

Podcast Recording: Lan “Florence” Yee

Diane Wong (3:15):

Hello, hello, Lan. Thank you so much for being here with us today. Let's kind of start with an introduction. Tell us a little bit about yourself and how did you find yourself involved with Centre A?

Lan “Florence” Yee (3:27):

Thank you so much for having me, Diane and Coco. I always appreciate just being able to catch up with people you've worked with and see that kind of grow in real time. So I'm a visual artist and cultural worker from Tiohtià:ke, otherwise known as Montreal. But I've been living in Tkaronto for the past five years. I started with painting and have been expanding my practice over the last decade to include text, signage, installation, weaving, embroidery. It varies a lot because I create work by mostly responding to the context and history of materials in front of me. My involvement with Centre A began with my relationship to you, Diane. When we met during an orientation event at Concordia University, probably around 2016, we both became part of different student-led art groups. So we kept up with each other's work. And I think it was in 2019 that Diane contacted me to be part of an exhibition that you curated with recent graduates at Centre A. And that group show was with Anya Asrani, Olivia Chen, Cheyenne Rayne LeGrand, Rehan Yazdani, and myself. It was titled *(Dis)location, (Dis)connect, (Dis)appearance*, with the dis in brackets. And it was a really ambitious show, both in scope and in relationality. I was really grateful to have the opportunity to participate in it, and especially because Diane hosted me for a whole week at her family home. And it was my first time in Vancouver, and it's been the only time ever since, so very special.

Diane Wong (5:00):

Yeah, it's actually my parents' house. I can't believe, like, I was thinking about this as we were doing the question for the podcast, that we've known each other for a decade, like a good decade at this point. And yeah, no, I really enjoyed that. Still, I think to this day, my favorite show that I've curated, I think that was the one that was the most meaningful to me. I was thinking at the time a lot about my relationship with my grandma, who has since passed, unfortunately, and like kind of this intergenerational gap that happens because of a loss of mother tongue and a disconnect to your culture, especially with diasporic kids.

Coco Zhou (5:37):

Now, have you visited? You've visited our gallery, right, Lan? In the past, not recently, but...

Diane Wong (5:43):

Can you imagine if they came for the show and then didn't go to the gallery? That would be so funny.

Lan "Florence" Yee (5:49):

You know, I was there every single day of install, not only because I was following Diane wherever she went, but also, so I finished my own install pretty quickly and was kind of just like helping out other people. It really gave me the time to get to know the other artists in the show too. And it was really nice. I kind of, there's a model of some curators now calling the install period, like a one week residency so that the artists can focus on it and, you know, get paid for that time to basically connect with each other. It's a very good idea. And I should credit this to Eunice Béliador, who is the curator for my show that's going to be at Montreal, Arts Interculturels (MAI) in May 2024.

Coco Zhou (6:38):

Well, very exciting. So you've been to Vancouver's Chinatown and obviously you're from Montreal and now you live in Toronto. So thinking about all these different spaces where the Chinese communities have settled and all these different practices of place making, and your work as well intersects with your involvement and activism around Chinatown spaces. So how does your practice affect the way you think about heritage and cultural memory?

Lan "Florence" Yee (7:08):

I feel like my practice is a skeptical one, and this probably comes from, personally, like second guessing much of how I'm engaging with myself, my family, my histories throughout the years. And so I'm drawn to digging into questions that surround the conditions of a story, like why did this become the main narrative that's told? And how are we impacted by carrying these stories? One of the examples I can think of is that the main narrative we're told about Chinese-Canadian history is about like the railroad workers, because, during 2006, the former Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued an apology after 25 years of campaign to redress the head tax, in which he mostly emphasized the way that Chinese workers were indispensable to the Canadian nation state by building a railroad that would connect the provinces, assimilating that history thus into like patriotic pride and the narrative of hard-working sacrifice, even though the narrative amongst the redress advocates themselves and their families were mostly about the decades-long separation between families and how that impacted generations and still do. And even at the end of Stephen Harper's speech, he announced like a \$5 million funding pocket to educate the public exactly on this, mostly the railroads. And so I see that same kind of influence in funding throughout a lot of my formative years of artmaking, which were surrounded a lot by an age of anniversaries, like the 150th year

