

## **COLA20 Salon Conversation #7**

Moderated By: Tony de los Reyes, Amy Knoles and T. Kim-Trang Tran  
With Karen Atkinson, Jane Castillo, Joe Davidson, Margaret Honda, Stas Orlovski,  
Sue Ann Robinson, Barbara Strasen and Scott Uriu

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TONY DE LOS REYES: Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Tony de los Reyes. I'm one of the moderators for today. I would like to thank the Department of Cultural Affairs for hosting us. It's a, a terrific exhibition, and we all are very appreciative of all the work they've been doing in regards to supporting Los Angeles artists. I'm going to start off with the, the main question for today's salon conversation. Regarding technology and innovation and art making, what are the strongest elements in the cultural context of Los Angeles that encourage artists to employ new technologies? And what excites LA artists to take intellectual and conceptual risks in advancing the boundaries of traditional art media? So we're going to go around and everyone's going to testify to some of those questions about technology, how we use it in our practice, how it impacts Los Angeles, how we utilize Los Angeles as part of our own practice.

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TONY DE LOS REYES: But first, Amy is going to give us a great quote about Los Angeles that she just brought to my attention.

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AMY KNOLES: Thanks, Tony. Thank you, Tony. This is a, a Frank Lloyd Wright quote. I think it's appropriate for the venue here. "Tip the world over on its side, and everything loose will land in Los Angeles." Here we are. So.

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TONY DE LOS REYES: So, just briefly introduce yourself. Say... if you could just describe your practice and how technology's a part of it, as an Angeleno artist, and we'll just briefly go around and introduce ourselves to each other.

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KAREN ATKINSON: Okay, my name is Karen Atkinson, and technology, I use technology in my work in a lot of different ways, both low technology and high technology. To me, they are both incredibly important, so I might create a project that uses the most forward technology that's happening, but then I'll also figure out perhaps a way to distribute a project in the lowest technology possible. So one might be something that's computer-driven, but it's actually distributed in a very old fashioned way. I also, if someone had told me 20 years ago that I would be a software developer, I would have told them they were nuts, but I think the city of LA and the artists in LA have inspired me to work really hard to try to make life better for artists through an organization that I started called Getting Your Shit Together.

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MARGARET HONDA: I'm Margaret Honda, and I worked in sculpture and film, and for both of those things, I've, I've actually utilized I think a lot of the resources that are really specific to Los Angeles. Early on, people were able to do a lot with the technology that came from the aerospace and defense industries, and those things have, have actually, I think, helped me a bit in my work. And also, most recently I've been working with... working in film and the film industry itself is something that's... that has been developing a lot in terms of, of working digitally, working with virtual reality.

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MARGARET HONDA: Not that I'm doing those things, but, but it is here for people to use, so it's, it's sort of like the city is... has enabled a lot of people to do things that they probably can do other places, but because the concentration of, of people who are working along those lines is so great here, it's just it's a wonderful resource.

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JOE DAVIDSON: My name is Joe Davidson. I am a sculptor here, and in terms of technology, I mean, my work is, in some way, feels kind of traditional compared to what a lot of people are doing right now, but I do a lot of work like in plastics and I do a lot of like foams and things like that, which is I always think about it as it associates with like props and like the film industry and stuff like that, so I end up using a lot of these materials that I associate with more like filmmaking. And yeah, it's, it's, it's one of the... it's one of the great things about having this resource of Los Angeles to, to, to find these materials, to find things that you would not find if you were in, say, like a smaller city or in a rural area, a rural part of the country.

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JOE DAVIDSON: Like a lot of these things are kind of... they're not necessarily developed here, but some of them are, and some of them, they're like the resources in all the newer kind of technological materials seem to come out from around here, which is... you know, which is what makes LA an exciting place to, to make work.

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SCOTT URIU: Yeah, my name is Scott Uriu, and basically I'm going to echo a lot of what has been said be... before, but, but yeah. Our work is definitely pseudo-, quasi-sculptural and habitable sculptural pieces. So I'm from a, a partnership, Baumgartner & Uriu, and... Herwig Baumgartner and myself, and yeah. Los Angeles, we wouldn't exist without Los

Angeles. There's, there's no doubt about it. He's Austrian. I am pseudo-Japanese, 4<sup>th</sup> generation, and culturally it's, it's an amazing mix of, of cultural experiences in Los Angeles itself, and the technology is absolutely amazing as far as the manufacturers, the materials.

