

The Gathering Project -Proposal, Spring 24

Concept and Intent:

The Gathering Project is A proposal for a temporary outdoor public installation. A reclaiming of a once Indigenous space that is now 'derelict' and under utilized.

The Project is site specific and proposed for the 511 NW Broadway (city park block) right outside of PNCA and will aim to thread the 'interconnectedness' of Nature to humans. Our cities' historical cultures that have shaped the space are acknowledged, but human exceptionalism will not be practiced in the core design of the installation or bio-anchors, but they are considered. (Bio-anchors are ecological informed functional sculptures). There will be a symbiosis between the four...nature to humans, sculptural bio anchor form to function-a thread of balance.

There is a dire need for a place of commune for the community and a connection of Nature to humans. In this space there is potential & opportunity here - for a viable artistic student installation such as this.

I have traveled all over the world and I have transformed by and experienced the beauty and power of public art within public parks. I believe in the possibility of creating a safe, Nature based, human interactive space, that can be a true place to Gather in Commune. Some people go to church, I go to Nature based parks...

I will aim to reclaim an unused communal city park space with functional and sculptural forms that aid in human and Nature interconnectedness. The temporary installation will be intended as an homage to the fauna and flora of the past with ecologically informed designs that consider human history in regard to site specificity.

There is a cultural and environmental importance with repurposed and locally resourced materials which are dynamic and topical to public and land issues that address urban development issues, our climate crisis, and environments. - Like Native plants,

locally sourced concrete as an air sequester, locally sourced clay that provides shade and flora, salvaged iron oxide from Lake Oswego, re-claimed Oregon Oak from one of the oldest trees in the state, etc. etc. (more details to come in a diagram).

The Gathering Space is a challenge of acceptance and acknowledgement that goes outside the box and scope of the usual thesis due to its project length, site, finance, and physical and social magnitude. The Gathering Space, also challenges the 'free thinking' and 'stewardship' of the city and institution which oversees the specific parcel of public park land. It is high time that stewardship, ownership be put into positive and progressive action and who better to do so than a PNCA student with the vision and skill to achieve such a project. It is in the best interest of those energies and entities involved.

-For it is the Indigenous relationship to land and connection to it which is trying to be reconnected with those beings who currently reside in the area. This 'knowing' is the connector and emphasis of creation for the 'bio-anchors' (functional and ecologically sculptural forms) which I have designed and am proposing. The foundation is the -Interconnectedness. ³

Artistic Context:

It is time to reclaim space in the name of Indigeneity, student body and community need. I believe as an artist, it is our collective social responsibility to make our city a healthier and better place. Again, this is a temporary installation proposal, but also a love story to the future, a demonstration of what could be.

The Gathering Project will be an homage to the fauna and flora of antiquity; whilst re-activating the site for the beings of 'present'. I aim to use 'place-making' as a solution for a sense of belonging and to create functional, yet attractive 'bio-anchors' as main environmental aids.

Ex. a shade giving, lean-to, that is also a planter for a Native flower/insects and made from locally harvested earth.

I rely and am standing on solid artistic shoulders of the likes of Nora Naranjo-Morse, Mierle Ukeles, Mother Nature, Agnes Denes, and Barbra Hepworth.

The ecological component of the project - homage to fauna and flora - will aid in present day use for these beings. Our

species connection to land, place, Nature, and each other is an issue and having the proposed arrangement of the Gathering Space attempts to connect these things. The 'reclaiming' of space is a beneficial gesture to the Gathering Space ecosystem and also is a direct acknowledgement of the rights, reclamation, and history of the Indigenous Peoples and many other prominent cultures who have cared for the specific site since anticum and have sculpted our entire city.

My approach is observation, life knowledge and skill, research, and purposeful creations and of bio anchor assets and a living document that aims to solve environmental, land use, public art processes, and human and Nature interconnectedness. ²

Ecological, sustainable, functional sculptures that create a temporary ecosystem and installation/demonstration. Bio-anchor to the urban landscape. Place-making structures that evokes a sense of being and relevance to our interconnectedness reveal about the health of an urban city. Researching cultures of past and present with Indigenous land knowledge to reinvigorate a 'public' space ignites this 'interconnectedness' that I am trying to achieve through the use of a temporary demonstration installation. Not all things can or should exist forever and I welcome that non-permanence in regard to public art. ¹ Documentation will be a thesis in the written form of my project's process, archival research, neighborhood collaborator engagement, reasoning, and actual events of this entire project. (Sloane)

I am envisioning a consolidated thesis piece-as a manifesto-which is going to be my artist's 'take-away' for the temporary installation printed on detritus from the realized bio-anchors. (Rory)

For example, a piece of flattened concrete with my Manifesto printed on it OR a scrap of Oak.

This 'documentation' will also reflect my art practice and ethos of sustainability.