of so-called Canadian Confederation and the 50th anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality. And being very involved in academia at the time, it was interesting to see so many projects started along these lines because it was support for it. And in the shadow of this logic, I was struck by something that June Chow said. She's an archivist who is working with the Chinese Canadian Museum on the 100th anniversary of the 1923 Exclusion Act that banned entry from Chinese people into Canada. There were so many archival materials and government documents that were only made available to the museum because it was a 'special year.' And many families saw these documents for the first time, only then realizing that their names were maybe different and that their arrival story was changed. And June said, "we can't keep waiting for another anniversary," referring to this information that kind of only trickles when it's something that needs to be commemorated. And she was thinking of like the next time something like this would happen would probably be in 2047, the 100th anniversary of the end of the Exclusion Act. And so that kind of interest in like why things get remembered is like how I think my practice also is wary of this reliance on a discourse of representation that has prioritized visibility and aesthetics overall else. And it's resulted in a lot of like tokenizing and shallow understandings of how our communities function and seeing them only as like individuals. So that's why the main goal of the *Haphazard Handbook of Artists and Organizers Across Chinatown's* long title to this little book was meant to connect stories and efforts of each city's activists as a collective. And it was something that was already started by the Coast to Coast Chinatown's network. And that's kind of what I keep wanting to emphasize, that this is not just like my work or something that started in 2019 either, but like many decades and different groups. Because there's this real recurring lack of intergenerational mentorship for young people who end up having to reinvent the wheel a lot in organizing spaces and end up believing that they're either the first or only ones doing the work. So, keeping these stories intertwined with each other is one of those main ways of allowing us to share strategies, resources, and hopes. I mean, one of the main common solutions that I see spread a lot because of this like talking between Chinatown organizations and leaders is a lot of people adopting the community land trust model wherein like property is decommodified by taking it off the speculative market and putting it in the hands of something like a nonprofit organization. And I was part of the Jia Foundation team that hosted the Chinatown Reimagine Forum, or the second one. It was in Montreal, September, October. And yeah, it was really cool to see how things have changed from needing to emphasize this like built heritage to really seeing the responses come in from different communities fighting gentrification and the things that they've planted a few years ago now coming into fruition. Yeah, I hope that answered your question.

Diane Wong (12:03):

Yeah, I remember when you came to visit in Vancouver, we were hanging out playing mahjong with Youth Collaborative for Chinatown, who was also started by June Chow and June's sister Doris as well. Yeah, that's where I learned how to play mahjong, actually. I remember that feeling of intergenerational relationships being built in Vancouver Chinatown at the time because of these events that Youth Collaborative were doing. But unfortunately, we're going to get into 105 Keefer now, I guess, unfortunately, that has been approved for condo building in the last couple of years. Doris hosted one of the last mahjong events, I think in September. I was talking to Doris and Doris was like, yeah, this is likely going to be like the last one. I think intergenerational relationship building and working together is so important. That's why I really respect the work that Yarrow does. It's something that we've been talking about is how could Centre A get back into more community based events. For example, we just did a zine making workshop with Yarrow and Hatch Gallery out at UBC, where elders and students were paired up to make zines together. That's like the type of events I want to do more of for sure. Jumping back to, you know, *(Dis)location*, *(Dis)connect*, *(Dis)appearance*, we explored themes of diasporic identities, loss of mother tongues, and kind of intergenerational gaps within our culture with all the artists that we were talking about before. What were some memorable moments during that exhibition for you?