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SCOTT URIU: If you needed anything, it's somewhere in Los Angeles or in Burbank or in Orange County, et cetera. C&C, you know, fabricators, milling, laser cutting, all of this is absolutely irrefutable, available somewhere in Los Angeles at, at, at some time or place, bizarre silicones, et cetera. So it's an amazing city for all of that, and then also, you know, the schools, et cetera are amazing. Individuals coming out of all of this as well for, for technology in the... in the future and software and all of these sort of development, which we have in our own practice as well so, right?

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STAS ORLOVSKI: So, my name is Stas Orlovski, and my work primarily is drawing, painting and printmaking, and somewhere around 2012 I took a very hard turn and realized that my images needed to be animated, and so more recently I've been doing projects that involve moving image. And it's true, I think, I've been in so many situations where things were falling apart at the very last minute, and it's shocking what you could do by picking up the phone in Los Angeles and what could be solved in what seems like it should take months, but you can make that one phone call and there's resources.

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STAS ORLOVSKI: And so, I think in that respect it's, it's an incredible place to be making the work that I'm currently making. And I think the, the other thing I'd say is my personal work is really inspired by early film history, like pre-20th century moving image and projection, and so, being in a place where you have, in a sense, film pushing the

boundaries, right, projects that are pushing the boundaries of the medium, I'm kind of exploring both ends of it, I, I feel.

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SUE ANN ROBINSON: I'm Sue Ann Robinson and I, like Karen, use old technology, because I make books, but when I moved to Los Angeles, Southern California, I moved from Washington, DC, and if you were a dead artist in Washington, DC, you did pretty well, but if you were a living artist, you had a lot of competition with the major industry there, which is United States Government. So, coming here, what I found in Los Angeles was a real sense of openness, of possibility, of accessibility.

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SUE ANN ROBINSON: You could almost just sort of walk in and say, "I'd like to do this," and it could happen. So, for one of the things I did very early on was create with some slightly newer technology called flexography. I actually printed a piece but then got it distributed through the local newspaper, so it was kind of out of the box, in a sense, out of the covers of a book and out into the public sphere. So I just find that the, the sense of openness, the sense of possibility is always surrounding us as artists in Southern California.

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BARBARA STRASEN: I'm Barbara Strasen, and for me, my, my art is... comes out of painting, but it morphs into installation and it morphs into digital collage and it morphs into lenticular projects and images. And I know, for me, having grown up in the New York area, I... that's the basis of my comparison, and I've always wanted to come to California because it seemed like the last frontier, the, the tabula rasa that open possibility, and I've never been disabused of that notion. So, early on, when I was here, I wanted to combine unlike images and I wanted to use lentic... the lenticular process.

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BARBARA STRASEN: And, at that time, I was commissioned to do a library ceiling and it was actually possible to learn it on the Internet and find out a way to do it archivally and large scale, and you just research it. You find out how to do it, you do it. You buy a laminator. You could buy a press. You do it in your bedroom. That's it. Problem solved. And I've also used other kinds of materials that came right out of Southern California. I was using a material called silastic, which is what they used in Disneyland for a long time. I gave it up finally because you had to splash about in acetone for hours on end and you could kill yourself. But I've also used Tyvek and Yupo and plastic and acrylic paint, and you could drive a truck over it and nothing will happen.

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SUE ANN ROBINSON: I mean, it's anything you think to do, you can do, and there's no history telling you that it's beyond the pale. You just jump in and do it and make it last and you're good to go.

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JANE CASTILLO: My name is Jane Castillo. I'm a native Angeleno and I agree with everyone here that LA is just fertile ground for resources and has really helped in the development of my artwork. I'm an installation artist and, being in Los Angeles I, I feel that it was worth it to research my lineage and where I come from, and I was able to trace all of my mixed ethnicities to the sugar trade, and so I decided to incorporate technology and imagery in, in the way of using collage, but also using materials, and as far as my imagination can think of an idea to create, you're right in, in saying that in LA, if I... if I needed to silkscreen something, I could get that done right away.

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JANE CASTILLO: If I needed something done tech... technologically-speaking, yeah, we can get things done. And it's grants like the COLA grant that allow you the freedom to take risks and, and try new things, and that was something that I was really particularly grateful for when, when I got the COLA grant.

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T. KIM TRANG TRAN: Hi. My name is Trang Tran, but you might see it written out more formally as Tran T. Kim Trang, so don't be too confused. I'm a media artist and I've worked in a variety of forms – moving image, short experimental videos, to virtual space in Second Life, and now I'm working on... at the web, trying to put out games, but like casual games for mobile devices, but also older and more simpler forms, like the visual novel, so right now that's sort of where my practice lies. And I would just say that I agree with everything that everyone had said so far about the resources here in Los Angeles.

