:50:18

LYNNE THOMPSON: She said well you're just mad because we don't have African artists. I said I'm mad because you don't have Chinese artists or South American artists or anything but European, primarily French and Italian artists. That, I said yes it would be nice to have African artists, so for me personally that's, that's how I, I, I make that distinction.

00:50:44

MALATHI IYENGAR: You know there has also been several labels for that, from the non-western. It used to be world, global, ethnic, oriental because people are always trying to put you in a box, you know, to see where and so non-western is really a broad term. It's hard to see where you would place, you know, anybody or do we want to be placed? Do we want to just belong as human beings with everybody else? [LAUGH] You know to me that makes sense.

00:51:18

DENISE UYEHARA: So like you said it does make me wonder about like the term not western versus other immediately puts western in the center and everything is in response to it. And so I feel like the interesting thing as artists is that you complicate it in a way. We can complicate in a way that it's, it's more like everything to even the playing field. So it's not, we're not creating work in response to western, it's just that we create multiple voices that I allow to co-exist and that's what I think is really interesting about Los Angeles is there is enough access to, to resources and, and to being to tell one's story or point of view. There's enough that there are, there is space for all those voices to co-exist.

00:52:04

CLEMENT HANAM: And just to answer that, I think for me it's always this, this argument between classical and ethnic. A lot of times when we talk about ethnic we always mention food because that's like the ethnic thing, but it's really for the, like where I work at the museum it's about trying to dispel that whole notion of the other, that it's we're trying to raise the work that we do to a level of classical where you're not asking if it's ethnic or classical, but that there's no differentiation, but that's sort of the natural thing, inclination that we have from, from school days, so.

00:52:39

JOYCE DALLAL: I think we're now starting to touch on that issue, is if we, if we are making work from our own background does it become a label that we get stuck with and then keep us always outside the norm.

00:52:59

BIA GAYOTTO: Yeah, I just wanted to add that that's something I often think is when we think about ethnic it's not to me it doesn't mean the biological. It's the cultural and, and that could be anything like you said, right. It's not my DNA from color or something else, but it's culturally what I'm relating to and thinking about.

00:53:28

JENNIFER CELIO: I've been thinking about what you mentioned about that comment, you know, as much as we may think our work isn't, you know, about where we're from and from here, but it, it works its way in and, and I, I mean I, I can see that my work has always been about the urban environment and such, but you know trying to really, I've been thinking about that for the last, you know, 15, 20 minutes or so just really trying to delve into that concept and really think more about, you know, how, how does that, how is it coming through in my work.

00:54:02

JENNIFER CELIO: And I, I think my work has always been not so much about literally people and cultures, but I think when I depict elements of their urban environment and things that I see around me in the, in the city and they work their way into work whether it's kind of more abstracted or it's I, I'm literally presenting and representing those things in my paintings or drawings. I think obviously I'm, I'm depicting things that are created by very diverse peoples and so I guess in that sense it's, it makes its way into my work, but not, not maybe not in a literal sense.

00:54:45

JENNIFER CELIO: But it's, it's the products of people, you know, of who are creating buildings and structures and, and, you know, fabrics and, you know, all kinds of products and everything that I see and experience around me that are in the city that makes its way into my work, you know, whether it's yeah some kind of structure that I see that's, you know, that, that strikes me and it, it makes its way into a drawing or so in that sense perhaps it's kind of around about way that it, it makes its way into my work.

00:55:24

LYNNE THOMPSON: I think that we are the perfect example of that cross section of the arts, a cross pollination. I don't whether it's western and non-western depending; now I'm, I'm trying to open my mind to that definition a little bit more perhaps, but, but certainly we all have backgrounds where we can point to things that might arguably differentiate us, but it seems to me from, from the way we've been speaking that we all are drawing from the

otherness that some might define to create an art that can be appreciated by a larger, a larger group and that we all can take something from and say oh, you know, now I'm interested.

00:56:12

LYNNE THOMPSON: I want to come and see your dance company and I, I want to see the ceramics and, you know, and every little thing whether we use it that day or that next week or two years from now that was some influence, that chest you had with the, with the small figurines in it when I went to visit the Cultural Center, I've been thinking about that, that chest a lot. It's quite, quite beautiful with artifacts and separate little; who had the house with the, yeah, you would love this. It had, it had little rooms with different little artifacts in each one and I've been thinking about that a lot so it, it stays with you.

00:56:54

MALATHI IYENGAR: I was a 2013 COLA recipient and I have always been interested in inter-cultural performances and inter-cultural dialogue in my work and in addition to doing my traditional work. So it has continued to work with artists of diverse cultures and poetry and, and visual arts and, and performances, spoken words and to make it part of my life which is what and find some kind of a common platform.