A 2-D visual as a viable art piece and 'roadmap' to the projects in's and out's. My diagrammatic will be an 2-D artistic glimpse into my mind that directly connects the many facets of *The Gathering Project*, together. Again, the weaving of 'Interconnectedness'. Visual and visceral chaos into art.

As I create drafts and go through this process of diagrammatics; it will help me suss out final choices.

It will show for example, why and how a Oregon White Oak - George Nakashima style table is a proposed maquette and its relevance to the site specificity, flora and fauna.

Materials, Processes, Techniques:

A second set of bio anchor maquettes TBD. They will be an evolution that will guide me into the realized bio-anchors.

Maquettes will challenge my skill and ideas of design, structure, ecological adaptability, human ergonomics,All three of these proposals sections will be working in tandem and I am excited to have fun with them.

Vol.1 Maquettes -(top left to right) **Oregon White Oak** (tree felled from my farm), Nakashima style and ode to Nihonmachi culture of Portland and a Native tree that once lived in the actual site and was an Indigenous gathering site for acorns. It is a needed table and bench for students/communal eating and rest. Inoculated with mushroom spores. bioremediation.

Concrete pillars as shade, fauna water bath, planter, and chair bio-anchors. Concrete with grog as a carbon sequestration station. Concrete colored with natural blue pigment as symbolism for the Jewish and Hellenic cultures that helped shape Portland.

A 3 person reclaimed wood bench coated as recognizing historical/detrimental Lake Oswego iron smelting company. ore/copper oxides/metal spray to patina and attract pollinators with hues. porphyry ores and E-wastes,

Native planters made from detritus materials painted in Yo's favorite color (who is Yo and why) they are - garden rhombuses...(yo, and rhombus?)

Oregon architectural clay coated in Lipstick purple as homage to Camas, shade giver, planter, mason bee housing, heat generator and conductor. A lean to....

Materials- are heavy research within a cultural context alongside scientific research of fauna and flora specific to Portland, and oral ancestral knowledge. Materials will be sourced from a hunter-gatherer and detritus perspective as well

as finite product usage from specific entities.

Processes- research based with ecological innovation, Indigenous knowledge, and keen observation alongside current input from residents around the site. How to navigate producing public art and its 'hoops' will be a great part of the digital reference information guide.

Techniques- ceramic sculpture building, furniture building, hunter-gatherer materials in a detritus ethos, engineering methods of safety and consideration for 'sound structures'. Community building with residents and businesses as well as other artists and builders. Working as much with my supporters at PNCA as possible as well as the city.

Project Description and Materials:

The Gathering Project is a multidimensional and complex endeavor that relies on research, physical forms, and bureaucratic processes. For PNCA thesis criteria and scope, I will create maquettes alongside a 2-D cross pollinated diagram and access to a digital pamphlet/reference of the processes of the entire project.

Details to be included in the 2-D diagram of 'cross pollination':

Concrete from Ross Island Gravel, reclaimed- Iron oxide from Lake Oswego metals, Sustainable harvested clay from Oregon Coast, Salvaged Native Oregon White Oak from Wapato Island, reclaimed wood with Orange paint (that is Yo's favorite color) planters for more Native flora, repurposed scrap wood with metal glaze, etc.etc. TBD.

-Oak, concrete, iron oxide, reclaimed wood, Oregon clay, Cone 10 glaze, Native plants and grasses, archival research materials, diagrams, building construction/engineering guidelines. -

I have created maquettes as a final guide for finalized forms and an arranged installation diagram on a map that

conveys their circular placement, origin of idea, composition, and how I foresee them being potentially installed.

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Work Samples:

Meg Denton, current iteration of maquettes for The Gathering Project, 2024.





Meg Denton, current iteration of maquettes for The Gathering Project, 2024.



Always Becoming. Nora Naranjo-Morse. 2023.

Outside of Washington, D.C. at the National Museum of American Indian where 5 adobe style sculptural forms are representational to land, always evolving. Always becoming.

No steel or metal, where Public Art is supposed to break down with time. Not all public art needs to last forever. Nothing beautiful ever truly does, but it lasts forever in our nostalgic memories. Here lies lies - My love story to the Future-.

We as a society need to put our heads and hearts together to reconceptualize what Public Art is.



A living monument to the forest that once blanketed Manhattan Island. Collaboration with the New York City Parks.

He proposed the project in 1965. After extensive research on New York's botany, geology, and history Sonfist and local

community members used a palette of native trees, shrubs, wild grasses, flowers, plants, rocks.



Even in Death, I still hold you up. Meg Denton. 2023.

Project Budget and Timeline

Maquettes and the various possible iterations of will be completed by 2024 thesis defense and will cost around \$200. The digital reference of the entire process outside of the PNCA portion and the 2-D cross pollination diagram to be completed by the same time and created over the summer of 2024.