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T. KIM TRANG TRAN: I just want to underscore and echo the sentiment about the schools in this region as well, and I want to credit my teachers, Karen being one of them, for the encouragement and the push to experiment and innovate at CalArts. That's where I went to school, and I suspect that many of you probably had within your training, your school experience, that, that push to innovate and experiment as well. And now that I'm a professor myself, I definitely make sure that my students push the envelope in whatever ways they feel comfortable and have the, the ability, and that is the skills, to, to be able to do that. I also credit the students, too, to constantly introducing me to new technology, right?

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T. KIM TRANG TRAN: Whether it's free software or VR or, you know, the, the, the latest social media function feature, right, and that kind of thing. So I think I've been really lucky to have it coming from both, both ends of the spectrum, and I think some of our questions today will address that.

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TONY DE LOS REYES: Yeah. So what, what... just the, the tag end of the, the main question from the DCA is how does LA in... excite us to take intellectual and conceptual risks in advancing the boundaries of traditional hard media? So I always found that an interesting question because I'm not interested in pushing boundaries technologically speaking. I, I leave that to Silicon Valley and people who want to make a shitload of money off of it. But, for me, I... I'm very conscious of how, how can we relate to media and technology through traditional practices that allows us in some way to hear the technology? I feel like technology becomes quite transparent in its utilitarian form.

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TONY DE LOS REYES: But what art does is actually frame it in a way which gives it a kind of ethos that we can actually scrutinize. Does that make sense? So like... so I, I would like to open this up to, to you. When you're dealing with technology, how much of it is the content in and of itself versus a way in which to frame other contents that the technology could help you access? So anyone like to, to sort of think about that?

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T. KIM TRANG TRAN: [INAUDIBLE].

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AMY KNOLES: I'm Amy Knoles, and we've all pretty much said everything I have to say, except for one quick point I wanted to, to make about Los Angeles artistically for me has been the collaborators, the, the never ending stream of interesting, problematic, fabulous, annoying artists that I've had in my life, all of those things. I've never really created a piece of music unless I saw something visually, either on the wall or a movement from a dancer or, or a, a video.

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AMY KNOLES: And with... so, without that, I probably wouldn't have found a voice at all as an artist, and Los Angeles is very, very rich for that. For me, I'm... I've... have been an electronic percussionist for... since the dawn of midi, as they say, which is like 1985, '87, so it's been absolutely the most essential part of what I do. But I like to think of it as a, a fruit, that if you eat the whole fruit, the only thing that... the, the solid that comes out are the seeds, and then the... and then that's the beginning of an idea, but I love the, the, the consummation of ev... everything I can get my hands on technolo... technologically helps me to then distill what it is that I might want to do with something.

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AMY KNOLES: So... and that's just ubiquitous in, in music software and music hardware and things that are coming out now. Yeah. How about anyone else seem that way?

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SCOTT URIU: Yeah. You know, between Herwig and myself, we absolutely have a very complex and very interesting sort of take on technology that's used. So, so it's very double edged, you know, as a... as a lot of our work, you can't... we can't do the work without high tech computers, C&C milling, vacu-forming, all sorts of different technologies, but and/or, you know, the other... the interesting side of that is that, yes, a

lot of this gets derivative and sort of boiled down to it's an expression of the technology itself, but really, it's also a lot of the... all the glitching and all of the mistakes, you know? The interesting thing, the great thing about where we're at right now is it is really the Wild, Wild West, you know?

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SCOTT URIU: I, I consider it. It's not perfect. Nothing of the technology is perfect per se, or the parts that are perfect are very derivative in, in... unto itself. So there's a... there's a strange sort of play between, you know, what's authentic and what is sort of, you know, again re... absolutely repea... repeatable and, and, to a certain degree, not, you know, as artistic as it could be, if that's a really long and whatever answer.

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STAS ORLOVSKI: Sure. So to, I guess, expand or, or to respond to Tony's question, in my work I, I never had any particular interest in technology. I mean, I came very much from mark making in a very traditional way, and when I needed to make those marks move in time, I went down the rabbit hole of trying to figure out how, how do you make something move, and one thing of course led to the next and at the point that I'm at right now, the biggest question that I have in front of me is just because you could do it, should you do it, right? Which I think maybe is a question that isn't asked often enough culturally, that sometimes you have the capacity to do things and we just do them because we can do them, and then wait to reflect on it afterwards.

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STAS ORLOVSKI: I think as, as artists, one of the interesting things is the constant negotiation between restraint and abandonment, like when do you let go and when do you hold back? And trying to figure out that dynamic is in... with technology specifically is a really, really interesting question. So, you know, I, I feel like in some sense there's all this

equipment. There's all this... all these resources, all this knowledge, and sometimes I think that when I... when I think about what I'm doing, I'm using one, one millionth of the capacity of what of... you know, what we have at our disposal.