Lan “Florence” Yee (13:34):

Yeah, I mean, it's part of what you were describing too. I really appreciated that you had created a process of exhibition making that mirrored the like themes and desires, where you had asked our relatives to help us translate the wall texts. And unfortunately, I wasn't living in the same city as my grandmother at the time, and my language skills were still like super poor. They're still kind of pretty poor. And it's something that I hope to do with her in the future. We tried recently actually on a speech that I was writing, and but I kind of froze on stage when it came time. It's a struggle. But I think back to the ways that the many different logistics of something can be in alignment with, you know, the values of your show. And I always appreciate that about good curation. And I mean, I'm also reminded of how like, Reyhan was constantly like sweeping and raking the sand in her installation and repositioning the rocks. Because I was there most days, I got to like admire how she didn't seem to settle easily and kept trying new things every day. And that dedication to trying has really stayed with me as like a memory of the exhibition. It embodied like one of the functions of the show. Again, like demonstrating that an antidote to disappearance is this willingness to keep trying even when we fail. I'm in general reminded like what an immense privilege and joy it is to like make my practice integral to learning and relearning about my family, my place, my history.

Diane Wong (15:06):

Do you want to know a funny story? Okay, for context, I was the one, kind of, to translate Lan's wall text. Yeah. I don't think I ever told you this story actually. Do you want to know a really funny story about that?

Lan “Florence” Yee (15:21):

Yeah, of course. I mean, the saddest thing is that I gave you my name in Chinese wrong. Like I just copy pasted the fucking characters of my name in the wrong order. And my grandma pointed it out when she saw it. I was like, I know my own name. Why didn't I see this? I am sorry.

Diane Wong (15:38):

I should have also caught that to be honest. That was also on me. Okay, so the story is I was too busy doing all the stuff. And I was like, okay, maybe just ask someone else to translate some of it. So I went on Fiverr and paid someone to translate this. And then I was just going to read it over. And this person literally copied it into Google Translate. And then I was like, there's no way this guy did this, right? He absolutely did it. And then I ended up having to talk to my dad about it. I don't quite remember, but that distinct memory was like, wow, this man really just Google Translated this, word for word. Look over it, at least, you know? But that's kind of a fun anecdote. Yeah, I think that it's not weird to think about the show, but it's definitely strange to think about it because we were both really emerging at the time. And working, I think, collaboratively with all the artists, and it was like my first solo curatorial experience as well, I was still trying to figure out what being a curator meant. I mean, I'm still trying to figure that out now, but whatever. So like, it's nice to hear that you had a good experience.

Lan “Florence” Yee (16:46):

Actually, are there things you would have liked to do differently in the show?

Diane Wong (16:51):

Honestly, I think that was an instance of the perfect curation for me, even at the early time. Like, I don't wish I did anything different. I really did appreciate the artists that we're working with and the relationship that we built. I think I was trying to figure out at the time, you know, who I was as a person. And I think that the show really solidified a lot the way that I was feeling because of seeing others who are also feeling very similar ways. I strongly believe that there's nothing that I would have changed. That was an example of a perfect exhibition for me.

Lan “Florence” Yee (17:24):

Wow, I mean, it turned out great.

Diane Wong (17:27):

It really did. And like the amount of people that showed up and the amount of people...

Lan "Florence" Yee (17:31):

Oh, it was crazy. People still talk to me about it.

Diane Wong (17:34):

Really?

Lan "Florence" Yee (17:36):

Yes, yes, yes. Anytime I meet someone that's from Vancouver, they're like, oh yeah, I've seen your show at Centre A.

Diane Wong (17:44):

Oh, that's really cool. I still see a lot of the same people that we played like Mahjong with that day, actually. We're still in the same circle. I think that created kind of an opportunity for me to discover what I wanted my curatorial practice to look like, which is centered around building relationships, right? I mean, I don't necessarily love calling myself a curator anymore, but I do like working with artists a lot.

Lan "Florence" Yee (18:06):

What do you like calling yourself?