Artist Statement

Megita Amaranth Denton—An artist's statement/bio is an act of love and offering.

Indigenous Intermedia artist hailing from the Southwest, embedded into the Pacific Northwest. My practice is driven by collaboration, ecological solutions via detritus and a hunter-gatherer ethos. I flow through a plethora of mediums. My background as an agriculturalist is woven deeply into my artistic practice. I am reclaiming my artistic research to re-design the landscape in efforts to exemplify the interconnectedness of beings.

I am building on the elevation of my cultural perspective to evoke a powerful sense of nostalgia that emits joy, contemplation, connection, and inspiration. Land is the mesa from which I push and pull my art from.

[Able Farms PDX](#)

The Gathering Project

Megita Denton, Thesis Abstract

At its core, The Gathering Project is an inclusive reimagining of the public art process through holistic, conceptual, and philosophical designs that are rooted in Indigenous philosophies, in pursuit of transformative change. Such philosophies honor that all beings "have a seat at the table," which denies human exceptionalism, and provides sacred ways of recognizing the land as the connector of all beings. How we steward land, interact with her, and live alongside her directly sculpts the physical, spiritual, and metaphysical realities of our existence. This way of being with the land is the antithesis of capitalism. I am trying to "gather" all of these factors, elements and beings together to reconceptualize how we engage, finance, view, design, and allow public art in common spaces. The Gathering Project is shedding light on public land art processes for the artist, viewer, and gatekeepers of public art. My arrow is pointing to the resculpting of this process in pursuit of an evolution of public art accessibility for all stakeholders. All elements of my thesis, *The Gathering Project*, were created at Camp Colton and at my home studio, Able Farms PDX, due to unfortunate inadequacies of PNCA resources and facilities.


This project presents a temporary installation as an artistic concept which suggests alternative ways of engaging with the public art process and design. The four tangible elements are:

The Four Elements

Wind/Air - Schematic Diagram

Earth - Bio-Anchors (ecologically informed sculptures)

Water - Living Thesis Document

Fire - Manifesto, *↳ Outside of Art* 

The Gathering Project explores how an independent artist navigates the public art process and encourages viewers to rethink the design and production of public art in this city's current system.

The Gathering Project

Megita Denton, Intermedia, Oral Presentation-Living
Thesis-Manifesto-Fall 2024

Bonjour & Ya etna e' ta yah,

Welcome to *The Gathering Project*.

My name is Megita Amaranth Denton. I am a true Intermedia artist working in a 'zigzag stitch fashion' threading social, artistic, and philosophical mediums. I use my land stewardship background as an environmentalist and agriculturalist, my Indigeneity, and my community empowerment skills to evolve art, to problem solve, to collaborate, and agitate broken systems. The artist can be a thinker and or disrupter¹. I am the lovechild of a French woman and Coahuiltecan man. I mention my ancestry for it is the origin of my essence, passion, and one of the key threads within *The Gathering Project*.

As I use a hunter-gatherer ethos in my artistic practice, I have used this same 'tool' to create *The Gathering Project*. My artistic intent and role is to create a sense of being with Nature's own unique vibration and movement in tandem with human existence, using a mise' en place (gathering) technique.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the land we exist with and the tribes who have cared for her since antiquity - Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other tribes and bands. I stand alongside you.

I also would like to thank Shir Grisanti, Gary Datka, Nora Norenjo-Morse, and Sloane McNulty, Megan Mckissack, Monica & Jade of The Writers Block, Diana Oropeza, Mychelle Mortiz, and many others, for their wisdom, guidance, and belief in me. I see you, I respect you, and am forever grateful.

¹Cordova, V.F. *How it is: Native American Philosophy of V.F. Cordova*. Ethics from an Artist's Point of View. University of Arizona. 2007, 23.

Project introduction/Intent

At its core, The Gathering Project is an inclusive reimagining of the public art process through holistic, conceptual, and philosophical designs that are rooted in Indigenous philosophies, in pursuit of transformative change. Such philosophies honor that all beings "have a seat at the table," which denies human exceptionalism, and provides sacred ways of recognizing the land as the connector of all beings. How we steward land, interact with her, and live alongside her directly sculpts the physical, spiritual, and metaphysical realities of our existence. This way of being with the land is the antithesis of Capitalism, which reconstructs the broken power dynamics that currently have a hold on the city, institutions, and their monetary throathold. I am trying to "gather" all of these factors, elements and beings together to reconceptualize how we engage, finance, view, design, and allow public art in common spaces. The Gathering Project is shedding light on public land art processes for the artist, viewer, and gatekeepers of public art. My arrow is pointing to the resculpting of this process in pursuit of an evolution of public art accessibility for all stakeholders.