00:57:29

MALATHI IYENGAR: So this time on June 24<sup>th</sup> we have a performance right here at the Barnsdall so the first half of the performance is traditional, classical Indian dance and in the second half we are collaborating with Appalachian Flat Foot dance. So, you know, because I learn something if I do things like that and I think COLA is a very big part of that kind of a fire to continue for me to collaborate. Thank you.

00:58:00

MICHAEL PIERZYNSKI: I got a COLA grant in 2010 and I had this space right here and it was a bigger, more open space than, I usually work small and I asked for one of the small rooms and they didn't give it to me and so I was force to make, I kind of improvised to bigger installations that I made. One of them I just made to throw away afterwards and it

really spoiled me to get paid to make something with no commercial aspirations at all and that made me wish I could work like that all the time.

00:58:39

DENISE UYEHARA: Do you show?

00:58:42

MICHAEL PIERZYNSKI: I still show at galleries occasionally, but I try to make things that are hard to sell which I'm not sure is a good business plan. [LAUGH]

00:58:53

DENISE UYEHARA: I also when I received a COLA I performed right over here and it was a performance installation. Really the COLA had a huge impact on my ability to grow as an artist because I had to think outside of my own box. I was getting relegated to touring solo and doing kind of a monologue forum and I created work that actually had no words in it, that was having people move through creating their own cycle of picking up a ceramic bone and buying it in egg shells and washing it in projection of light of some hands washing and un-washing themselves.

00:50:34

DENISE UYEHARA: And then speaking, putting the bone in front of a mistranslation machine that then mistranslated your best intention. And so I learned a lot about myself in that work and about taking risks and I really couldn't have done, I mean the money was very significant to me being able to grow because I didn't have to think commercially about the next gig. And I, and then I made a commitment to myself after I finish that project that I would not go back to just doing the gig mentality. I had to think differently from that point on.

01:00:11

CLEMENT HANAM: I was a COLA artist in 2007. It seems so long ago. [LAUGH] And at the time, I mean I think a lot of my work has always been trying to topple this western European canon and trying to find a place for my work. At the time I was doing these mash-ups of a

low rider rickshaw kind of based on the whole experience of being called Chino in my neighborhood. And so low rider, rickshaw and just made these things that people, I would pull them around.

01:00:44

CLEMENT HANAM: We'd ride them; they'd have like music playing really loud and getting the COLA grant with that type of work for me it really validated what I was doing and really gave me even more confidence to pursue. I, I probably made three rickshaws, but other things in the same vein. And last year it was actually shown at the Smithsonian, so that's a good thing.

01:01:12

HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: I received a COLA in 2006, [CLEARS THROAT] again a COLA his, his sentiment about validation, like it made me a Los Angeles artist. I didn't really do a work of my piece here. It was done for a dancer named SOUND LIKE: Ogrey and we had been working for such a long time that I wanted to kind of give him the stage and Yuval Ron was another musician that he too.

01:01:49

HIRAKAZU KOSAKA: So it was a collaboration between myself and Ogrey and Yuval Ron who, it was called Charcoal Pit and it was a couple tons of charcoal here in, in this floor and so again the validation of all these artists that we worked with together made some sense and very happy for being a recipient.

01:02:17

LYNNE THOMPSON: I was a recipient in 2016 and the validation was not only internal, but it, it was interesting to me the way others started to view me because they thought well wow if the city thinks you're good enough for that I guess you're okay. So it was that, but it was also an opportunity in the project that I, I wanted to work on. I was, was and remain interested in the way that cities make decisions about what they keep and what they don't keep in terms of neighborhoods or buildings or murals or any other kind of landmark.

01:02:59

LYNNE THOMPSON: And I was nostalgic for landmarks that aren't here anymore. I thought well I could write, at least try to write them back into existence and I was also interested in things that had been covered up such as and I still haven't finished this such as the fact that where the downtown courthouse is on 1<sup>st</sup> and Hill was once, once the spot of a lynching. So I'm interested in kind of excavating the history of the city.

01:03:31

LYNNE THOMPSON: And so this project really forced me to kind of focus or the grant forced me to focus on the project in a way that I might not have done in such an organized fashion.

01:03:44

LINDA ARREOLA: I have to say that this gallery over the years has been the place I've looked to since I was very young. It was happening here. I mean the interesting art, you know. I didn't go to commercial galleries. I would come to the L.A. Municipal over the years and it was a big thing to become part of it as a fellow. It validated me. I have no representation in a commercial gallery so I make very little money on my art. The money that I received floated me on to do other projects and it's got me to the next level so I'm very grateful to be a part of it and to have the standing.

01:04:24

LINDA ARREOLA: It means quite a bit and I hope they continue it 'cause I think it's something that's, you know, it just doesn't happen everywhere. It's so important so I'm just really grateful.