Diane Wong (18:08):

I don't know. I haven't thought about that. Like curator has such a weird connotation, like almost a hierarchy with artists that I hate. I absolutely do not like that. I've gotten a lot of comments on my curatorial intervention. Actually, this was brought up during my crit for my final show a lot. One of the crit is like, oh, like you put a lot of your own curatorial intervention into this, why? And I was like, I talked to the artist. There was like a way that I kind of wanted to change the way that the work was shown previously. I was just working with the artists. We've had multiple conversations about this. So it's like, not really.

Lan "Florence" Yee (18:42):

Did this person expect, like, curators to dust their prints off of, like, artwork? Like, is it supposed to feel like you're, the curator, is invisible?

Diane Wong (18:51):

And like, that's what I was thinking. I was like, I'm not really sure, because it made sense, but it didn't make sense. Like, I didn't think about that until she brought it up.

Because different curators do very different things. And then I think that's just part of the way that I want to do things, and then not necessarily think about it that deeply. I felt like it got made to be a really big deal during my crit, and I was like, I didn't think it was that big of a deal, but okay. Not in a bad way per se, but in just a 'why.' People were curious, and I was like, I don't know, that's just kind of how I've always done things. It's similar to the way that the wall text for *(Dis)location*, *(Dis)connect*, *(Dis)appearance* was, it was just a different way of engaging, because every artist worked with someone in their lives to translate their wall text into their mother tongue, and there was like four or five different languages, which is like one of my most memorable experiences, being able to create a space that could happen. Anyways, the transition for this episode is great. I'm going to throw the next question to Coco.

Coco Zhou (19:52):

Great, thanks for that. Yeah, I think it's like, maybe this is a very bad analogy. Is creating a podcast, kind of also a curatorial practice? I think, Lan, what you were saying about the trauma narrative for Chinese Canadians is really interesting in terms of how like there's a politics of recognition that is wrapped into this myth or the origin trauma of the exploited railway worker and how it functions as the primary frame for how Chinese-Canadian identity is understood politically and formally and I think your work often examines and criticizes institutional archives as a kind of like narrative making machine. I'm curious about your attitude towards archives because I think you also create your own archives. I think the *Haphazard Handbook* is a kind of archive, right? Yeah, so I'm curious to hear about what your thoughts are about what archives can achieve and also how they perpetuate certain dominant forms.

Lan "Florence" Yee (21:00):

Yeah, I mean, I think people usually make this distinction between like big 'A' archive and small 'a' archive. Big 'A' being institutional legacy archives that are usually run by an organization that has a mandate that is tied to a patriotic history preservation, or in general just also has a long, long history and wants to value it in that way. Small 'a' archive being more like your family photos and one person's like personal belongings and lists of grocery items you need for the day. I think of archives a lot less for myself as like, I don't usually call them archives, I guess because I don't want them to be thought of in the same form as something that's searchable, that is necessarily like complete or all-knowing. And maybe that's why I called it the *Haphazard Handbook* too, this like very forward acknowledgement that this was like pretty quickly done, it was not exhaustive, and man, were there a lot of things that prevented the whole... There was a lot of conflict in like the bringing together of six different cities, well, half of them I had like... Well, actually, have I been to all of them? No, I haven't been to all of them. It was through Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Ottawa. And these are all