Overview of conceptual areas of inquiry

This project presents a temporary installation as an artistic concept which suggests alternative ways of engaging with the public art process and design. There will be key four elements introduced that define this project. The Gathering Project was originally intended for installation on The Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA) campus, which is currently owned by Portland City Parks. It is a site that was once Indigenous land and continues to reflect spatial and social tensions. The project, although initially rejected as a thesis proposal, was reshaped to include a critical discussion on how urbanism and capitalism affect artistic processes. It explores how academic systems under the forces of capitalism can hinder or deny artistic expression that honor Indigenous histories and experiences. Ultimately, *The Gathering Project* encourages viewers to rethink the design and production of public art by

showcasing Indigenous design principles and promoting inclusivity in shaping land and city parks. It promotes creating spaces where active artists and cultural bearers can have a voice in both academic and public realms.

Formal descriptions of works-

The project consists of four tangible elements: a schematic design of the process (wind/air); the bio-anchors (earth); a living thesis document (water); and a manifesto (fire). The elemental 'attache' to each of these are an homage to my Coahuiltecan Tribal Origin story symbolism.

The added components of photogrammetry, projections, and generated images that I am presenting today round out the full installation experience and display my ability to pivot and be playful with installation art as another medium. It, like many other disciplines of contemporary Indigenous artwork, moves beyond the stereotype of what has been historically associated with Native American art. Since the red tape of installing the bio-anchors outside is complicated and a process which I am still in the midst of, I instead leaned into emerging technologies to show them and myself on another plane.

This document is intended to be a teaching tool, for the artist, institution, and city. To show this process and to signify and enact the Indigenous design and inclusivity when sculpting land and city parks-which allows active artists and cultural bearers to thrive within academic and public spaces. Many organizations federally and locally are looking to such 'artists' to unite humans and Nature in efforts to not only solve the climate catastrophes and social issues but to thread the gap between them. - the interconnectedness - Threading land/human and research process/art together.

The Four Elements

Wind/Air - Schematic Diagram

Earth - Bio-Anchors (ecologically informed sculptures)

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Fire - Manifesto, *↔ Outside of Art* 

I. Schematic Design (Wind/Air)

The first element is a schematic design, which is a subconscious outline of *The Gathering Project*, depicting inner thoughts, hurdles, spiritual, and metaphysical inner "coeur" happenings. Similar to a fall wind signaling change, this work flowed and was imbued as the process continued to shift. It is a circling timeline using ink, chalk, drawings, and text. It is intended as a glimpse into my process and mind that was created in tandem with the other components, to map out the process whilst keeping the artistic energy from one component circulating to the next, hence my 'zigzag stitch process'. Although an indirect work of the conceptual aspect of *The Gathering Project*, it can stand alone as a realized and referential completed artwork. Artists I am looking towards with this work are Edgar Heap of Birds, Mark Lombardi, and Patti Smith. Edgar Heap of Birds uses text and systems of Indigenous suppression as fuel for large-scale outdoor public artworks reclaiming physical and spiritual space, while Mark Lombardi delicately creates thought processes as links on paper and visual bubbles of contained thought. Patti Smith, as activist and artist, uses juxtapositional words and poetic metaphors throughout her many mediums, she too is an Intermedia artist.

II. Bio-Anchors (Earth)audience/physical context

Bio-anchors- are designed to stabilize environmental elements in urban spaces -a medium through which to address and potentially soothe tensions created by urban development on the physical and cultural landscape of Portland. My bio-anchors are cultural and social homages that not only anchor Nature, but the humans who have sculpted our city in relevance to the NW Park Blocks via shape and color. Each work is echoing the human origin in regard to site specificity and further bridges our interconnectedness of humans to land.

All but one of these forms were created at Camp Colton due to the inadequacies of storage, shop hours, and access to resources at PNCA. They hold an ecological component, and were initially

intended for the barren space outside of the 511 building on the PNCA campus, where the ecology would have been 'anchored' with and in these forms, hence the term bio-anchors. I have designs for more using hemp, mushrooms, recycled clay, and sustainable bio-products, which I intend to create prototypes for, and all of which are created from the detritus of capitalism. Today, I am presenting four bio-anchors. These four are minimalistic sculptural designs, thoughtfully intended to age, patina, break down, and give aid to all beings. Their intent is to engage in the interconnectedness of all beings.

Work in context

The base designs are an homage to Native ancestral iconographies of communication via symbols and shapes and re-informed with a fresh perspective. They provide respite, therapeutic and aesthetic aids, in tandem with their ecological assets. They are a comfort to the harsh visual and visceral realities of city life.

An artist that I am in conversation with is Nora Noranjo-Morse specifically because she is an Indigenous interdisciplinary artist that embraces materials which naturally break down with time. I am spiritually looking to Nature (Nature as an artist-reinforcing her rightful 'seat at the table'). Phylidia Barlow and George Nakashima who both have 'gone back to the earth' have artistically inspired me with their choices of materiality, use of space, and precision of craft.