01:04:35

COREY STEIN: When I got the award I made a big bear that was about ten feet high, and it was a malling bear and it was like go shopping, malling kind of L.A., what everybody does. And so inside the, the bear on the chest was shaped like the shape of a church window and it was too layers of stained glass with these shopping bears and it was, oh I can't remember right now which mall it was, but it was one furthest east.

01:05:11

COREY STEIN: It was the Thousand Oaks Mall and I got the grant to do that and what I learned the most, I love this, is hire out things you cannot do. And so I had a blast. I got somebody else, I got my taxidermist to do the bear and then I got this other guy to do the lining because it was lit from inside so that you could see like a church and it was, I, I want, that's what I want to learn how to do, like what you were doing with the, with all the charcoal.

01:05:41

COREY STEIN: I would love to make another piece, but I don't know how structurally to do that and I don't know how to work with other people or how to learn how to work with other people so that you can apply for grants or even just do a piece by your, with other people, but something that's big. So if anybody, you know, gives me any ideas I'm open to it.

01:06:04

JENNIFER CELIO: I was a recipient in 2014 and like others have said, I mean it was just very freeing to have that funding to create something without any pressure for commercial applications of it and having to sell it and so that allowed me to create a piece that I had just barely started to draw in a pencil drawing that was one of my largest ones I had ever done.

01:06:35

JENNIFER CELIO: And so it allowed me to finish it and exhibit it and a piece that took me almost, it took me almost a year to finish that drawing and so it was, that was really wonderful to get, you know, that opportunity, but it also represented, actually the very end of that body of work was pretty much with the COLA pieces. I felt I had said what I needed to say with the work and so it, having the COLA grant allowed me to then finish it as I saw fit and then move on and now my work is completely different. I do mixed media paintings so it, it was just that step that I needed to go on to the next phase.

01:07:19

JOYCE DALLAL: I had an experience like you where they came to my studio and I had been playing around. I got the COLA in 2008. We were still, it was a time when, it was before the

election and I was upset about the United States using torture and so I did a piece using the text of the Geneva Conventions.

01:07:54

JOYCE DALLAL: And when they came to my studio I had this little mechanical piece of a paper. They were like paper airplanes and I thought I was gonna get one of these little rooms and then they said no, we're putting you up here in the front. [LAUGH] And, and I, I came in with one paper airplane. It was about this big and I was like [LAUGH]; I did a little test by hanging it and I thought oh my god. I, I have like three months to fill, you know, by the time, you know, like so I had to amp up and I had to incorporate volunteer and go to all these classes.

01:08:34

JOYCE DALLAL: And I teach; luckily people lent me their classes. I had clubs coming and we made, well now I know because you guys counted them; when they came down to the airport 937 airplanes. [LAUGH] And, and so the spot with it and so during the opening somebody said to me you should show this at the United Nations and so I mean I don't know if I would ever have thought yeah, you know, after having done this so I, I actually, I called the United Nations.

01:09:11

JOYCE DALLAL: I talked to someone in Geneva where, you know, the, where they were written and, but they ended up taking them to New York and they were, I did an installation at the, in the lobby of the United Nations with an artist, an African artist who was, came over from Norway where he had been doing a residency. So he orchestrated taking them to Norway. So I went to Norway with them and in suitcases. [LAUGH]

01:09:46

JOYCE DALLAL: And then they came back here and I just, so I've been on this kick with paper airplanes now for like ten years. They were at the African, California African American Museum. Every time a different configuration and then they were just at LAX for three years. The thing came down and now they're back in their suitcases. [LAUGH]

01:10:12

MARYROSE MENDOZA: When I received my COLA grant I was very honored to be in, in relation with some of the teachers that I, that received COLA grants before like Michael Brewster, Phyllis Green, Jack Butler so when I received it SOUNDS LIKE: Susan Ankitis, I felt like wow can I do that? So it was also the year that they had us to two projects.

01:10:44

MARYROSE MENDOZA: One was at the Plaza De La Raza and then here and so it was a real challenge to kind of see my work in a more public environment and so that was really a great opportunity to see how I could do something that was a little less intimate and how can I play with scale so that it could configure that kind of world. And then so I'm really grateful and that it challenged me in that way.

01:11:22

BIA GAYOTTO: I received the COLA grant in 2009 and that was a time when I started doing artistic residencies and traveling overseas to research and do projects and that also was a time when I started doing multiple screen video installations and using that multiple ways to tell a story through different points of view and perspectives and that's something that I'm still doing.

01:11:54

BIA GAYOTTO: So it had a big impact in me and in my work in a positive way. And, of course it was an honor to also like you said being in the company of so many amazing artists that I admired for many times, so thank you COLA.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]