like different communities with their own histories and their own community beef. And it probably said a lot that the communities that were furthest away from me and that I had spent the least time in obviously had less of an ability to talk to me about what was difficult about organizing in more like personal terms. We had initially had an introductory text that we pulled last minute because we had gotten some complaints that the author was affiliated with trans exclusionary leaders in the Chinatown movement. It's been two years since we had this published and the decision was like so quickly taken. It was very rushed over, I think, only a day. And so when I think about it more, I would have liked to sit down and actually just talk it out with people. Because the essay that we took out was a pretty scathing class analysis of the powers of specifically Vancouver's Chinatown that are more aligned with like real estate and police power are more so dominating and dictating what happens in the neighborhood than the other, like smaller organizations and grassroots collectives. And so it was really, I think, an important thing to include. And it's too bad it's not there. And it's definitely available whenever people ask me about it, I give them the essay. Maybe, I mean, if anyone hears this podcast and is interested in also looking for that essay, I am happy to send it along. You can contact my email. But yeah, I think putting together that publication also just showed me a lot of how it is still like the relationship building that needs to be prioritized. I mean, back to your question, I try to remind myself that I'm not doing the work of an actual archivist, because they exist, and I shouldn't just be pretending like I could do their job without training or education about the actual methods and background they have. And so it goes back to this funding of these anniversary type things. And I mean, I guess this podcast is also an anniversary funding thing. Not to make it seem like we're in some sort of big conspiracy, but that's simply, I think, Canadian art world existence.

Diane Wong (25:19):

They really love their anniversary stuff. They really do. Like, I think there's a whole funding stream just for anniversary programming for non-profit organizations, but I unfortunately missed the date for that one. But anyways.

Lan "Florence" Yee (25:32):

Oh, you're not kidding. That's a real thing.

Diane Wong (25:34):

Oh, that's straight up. I think it's a Heritage Canada fund specifically for people who have anniversary things happening, and it's every 25 years. So if you don't apply for the 25th year, you have to wait until the 50th year to apply, basically. It's like crazy.

Lan "Florence" Yee (25:53):

That's so funny. Okay, wow. I didn't know that. You know what? Yes, because a lot of artist-run centres are either coming up or have just had their 50th year, because it seems like a lot of artist-run centres were incorporated in the 1970s, I guess, tax stuff. I keep asking people, like, why did artist-run centres all start around the same time? And people always tell me the taxes were lighter or something. But I mean, probably also just like the movement for more conceptual work was like needed away from commercial markets. Anyways, a history class could be probably found on that. But I get approached often because of these anniversaries to engage with archival work, and usually in this like big 'A' archive way. And I think being aware of the reason why you're being invited to do something is like part of, I guess, like the way I work and noticing the structure of things. So my interventions mainly kind of expose or make more obvious what the structure of these institutions are so that it's more visible and makes it maybe a bit easier to identify where we might have agency to shift something. And these bring me back to the questions that I have about the context. So like, how did this archive come to be? How and why does it continue to be maintained? How do they process new knowledge? What's their relationship to existing communities that they should serve or say that they do serve? And if anything, I think my work undermines the archive in actually many senses of the word, both in the sense that the archive is reminded of its gaps when this kind of intervention happens, but also in the sense that it's not used in the way that it's intended. One of the more recent projects was something I did with the Textile Museum of Canada. I was invited by Camila Salcedo and Karina Román-Justo, who worked together as a group called Mending the Museum to join five other artists in responding to the museum's online collections as fragments. And the curatorial statement they put up for the project recently is beautiful. It's just like an interview, or not an interview, it's a conversation between the two of them instead of like a straight up kind of academic didactic. And in it, they talk about thinking of their work inside museums as like helping museums die, in the sense of composting it into something more equitable and focused on community learning rather than like housing colonial treasures. I mean, we were asked to focus on the fragments of their online collections at the Textile Museum. And I was drawn specifically to this object. It said it was from China and it was called a sleeve band. It had no clear provenance, but it was donated by Fred Braida, who happens to be the real estate developer that gave the Textile Museum its space in the condo tower he built. I asked the conservator why it was just a band. She responded that it was likely cut off from the rest of the garment to sell more easily as it's the most adorned part of the garment and resembles a flat-framed drawing this way. I decided that the results of my research would take the form of a video piece that mimics the format of museum staff showing a piece on their conservation table. So it's like a top view of this flat table. And it satirizes the archival system by playing with assumed objectivity in Eurocentric methods and narration. By contextualizing the sleeve with a combination of speculation and historical research, I