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STAS ORLOVSKI: And those are very... those are questions that I think perhaps are in the sphere of what we do, right, is when to use it and how to use it? Yeah.

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SUE ANN ROBINSON: I just think that Stas has pretty much nailed it, because the aesthetic of what you have produced is restrained. It's really the technology in service of your vision rather than going full bore, as you say, down the rabbit hole and using everything possible. I think the storytelling that you do, you could have done a film. You could have done, you know, color. You could have done a computer animation. But what you did do is very much your aesthetic and utilizes the, the technology.

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BARBARA STRASEN: So, so for me, the technology is, is just another tool. It's a means to an end. And one of the things that I like to do is take artistry and bring it full circle, and I like to compare what... what's going on with us now with what may have shown up in an art historical painting from 400 years ago and pick it because of its contemporary resonance, and so I, I use technology because often that's the best way to do it. One example was my COLA project, which was called Multiplex LA, homage to Peter Paul Rubens, and it was based... the composition was based on Rubens' Triumph of the Church.

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BARBARA STRASEN: So all... the composition, everything moves quickly to the right, and there are circles and carriage wheels and putty and monsters and things like that in the Rubens, but what I wanted to do is do a... an LA analog, so that's why I went to the Fabric District and I found a lot of shapes and bolts of fabric that looked like clumps of people and creatures, and I cut, cut everything out digitally and then stacked it digitally and moved things around to replicate the composition, and that was the easiest way to do it using Photoshop, so that's how I did it.

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TONY DELOS REYES: My work is about the US-Mexico border, or at least it is now. When I had the COLA grant, it was... were, were... yeah, I was working on... with Moby Dick as an analogy to American psyche. But I... one of the reasons I started the border work is because I was looking at satellite images of, of the border and I was just really amazed by the sort of horrible logic of it, and, and you... again you have this, this, you know, unbelievably sophisticated technology to take photographs of something that are basically contour drawings, which is the most elemental form of human expression that's found in cave art. So you have this odd juxtaposition between a kind of pre-civilized concept of space with a... you know, a galactic concept of space.

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TONY DE LOS REYES: But I... yeah, I, I, I think that I, I worry when, when technology in my own work winds up being... looking like stylistic vanity, you know? Like it... it's like, "Oh, I can do this, and so therefore it, it looks great and it looks contemporary." I'm not interested in making contemporary work. I'm interested in making work that goes beyond that, and I think the, the... one of the problems with technology in any of our work is that it, it winds up... make us look faddish or fashionable, and, and I, I think that's short sighted, so yeah.

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T. KIM TRANG TRAN: So I would just add that it's very difficult for me to separate what you say from how you say it, so if you just sort of disregard the word "technology" for the moment, right, and just think of it as, well, how do I say what I want to say? You know, whether that's whatever form of technology you want to apply in there. So, to me, the integration of the two, form and content, was what I was able to learn and what now... so when I say I push students to innovate, you know, it has to be the integration of form and content, otherwise... you know, I totally agree with what you were just saying, otherwise it's just sort of like a shallow use of a, a vehicle and not really thinking about it. And then... so then, then we get into it in terms of like, "Well, why are you using that?" right?

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T. KIM TRANG TRAN: Like, "How does that, say, add a layer to what it is that you're saying?" And then it just falls apart or, you know, some other problems come up, and then I think that that's a key to understanding that question.

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TONY DE LOS REYES: A, a, a... another, I think you, you, you had this question. Also, I love this question. What is the cheapest technology... was it yours? What is the cheapest technology you've ever used, and did it surprise or disappoint? Because cheap technology doesn't get enough kudos, so that you, you have a cheap technology that you just fell in love with or, or, or just couldn't stand?

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KAREN ATKINSON: So this is... this is actually kind of a follow up to my original comment. So when it... artists were first able to use a computer to create work in slide form, right, so it was using new technology to create a kind of old technology, I projected them in

commercial movie theaters in between the popcorn and trivia slides, and then for three years used the Laemmle Theatres. When we produced this project, it was the most high tech way that you could make art at that time other than sort of, you know, stuff that was obscure that we didn't have access to at the time, but we decided that the way we would make the catalog was actually in a View-Master form.

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KAREN ATKINSON: So we made View-Masters of all the work that was light generated because we didn't want to have a traditional catalog that was on print and that you couldn't see it the way it was meant to be seen in a theater. This was really important because the lawyers censored some of the work at the last minute, and I said this in other panels, you can exit this out, but some of the lawyers thought we had figured out how to subliminally put messages in the pixels, and so they decided to censor some of the work and we kind of freaked them out. This is what happens when you deal with corporations, you know, when you're trying to do a big public art project. So, again, it's like it's that's a really interesting way to distribute because actually it's created in this really high tech way. And I think in terms of my, my COLA grant, I've been actually creating work on... with glow in the dark paint, which is actually a fairly low technology platform, but my work is really about the history of ideas.