Since the vivisection of the colloquial common land birthed capitalism; how can we collectively reclaim the 'common land/commons' which is now deemed city parks to restore a place of true community or sense of belonging; whilst honoring its origin and how can we re-unite Nature and humans within that shared space that emphasizes our interconnectedness?

In addition, the process of how an artist navigates the professional public art sector towards Portland City park art work is intended to be used as a guide and nod to the inadequacy of the institutional lack of such a program as a whole. Public art within public space, specifically city parks, is the root of our 'communal' and 'free' shared spaces and a core intent to

re-discover the *The Gathering Project*.

Using *The Gathering Project* as my thesis project injects a point of view which places the observer within a network of ecologically informed structures (bio-forms) that prove spatial and social tensions exist within city parks. These pressures are generated by urbanism. My aim is to use my bio-forms as soothers aesthetically, physically, and spiritually to these tensions. I am trying to achieve the buoyancy that momentarily relieves the human spirit of burdens and allows growth of the Natural elements within their rightful space. The project demands an intensification of attention and response from the observing participant. The stimulation of experience is what I seek from my bio-anchors and transitory installment of *The Gathering Project*.

This historical, cultural, social and artistic Nature based installation relies on the one of Portland city's park substratum idea of 'leisure time'. This idea was the foundation for Olmsted Brothers architectural template for Portland City Parks, circa 1903. The Olmsted Brothers are credited to engineering and designing Portland, Oregon progressive parks among others in America.

For, *The Gathering Project* includes that luxury whilst examining the surroundings. Not putting human comfort and service above Nature. Re-inventing the landscape of recreation to one of contemplation. The designs of my bio-anchors signal cultures of the past, refudiate human exceptionalism, and aid in reconnection of humans and Nature living in the present. In a way, my project is a space for experimentation for human and Nature's behavior within a procured environment. I can only imbue it with design and thought - what is taken or perceived from this installation is beyond my control or affluence - and I want it to be. This is one of the guiding ethos for *The Gathering Project*- interconnectedness as a direct intent from indirect things. In looking beyond the landscape to the horizon, the various objects that comprise a place begin to lose some of

their solidity, at least in terms of how you apprehend their forms.²

The formal components of my bio-anchors are:

The TeePee - (8'x 3'x 2') a ¾ inch steel, teepee shaped form that holds a native plant, provides shade depending on the season and placement, and provides the visual symbol of the tribes that once inhabited our city. Painted in Sun Yellow with recycled industrial paint incorporating minimal curved lines to take the edge off of the steel aesthetics. The irony of using a harsh and unsustainable element such as metal was intended. It is derived from Nature, utilized by humans, survives weather elements, and provides a juxtaposition to an actual teepee which are made from soft materials. It is also referencing the many steel/metal artworks that sculpt our current city's public art landscape. Cultures threaded through this piece are Indigenous peoples and European settlers represented both by material and form. The contrast of material and representational pairing is a metaphor for the complex relationship between each of the two.

The Circle - (2'x 2'x 2') a cellulose and natural pigment-inoculated cement circle with embedded rebar and a steel plate per the city's' bolt and anchoring requirements. This form holds a native plant in the center of the circle and uses natural blue and pink pigments from Indigo and Iron oxide. The plant can thrive in the protected shade of the circle, the cellulose within the cement serves as a carbon sequestration, and the shape structurally provides a seat for beings. The circle shape is signaling reciprocity and the interconnectedness of all beings. Cultures threaded here are Jewish and Hellenic, threaded with the hue of blue because of its significance within both cultures.

The Bench - (2'x 4'x 2') a reclaimed wooden-core, three legged bench. The finish on this piece was done by Livia Erwin, another

² Martinez, David. *Along the Horizon a World Appears: George Morrison and the Pursuit of an American Indian Esthetic*. Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 54.

Oregon artist, in a recycled liquid copper coating that will further naturally patina with the elements. Purely intended for humans, this multiple person bench is an opportunity for residents to share space in the city, creating interactions within the community, if even for a moment. The color and coating on this shape is an ode to our Ports and waterways where Natives gathered and fished, and where many other human cultures docked their existence, going on to create the structure of our rich city. Cultures threaded here are the Black Pioneers and Chinese Americans who were both the key laborers and sweat equity in the building of our ports and the metal foundries that made Portland a viable capitalistic international site.