wear these comically large white gloves with long fingers to touch the replica of the sleeve band that I made because they wouldn't let me touch the actual object, obviously. Or maybe not so obviously because, I mean, there's so much that I uncovered about this piece. Well, I mean, the video kind of starts with this voice in there that goes through the stories related to the form and history of the sleeve band, as if it were a sentient being talking on its own. And the first story that I wanted to relate it to is a Chinese tale where a queer emperor falls, has a lover that falls asleep on his sleeve, and instead of disturbing him to get up, he cut his sleeve and let him rest some more. And so that's like where the queer slang in China now talks about queer people as people of the cut sleeve persuasion. So it was fun to think about the sleeve band as having that potential to carry that story, but also seeing the many other histories that could also be its origin. So finding that there was also a widespread practice of like sacking imperial palaces at the fall of the Qing dynasty and selling the clothing in fragments that would ignore their provenance, which was both accepted by all parties, because if it was perhaps actually looted from a palace, or not, it could have been made from like a commercial factory. But their purchases were fueled by this desire of orientalist fantasies that ignored the reality of poverty and famine during this time for this flood of so-called new artwork on the market. I mean, it's interesting because my sleeve band on the fact sheet that it's provided with is dated between 1800 and 1985. So there's like a 200 year period where it could have been made, but this is a really big change time. 1800 is like pre-industrialization, and 1985 is like almost as old as us. So like, I can't believe that no one would be able to look at this garment closely enough to just say, no, this was made in 1985. And obviously I can't know for certain, but it seems like there's a reason why its provenance is so murky and why there's such a large gap in time that it might be from. And thinking about how the Textile Museum got its space in 1989. So maybe, I'm not saying it is, but it might just be a knockoff that many other pieces have been found to be and deaccessioned from museum collections. I was just looking at the Metropolitan Museum the other day that, I mean, not in person, but online, that had a painting that they recognize now, that it is a fake stamp of like a 13th century painter, but it's still a painting made in the 17th century. So it's still old, just like not that old. And it's great to know that even in the 17th century, people were already, you know, idealizing a different dynasty as like a better golden age of China. And it's been interesting to learn about this larger international craving for Song dynasty artwork. That's a different thing, I guess. But yeah, back to this sleeve band. There's this idealized narrative of antique authenticity that's often touted at places where Asian textiles would be displayed by like colonial powers specifically like world expo's and museums. I found online that Fred Braida also had a lease at the Queen Elizabeth building of the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto for something called the Toronto China Mart. So like the market for Chinese things at the CNE, like the Canadian version of a world expo. And so that was in 2003.

Diane Wong (33:36):

That's too, that's too... The fact that we were alive at that point.

Lan "Florence" Yee (33:42):

Yeah, and I couldn't find like whether it was held for very long, but there's just so many connections, especially that the textile museum's building that he developed sits exactly where Toronto's former Chinatown was, but the city of Toronto demolished it, raised it to build their new town hall and adjacent amenities. So it's like, truth is stranger than fiction, type of scenario. And yet the only fictionalized part of the video is at the end of it, where I talk about Petrina Ng's work, who is the artist in residence at the Textile Museum from 2019 to 2020. And she uncovered the same story of gentrification and dispossession at the source of the Textile Museum's housing and collections. She made a suggestion that the institution should donate \$2,000 to the Friends of Chinatown Fund, which is not a real fund, but she suggested it could be set up. And Friends of Chinatown is one of the groups that is advocating for affordable housing and the kind of cultural capacity of remaining Chinatown. But in doing that, suggesting that the Textile Museum commit to that in perpetuity, and the Textile Museum's decision on that was still pending slash unknown by the time that she left the residency, and still now. But in the video, the only thing that is definitely a lie is that, at the end, I say that the Textile Museum agreed to this term, and that they also agreed to honouring Indigenous treaties. And it did what I hoped for, which is that the Textile Museum mildly freaked out at hearing this, and they're like, where did you get this information? And I kind of hopefully brought up the conversation again to actually maybe implement this. They had a recent change in leadership, and yeah, maybe bringing that up again would be different this time. So yeah, a very long convoluted thing to say that like, it's incredible how much even just like one object I randomly selected in this like pile of thousands of things was able to bring so much to light, or maybe it's not that strange because many of the, I would say, a majority of the Chinese objects in the Textile Museum's collections are actually donated by Fred Braid. I mean, obviously there's many incentives to doing this, but that, maybe, putting a mixed-use amenity like a museum into your condo would mean that you could build it higher. And so there's just a lot of like super relevant issues that are fossilized inside these fragments of the Textile Museum's archives.