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KAREN ATKINSON: And so, for the COLA grant, I was projecting this movie I made. It was a 40-minute movie on a glow in the dark screen that I had painted, and this is an example of how technology can actually work with content, which is exactly how I use it. And so if you project an image on a glow in the dark surface and you take that image away, there's a trace of that image left on the screen. When you project another image on top of that, the first image infects the next image. So there's no way to actually see a clear image without a trace of what came before it, and so I used that in really carefully

constructed ways with images so that they would kind of blur into each other and never be, you know, just a solo image without some sort of trace or historical context or something like that.

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MARGARET HONDA: I think in, in terms of my COLA grant, it probably really definitely was the cheapest technology because I, I reconfigured older sculptures of mine, so it, it didn't involve actually getting... and the materials were all there. It was basically just looking at a piece that had already been completed, already been exhibited, already been published, and treating that as a raw material. So it was... that was definitely the cheapest thing I had done. I... I've done other things along those lines, but it got more expensive because I had to involve foundries and things like that, but, but I think shopping your s... your storage for materials is a pretty, pretty economical way of doing things.

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JOE DAVIDSON: I was going to say, you know, it's interesting, thinking about like tech... like when I think of technology, I think of like kind of computers and what we think of high tech and things like that, but when I think about it in terms of art, I think about it more in terms of just like material, like technology as material, and it's just because it's, it's my process and it's because it's, it's the products that I do. And so, for COLA, which it's an... it's an interesting question because it aligns really well with this idea of like low tech technology, I did everything in scotch tape. So I did like these large renditions of the San Gabriel Mountains around LA, but just did them... I rendered them completely in just layers of scotch tape.

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JOE DAVIDSON: And it really kind of conceptually had a lot of things going to it for me because it was such this ubiquitous office product that, you know, you just use it day in

and day out and don't think about it, but it was this thing that didn't really exist probably, what? About 70 years or so ago. So, in terms of technology, it's relatively new in art historical terms and... but now it's to the point where it's just, you know, you get it everywhere. It costs like 85 cents a roll or something like that. And, and it worked really well when I was thinking of like I'm building up these like mountains, which get built up by layers and layers and layers of sediments or by... you know, or by earthquake eruptions or things like that.

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JOE DAVIDSON: But it felt like there was this interesting process going on of me just all day, like 10 hours a day, for like seven or eight months, just like applying scotch tape to them, and you know what I mean?

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AMY KNOLES: We can get you help for that.

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JOE DAVIDSON: It was crazy, and I like, like I can't do it anymore because it just it was just like splitting open my fingers and it was just in... but it was... it was an interesting... like it was just this interesting, you know, choice of material to kind of explore this idea of stupid labor, you know, which is a little bit of, of what I have to do or what I used to have to do a lot in terms of trying to survive so that you can keep like feeding, you know, the studio practice and so you just do like job after job when you think about, you know, all the other things it can do, so it just it worked out really well, and it was kind of like a s... it was like a stupid technology that I... actually, it worked really well for the time.

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SCOTT URIU: Yeah. I think, again, we have... I have two different answers to that. So, you know, with us, the, the cheapest technology, ironically, is computer. That's it. So we make tons of iterations in the computer. We, we have a saying that we try to make as many mistakes as possible in the computer digitally. You make those mistakes digitally and then see what works and doesn't work. So, for us, it's all the iterations of, of geometrically and working this whatever we're doing, if that's the right approach, you know, if we're... if we're going the right path, if this is the right sort of "look" or whatnot, so that's on one side of it. Then the other side is, nah, zip ties and hand rivets I think are amazing technology nowadays, you know, that didn't exist, you know?

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SCOTT URIU: And so, they're effective with the use of cops and everything, and, and also they are very effective with materials. So the hand rivets are also amazing, too. Super cheap.

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AMY KNOLES: You know, could I... I'd like to mention why I actually brought that up. I... the first time that that idea kind of rocked my world was working with a, a Polish electronic musician and composer, and we ended up performing a duo called Natural Plastic, also an odd technology. But he, out of necessity, living in Poland before the Wall came down, getting his hands on certain technology was very, very difficult, and still it's prohibitive, you know, in, in terms... monetarily, it, it costs a lot, you know?