The Table - (2.5'x 4'x 2.5') An Oregon Native wood table with Japanese style joinery. It is currently inoculated with oyster mushroom spores and inlaid with various upcycled wood pieces for structural and artistic emphasis. Adorned with an Oregon desert Red Jasper rock, the table displays site specificity in regard to our state. The ecological aid of mushrooms will decompose organic contaminants, alongside providing food. This table, exemplifies the aspect that not all public art is or should be everlasting, as no truly good thing is or does last forever. This naturally decomposing component is a key fact in the evolution of public artworks. The shape is significant to displaying the true right angles of a square, sturdy and strong, but not incapable of breaking and going back to the earth, a metaphor to public land art's current processes and restrictions. Cultures threaded here are the Japanese Americans, directly pulling from their traditional wood joinery, simplicity, and Wabi-Sabi.

{In art, sometimes freedom can assume unlimited symbolic and spiritual character. This idea is an imperative cell within my creation of the bio-anchors. We are living in a profound and unrelenting climate crisis, and such progressive public art works or bio-anchors are not only necessary, but desired as a form of how city parks hold a significant key to the connection of humans to Nature. I deeply believe in this power of Art and

Urban Nature as an intertwined reality and change-maker. This form of art as well as artists' access to capital, academia, and societal support has been far too long suppressed in the United States, and I know this because I have traveled outside of the U.S. within academic, agricultural, and artistic organizations.)

These current designs of bio-anchors bind a revitalized existence of function for beings by anchoring environmental and aesthetic qualities in city scapes that are derelict or void of Natural components. I am threading my agricultural and land stewardship background into actualized artistic forms, which are ecologically based and emphasize the interlocking of Natural systems.

The sculptor is primarily taking an idea, selecting matter, giving it form, and through content creating a sculptural reality.

Doing my due diligence with site specificity I researched the North Park Block areas pulled geological data of weather and Lidar mapping to greater inform my bio-anchors were holistically considered.

My will as a being and artist has formed my bio-anchors sculptural content and matter. Sculptures using Nature as the force, even within my creations, has yet to be and remains a phenomenon-for the implementing my agricultural background into a landscape and architectural lens has been exciting.

III. Thesis Document (Water)Role

With this living document, I am activating artistic research and embodying myself as well as *The Gathering Project*. This is as an 'archive' - a tool for everyone to view the process and serves as a future reference. When a young person finally makes the decision to become an artist they take on a new persona. The artist, like the scientist, is a seeker of knowledge, they examine the world and portray what they learned in order to share that knowledge with their community.³ I have adopted these

³ Cordova, V.F. *How it is: Native American Philosophy of V.F. Cordova*. Ethics from an Artist's Point of View. University of Arizona, 2007, 34.

ethics and am using them within this project. An artist that I am echoing here is Yo-Yo Lin, who uses herself as the living archive of her art, much how I am here.

My entire life's work prior to devoting myself to the art world binds land stewardship to Art, where I am informed by and speaking from lived experience and knowledge of both. By using this type of research, lived experience, and learned knowledge; I have allowed art and experience with *The Gathering Project* to be the experiential archive. The 'takeaway' is this living thesis document.

The process of displaying Indigenous principles, such as Native and scientific modes of thinking and creating about the natural world are often complementary and mutually enriching, not only in their perceptions of the workings of nature but also in their perceptions for a viable future.⁴ This document, is in a way, a love letter of the possibilities around restructuring the public land based art.

With regard to understanding, igniting, and using artistic research as a medium, I am in conversation with educator and writer, Lucy Cotter and her book, *Reclaiming Artistic Research*.

shifts/levels of meaning

This flowing document has undergone several iterations. Originally the project was focused on site specificity, but has now evolved to a research and archival documentation. I am directly pulling from the larger body of the living thesis document to be adapted as *The Gathering Project* as a whole concept continues to grow. I imagine my *Gathering Project* proposal being continuously splashed/passed around from the City Parks Department, to the City's Arts and Culture Council and maybe to another entity, as the city continues to define the structure of public art funding. TBD. This bouncing around is a symptom of the broken bureaucracies of systems, resulting in problems such as refusal of responsibilities and unplanned/

⁴ Knudtson, Peter, and David Suzuki. *Wisdom of the Elders*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2006, 67.

unsupported routes for these types of independent artistic proposals. Perhaps, *The Gathering Project* can carve out an avenue for future similar proposals and allow Indigenous presence within the public art process in our city.

Here I am agitator, embodied archive, zigzag stitcher, and problem solver by way of spotlighting restrictions within.

More of Role

This process has forced self-reliance and self-conviction. Both were heavily used to gain the sculptural, content, and community cultural networking needed for such a complex project, which is still in limbo. My lived experiences as an agriculturalist, community organizer, and decades being rooted here in Portland have enabled me to reach my own educational goals with this project, thus far, and within the art world. My successes and accolades are mine and mine alone.

Such new skills that were learned and researched in this project governs much of my criteria for my manifesto. Again, some are not all artistically based. I am seeking a balance of power within systems of conflicting conditions of the 'art world' and 'artist'.