Diane Wong (36:19):

Thank you so much for answering that. I watched over the internet, like your residency at the Textile Museum, and we haven't talked about it, so it's really interesting to hear about it now, actually. I want to ask the last question that we have, which is your, on your new publication and your project, Kind of a Collective, which is a six-week-long peer mentorship program for emerging creatives alongside your exhibition at the FOFA

Gallery at Concordia, titled *What Academia Has Done To Me*. Tell us a little bit about that.

Lan “Florence” Yee (36:50):

Yeah, of course. I mean, I'm so glad that they accepted this proposal. I thought it might be a little, I don't know, spicy for an academic gallery to feature the show. It was supposed to happen, obviously, like during the pandemic, or during the worst parts of lockdown. But then we pushed it like two years. And I'm glad, I'm glad I got more time on it, mostly to develop this programming. So like, not much of the artwork is different, but the programming changed from just a one day thing to being like a six week program that ran throughout the whole run of the exhibition too. And the FOFA is a really symbolically apt place to be holding work in response to seven years of being in higher education in the arts. It begins with the question, what do we lose when we describe ourselves? The text is on top of a picture of myself as a young child in a denim jumper, dancing with someone in a dress. I see description as a form of determination that can sometimes close off doors to ourselves if we are asked to repeat that overly determined description too often. And the exhibition in general is made of work created during my MFA about the anxieties that come with identification, as well as racialized and gendered labor expectations. But to really like combat that stuck feeling, I wanted there to be a more hopeful answer to these anxious questions asked in the exhibition's artwork. So I asked two other cultural workers, Mattia Zylak and Vince Rozario, to help me create a peer mentorship program for emerging artists invested in collectivity, and are seeking new ways of collecting ourselves. We call it Kind of a Collective because we're, you know, not really a collective. We didn't know each other before. We hosted an open call to see who would be wanting to do this, and we got a really nice amount of people that made us think like, yeah, of course, this should be something that we redo or that could be expanded upon. Because it only ran for six weeks, and every week we would go over time. And there was so much more that we wanted to talk about. We wanted to tackle creative labor, community building, sustainability, boundaries, funding. Mati and I particularly wanted to focus on what we've seen happen to collectives that have power struggles because of our own experience seeing them do harm, and so we talked a lot about what we called 'collective hygiene,' which were ways to like prioritize the wellbeing of people in alignment with our values instead of growing projects. And, yeah, our participants, there were 10 of them, wrote their thoughts and answers each week into a 60-page publication that we have in print and online for free. It's on my website. And I haven't physically seen it yet since they printed it in Montreal and I have yet to go back. I'm going back in like two weeks, but I'm very excited to see it. Yeah.

Diane Wong (39:48):

That's so exciting. It's nice to see these types of public programs that are intertwined with the exhibition. I thought it was really cool.

Lan “Florence” Yee (39:58):

I mean, one of the most important, or most like impactful things I feel that I do, is not putting on a show. Sometimes it just feels like putting things out into a void. But I felt like that one-on-one mentorship, which seems to be focusing in on fewer people but for a longer amount of time, is so much more helpful. And it's definitely the mentorship I've received informally or formally from a lot of people in my life that has always been something that sticks a lot in my mind.