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AMY KNOLES: The iMac or something costs a lot more for, for them to acquire. But he came up with the most insane way of making the most beautiful music out of the, the craziest things. So he would take a, a keyboard, a Casio. Everyone's favorite, Casio

keyboards, and they have... they usually have what's called the little modulation wheel and, and a pitch bend, and these things send controller data. And he wanted to be able to make gestures, you know, electronically and change music that way, and what he did was open up the keyboard and resolder a, a photo resistor to the potentiometers or the knobs on the keyboard, or the, the sliders and then hide the, the photo resistor inside of a... like a broken mic cables housing.

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AMY KNOLES: You know, anything that was lying around. And then bring a light down here, and he reflect the light into his hand and then into the resistor to shape the sound and he ended up putting it in his mouth and putting one here and here and one here and would go [MAKES GROWLING SOUNDS], you know? And amazing music would happen, and also you get this incredible image of his head that is just blown up, you know? And, and it's just with this... and he, he put... the one in his mouth, he put the photo resistor in a bust... in a bent bottle cap, you know? And these things were housed in bottle caps and, and it was the most absolutely amazing thing you've ever seen.

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AMY KNOLES: So I've sort of kind of always tried to, to kind of get down to that level again and, you know, use a soldering gun every once in a while so you remember where this shit comes from, right?

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TONY DE LOS REYES: I had a... this made me realize I'm, I'm very bad about using cheap materials. I need to be more cheap. Because I had this... I had this... I, I, I had this fetish for like cheap-looking things, but they wind up being very expensive to make. So as I was... it reminded me of, of one of my COLA pieces regarding Moby Dick was I had read the, the novel as a paperback on residency, and I, I found the first chapter just absolutely

mesmerizing, so I wanted to make an exact duplicate of the first chapter in my paperback book with 90% of the text removed, and the... this stream, stream of consciousness kind of prose, prose poem. Most of it was a blank page, but I wanted to do it in the letter press and I wanted to do it, you know, the same sized paper, the same quality paper.

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TONY DE LOS REYES: It wound up being very expensive, but it looked very cheap. But what's great is I, I was getting back to Los Angeles, I worked with an absolutely fabulous typesetter, Gerald Lange, who taught at USC and in... at Otis, and, you know, even though he had a lot... incredible handset-type experience, even he used this amazing process where you were making plastic, silicone sheets of type, and in order to get the page the way we wanted, we did that process rather than handset type. But I, I think, to some extent, what we're talking about is material, right? It's kind of an affection for material, and when the technology, whether it's cheap or expensive, allows itself for the materials just to kind of ooze out its, its beauty, that's when we all feel, you know, really lucky.

00:38:44

T. KIM TRANG TRAN: So, for my COLA project, I worked in Second Life, which is a free software, but the labor power was extraordinarily expensive and, and I'm happy to pay other people for that, so it was a really great steep learning curve for me to collaborate with coder and coders who have a, a great aesthetic sense to build this virtual world that really spoke about my mother, and, and so the, the idea was to sort of create an afterlife for her in this vit... virtual world of all the things that she had wanted but couldn't really have, you know, like her children around her, and we would be doing everything that would be her favorite thing for us to do.

00:39:29

T. KIM TRANG TRAN: So like I was eternally playing the piano and Moonlight Sonata, in particular, for her, because, you know, she really want... Yeah, my personal hell, yeah, but her... you know, her fantasy, right? Like that's her nirvana. And, you know, and, and so that was the idea because I think in some Asian culture the practice of sort of burning money or burning paper versions of worldly goods and material goods to send to the... you know, the, the after world for your deceased loved ones was, was sort of like where I sprung board from, and I think earlier you had talked about does the technology allow us to sort of reframe or rethink or understand something differently about life that, you know, just non techno... not... non technological means wouldn't be able to do?

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T. KIM TRANG TRAN: So I think, in that instance, you know, it, it, it helps because a friend of mine came up and said, "Oh, my God. This is... this... you know, this is just like burning paper money for your mom," that kind of thing. But, you know, it just kind of took this very high tech way to talk about it. So even though the tool was free, like, you know, how they used it was not, so I just think that's kind of [INAUDIBLE].

00:40:54

STAS ORLOVSKI: So, for my COLA project, I made paintings with Xerox transfer, so they're basically photocopies with acetone to release the toner, and that was, you know, a pretty... as, as inexpensive as it gets, but of course that's really just a gateway drug to the printing press. So, so sadly for me, I became obsessed with the printing press and, you know, my background is not print making, so of course I have to make with a master printer to achieve what I want to achieve, and that is not cheap technology. That is... that is very expensive, as Tony mentioned, with letter press. So, yeah, it's kind of a curious question about cheap technology, because some of the things that, you know, might

seem, I don't know, low tech or, or relatively accessible, in fact are some of the most precious, most complex things.