Re-designing, re-contextualizing, and honoring beings, including myself, throughout this 'temporary installation process' has forced me to reconcile my intent while integrating within the city and ecosystems surroundings. This 'cultural engineering' and collaborators from my research has aided me in confronting the project's weaknesses - cultural, social, academic and institutional education-.

My artistic research and archiving process within *The Gathering Project*, is connecting the complex, long, and impactful works of Agnes Denes and Nicolas Ganinin. Both artists whom I look to use social, land, and subtle but explosiveness of time to recenter the disengagement of humans in relation to land. *The Gathering Project* using these artists 'practice' in this way as a catapult and catalyst for change.

I have been and am recording the entire process of The Gathering Project since the Spring of 2023. Here I am intending to show the 'process' using myself as the artistic archive to navigate and engage in the Public art processes, not as just a student, but as an independent artist not under an umbrella of an organization. This archive is important because in the midst of Portland City's chaos, the current political catastrophes, I can no longer be an observer, but I must engage as an activist and artist, providing social/political critique, cultural insight, and exemplifying my ethos-of an artist's responsibility to uplift their community.

Realities to Note for Artists Considering Public Art Works within the Portland City Park System -

Portland City Parks Permitting and Process
[Portland Parks Non-Park Permit Form and Fee](#)

\$1000 non refundable fee if they accept your proposal

Professional Artist Insurance based on the criteria set by the City of Portland is required.

\$ 450 yearly with base city requirements for an independent artist

Non Permit Park Use Fee Form (NPUP) which is a mandatory Portland City Park Form for any event or public art work within a city park and at a flat rate of \$1000.00 to submit to 'cover reviewers costs'. Brought this expense to PNCA Student Council, since it our redistributed funding as a student body to cover this cost. It was approved as I explained and shared that The Gathering Project is for the entire community as a whole, although I had to propose the project for another space besides outside of PNCA, since that was no longer a possibility.

Though I have moved on professionally and artistically, some questions still remain. Why was my thesis proposal, even in its nascent stage, denied and not fostered by PNCA, as a teaching opportunity? Why is the 'scope' of a BFA student thesis so narrow?

As I swivel with *The Gathering Projects* barriers whether financial, institutional, or city related in regard to my thesis components, some events to note occurred.

A 'mural' that was quickly implemented at the site right outside of PNCA at the end of Spring term 2024. Did PNCA fund that project through the city? Put those artists under PNCA insurance since that is legally required per city law.

*City insurance assessor has this documentation of insurance provided to muralists for the NPUP form to implement the mural. When inquiring for my own purposes of insurance recommendations, Brian Wassetis, who is the City's commercial permitting coordinator, he inquired "why don't you use your schools insurance?" - my thoughts exactly. Why not?

*PNCA leases the specific site of my proposal, which renders an 'approval', so that the City is not in default of its financial and legal obligations.

And the future of my proposal, which has been passed onto the City Of Portland Arts and Culture from the Portland City Parks Department. Now my proposal hangs in the balance of the city's full control of Arts funding and the responsibilities that come with it.

Prelude to - *The Gathering Project*- overt the subvert

Shifts/context

Within learning and researching this process of public art installation as a whole and independent artist - I had to shift my relation to the site as each element changed my project and my perspective. I have spent copious exhaustible hours apart from the actual design, works, and fabrication, but in the communication and figuring out insurance, bureaucracies, and trying to cover my professional artistic 'bases' to the best of my ability. This constant learning and new awakening of my abilities, in-abilities, schedule, and redefining of my project has caused me a good deal of 'growing pains', that I am now thankful for.

Since universities often are battlefields for intellectual thought, movements, and conversations; there is still work to be done in regard to public land artworks. As a student, artist, and activist I will no longer cede space or conversations unless transformative knowledge and actions have the power to be actualized within the public art realm. Here in this thesis, is the perfect opportunity to emphasize this fact and highlight *The Gathering Project*, as a proposal for the advancement of this specific issue.

I see *The Gathering Project* as the alternative proposal mentioned above, but also another gateway to unlatch the possibilities of independent artists to recreate our city's public land parks and spaces into a continually artistic and cultural hub—here within lies the evolution.

I acknowledge that each institution is a beast unto itself. The university/institution is a business and must operate on the motive of profit, regardless of their self proposed image, it is their actions or lack thereof that defines them. They as businesses have a vested interest in upholding 'their own thinking'. The hurdles that I have encountered come at a direct intersection with PNCA's philosophical objectives and those of my Intermedia Program.

The training, experience, support, mentorship, and education that I so desired and needed for the public art processes does not currently exist. The institution has failed me in my mis-education. I mention these inadequacies as hurdles, for I hope that this rectifies the institutions actions for future artists and to emancipates them from doubt and uncertainties when working with such hurdles.