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STAS ORLOVSKI: And the things that we think would be super expensive are not, you know, and it's just the matter of, I think... you know, it's like for those of us that teach, it's that constant argument of even, you know, why can't you make an expressive line with a ruler? Why does it always have to be like this for it to be expressive? And if it's not with a ruler, then it can't be expressive. It's the same thing with materials, right? It's this idea that we use these precious things and... or, you know, we, we have these expectations of what might be a throwaway or, or inexpensive versus what takes a lot of resources.

00:42:28

SUE ANN ROBINSON: For my COLA grant, I, I think I did... so far, I think I did the least expensive thing so far. I think I got scotch tape beat.

00:42:43

JOE DAVIDSON: [INAUDIBLE]. (Okay) [INAUDIBLE].

00:42:51

SUE ANN ROBINSON: I make books. I also teach people how to make paper. I have some issues with teaching people how to make paper because I feel that there is enough paper in the world already existing. So, for my COLA grant, I used already existing printed matter, things that already were out there, so little brochures that you pick up in the dental office, in the insurance company, Knott's Berry Farm, all kinds of things. So I have all those pamphlets. They go back to the '50s, and I can construct books with those and modify them. And I don't have to... I don't have to print them.

00:43:38

SUE ANN ROBINSON: I can paint over them or cut them up or do all kinds of things with them.

00:43:46

BARBARA STRASEN: I'd like to go back to the question about using very basic, simple technology in the elaborate 21st century technology. When... often, when I make lenticular works, I use... I cannibalize bits of paintings or drawings that I've made and re-photograph them and insert them into the lenticular as a separate layer and then combine them with, say, photographs of a concept, a design that are different from it or related to it. And then, to be really perverse, I like to often paint on top of a lenticular with acrylic paint so that you can peek through the static network that's hand painted, to the moving, s... sliding around thing underneath.

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BARBARA STRASEN: So it's a little bit of perversity.

00:44:41

JANE CASTILLO: I have abandoned the cheap technology idea, knowing that I had started with something that I thought was relatively inexpensive. I had started using human hair. But, okay, well that's free. But then I started making bigger installations, and then I realized I needed to keep up with my own demand of my creativity and needing to create bigger work, so I started buying Kanekalon, which is the artificial hair, and I started buying it in such large quantities that I quickly realized what I thought was a cheap material that I had grown, you know, this affection for, is now not cheap. So that has kind of framed my work after that.

00:45:28

JANE CASTILLO: And for my COLA project, I still tried to have humble materials, and I had these burlap bags and created my own fictitious sugar company because I could trace my lineage to the sugar trade in Colombia, South America. And, and so I know, because I like to work large, even my low tech that I think is relatively inexpensive always ends up being more expensive than I think.

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MARGARET HONDA: I think the labor costs are really what we're all sort of talking about, that, you know, we think that, you know, working... doing letter press or working in film at a film lab, because it's, it's an older technology, you knew... you sort of think, well, you know, it's not going to be as expensive as, you know, 3D printing or something like that. But, but what I found, and I'm sure what everybody's found, is that there are these amazing people out there who really know what they're doing, who love what they're doing and they love to be challenged. And, and so it's... for me, I mean, as I can't always do this, but it's really great when I can work with somebody on a project and I know it's, it's not going to be cheap.

00:46:49

MARGARET HONDA: I know it's, it's... you know, we might actually call it more like analog technology, but the results are usually always pretty amazing when you're working with people who've been working for decades like this. And the thing is a lot of people who are working in this way are not... you know, finding their, their successors is the real trick now, because a lot of people aren't necessarily, you know, especially at film labs, are not really being encouraged to sort of train the next generation of people to do what they're doing, you know, to making 70 millimeter prints, things like that. So I kind of feel like even though certain things are, are actually going to be sort of expensive in terms of the labor,

it's, it's kind of like you have to do it now because you don't know if you're going to be able to do it to the same extent in the future.

00:47:44

AMY KNOLES: Why don't we go to the notion of the future and what we might want to use in the future? Are we going more towards high technol... high technology or... I know in the... in the... in the music industry, odd... oddly, analog synthesizers are enjoying a huge resurgence. They are actually... I was corrected by the manufacturer of something that I recently acquired that it's a hybrid. It's just not just analog. It's a digital analog syn... synth. And so, in the music world, it's really a very... it's almost like a new frontier but it's an old frontier.

00:48:32

AMY KNOLES: Everything old is new again. But it's been changed and in... and improved in certain ways to make, make it easier to reproduce what you've done, say. What about... is that happening for other people in, in, in other fields? Is the analog coming back?

00:48:53

MARGARET HONDA: I, I think in film there are a lot of... a lot of machines that are like printers. They're, they're pretty much a kind of hybrid. And so that it's not like anything is like strictly analog or strictly digital. I mean, some... you know, some things are, but a lot of what I work with could, could be classified as, as hybrid. And I think, in terms of the future, what I would really like and what a lot of... I think a lot of people really want is just the choice to be able to continue working with certain processes and certain materials and not have things disappear. (Right) You know, you... to try to continue to support people who... technicians who can really help you do the kind of work you want to do.

00:49:43

MARGARET HONDA: And what I discovered when I started working with films is that it wasn't... and this kind of gets a little bit back to the question of content, I realized... you know, I started out thinking I was doing one thing, but then I, I realized that what I was doing was supporting a kind of ecology, you know? That there, there are labs, there are materials, and, more importantly, there are people that are projectionists. You know, they're... they are all these parts, you know, to the puzzle, and if one part goes away then... you know, then I can't keep doing what I'm doing. And so I think the future for me really kind of looks like, you know, continuing to support the people who've helped me do the work I've done so far, but then also having access to what else is available.

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MARGARET HONDA: So it's basically, you know, just wanting to have a choice to, to do as much or to have as much access as you can.

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AMY KNOLES: Yeah. I found the lack of the ability to continue to use a certain device has caused me to change my, my work, and it, it, it can be really frightening. I actually flew to New York once when the... I play an electronic xylophone sometimes, and that company was... had filed bankruptcy, and I flew to New York and got... bought two more of those xylophone out of this guy's closet, you know? Just so that I would still have the instrument, you know? And, and really, no, I don't use it that much and... because there's always something, you know, to change... well, we're always going to change, you know?

00:51:28

AMY KNOLES: We're not always going to be reliant. But it is... it's an interesting question, and, and the support of the people that are sort of making these, these things for us that we couldn't make. We're not really making the, the technology quite as often as we are

making artwork out of it. So, the support of these... of the people that, that make it possible is very, very important. It has been.

00:51:56

SUE ANN ROBINSON: I think that the idea of an old technology for me is still really interesting, because a lot of my students, for example, are working with computers all the time, and then when they have to learn how to bind a book with a needle and thread, they actually get a great deal of satisfaction out of that, and they know that that will be around for a while, that it's not going to be out of date. It will be accessible. And I'm reminded of a, a residency that I had at one point where the, the residency was applying for a grant to get... to support artists coming there, and they had no electricity.

00:52:50

SUE ANN ROBINSON: And the funder said, "No. We're not going to give you the money because you're, you're not... you don't have electricity." And so they asked all of us who had been residents there to please write to the funder and explain that having a residency in a place where you really have to get up in the morning and go to bed as soon as the sun sets was a different experience, and it was really the experience of a lifetime, I think, just to be able to be back in touch with sunlight, nighttime, as your... as your residence. They did get the grant, so that was great.

00:53:36

SUE ANN ROBINSON: But I think that the idea of technology can also be really a starting point for what you're trying to do. It doesn't have to be just a tool. It's also the, the inspiration, I think.

00:53:54

SCOTT URIU: Yeah. As an architect, you know, I, I think we have... and again, I've been giving all these answers all, all day, to which there are two sides of that. But on the bright side of everything, you know, the, the future is insanely bright. It's the massive mass customization that... that's allowing, you know, for, for incredible things to be customized I think is, is really in the future that, that is now. That's really a... you know, be able to bui... build these things cheaper, better, et cetera, et cetera. On the dark side of that, on the very dark side of that, which also might be now, is technology is absolutely allowed and nobody in this room is, is in this group, but it's allowed a, a, a mass mediocrity to be disguised as, as the, the future or, or whatnot, where it's, it's... again, it's derivative and authentic and sort of just... et cetera.

00:54:51

SCOTT URIU: I mean... and again, technology has absolutely allowed a lot of that, that do drawings, 3D models, all these, these really cool technology things are, are allowing things to be so much quicker, cheaper, "better" but not really better at all in, in a... in any aesthetic sensibility to it. So, a lot of our city right now is growing in an incredible pace, I would argue, but I would also argue it had some very questionable aesthetics, though, too. So... but, you know, the future is bright, but also a little dark.

00:55:25

TONY DE LOS REYES: Yes. This has been terrific and I, I feel like I can speak for everyone, we would love to just sit here for another hour, but... and I... we, we will, I have a feeling, but I really want to thank you in behalf of the moderators and, and, and myself. I, I really... I really enjoyed this tremendously, so thank you so much.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]