Natural and Ancient laws of my Indigeneity and traditions existed before Pangea. 'Law' is made by those who have the power to enforce the laws they have written. There are those within the confines of this communal paradigm of capitalistic realities that choose to adopt and live by such laws and there are those who choose to break them. Not as an action of ignorance or intended violence, but as a means to evolve what is already broken. Again, my artistic responsibility is to propose

alternatives, not only for Public Art; its forms and processes, but to generate other ideas that usually do not fit or seek the consensus. This indirect movement to recognize this hurdle of *The Gathering Project* is also a part of the process.

Finding my own balance and drive for this project started in Spring of 2023, when I began researching Portland as a city from its inception and antiquity. Funneling the specific site inhabitants and which cultures/beings sculpted it. I set up a fully self led and archivist curated research sessions, collaborations, and assistance from and with these supportive organizations:

Black Pioneers of Oregon
Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
Jewish Museum of Oregon
Japanese American Museum of Oregon
Bureau of Land Management
Chinese American Museum of Oregon
Hellenic American Cultural Center and Museum
Portland Pearl Neighborhood Association
Oregon Historical Society
JBD Architecture
Potluck in the Park
Stelo Arts
Lewis & Clark Small Business Legal Clinic

These research endeavors ahead of my thesis year of 2024, resulted in a larger scale active community collaboration, in the form of *The Gathering Project* collaborators and possible stakeholders in this overreaching project. I was granted council, networking, and support from these outfits, as they believe in the project and feel like it holds merit. Although *The Gathering Project* is complex in its many facets - each component is parallel and dynamic in relation to each other. This historical research component is an integral straw in my artistic research but also has informed my process regarding site specificity.

Processing the Processes towards Manifestation Self Critique

This process has forced self-reliance and self-conviction. Both were heavily used to gain the sculptural, content, and community cultural networking needed for such a complex project. My lived experiences as an agriculturalist, community organizer, and decades being rooted here in Portland have enabled me to reach my own educational goals with this project, and within the art world. My successes and accolades are mine and mine alone. Such new skills that were learned and researched in this project governs much of the criteria for my manifesto. I am seeking a balance of power within systems of conflicting conditions of the 'art world' and 'artist'.

Holding onto my integrity while navigating this complex process has been key in my artistic evolution. This is mine and mine alone. Each artist must hold onto this agency; for each project and powers that be - inevitably pass, change, and end. This is where new beginnings and redesigns can occur.

Raise your hands if you are a struggling artist

With any passion project, self doubt and challenges will ensue - but - this is an opportunity to recircle with exactly what you are intending to do and what you honestly want.

To be an artist that challenges any system or institution is not an easy way. We have chosen a difficult path. Keep your truth, composure, and focus. My hope is that this manifesto and entire project sets ablaze artistic passion projects that create joy, contemplation, and thoughtful societal critique.

Lower your hands

Institutional, legal, and social orders exist as fine lines-sometimes equal, sometimes parallel, each affecting the other. Art, and our roles as artists, is to respond to such orders and laws as a direct call for societal and inner self change, hence the impetus for my Manifesto.

IV. Manifesto (Fire)

(In my most vulnerable moment as a student navigating this project alone, an adult freshly divorced and houseless, and an emerging professional artist still seeking an undergraduate degree; I was in dire straits, so I sought guidance from one of my artistic mentors, Nora Norenjo-Morse. She shared some ancestral knowledge, which I dare not speak the sacred Tewa, Santa Clara Pueblo language but it can be summarized as -"Reach deep down into the man and woman spirit within you and pull that power forward." (Santa Clara Pueblo). So with this new knowledge, the re-igniting of my passion for *The Gathering Project*, birthed my manifesto, *Outside of Art*.

As life continues and our existence bends to capitalism, I have noticed that to exist as an artist warrants wisdom and knowledge that isn't taught or learned on an institutional level. These points of my manifesto evolved outside of art school, but I share them as a tool, inspiration, and call for change. Here I am re-defining the 'manifesto' as a narrative with parallel tendencies in modern art and life, leaning away from previous manifestos that structurally correspond to direct action.

↔ OUTSIDE OF ART →

A Manifesto for reclaiming artistic integrity/space

↔ The Gathering Project, is a direct reclamation of a once Indigenous space. Reclaiming what public art is, can be, who designs it, who decides its existence, and embeds Indigenous presence within the process. The Time to Rise has been Engaged. **The TeePee.**

↔ My bio-anchors go beyond aesthetic impact & design - into an ecological aid. These bio-anchors are creating new contemporary forms of knowledge within the art realm and are 'forward leaning' outside the colonial notion of 'Indigenous Art'. The interconnectedness of humans within Nature is the foundation of

The Gathering Project and the concept for my bio-anchors. **The Bench.**

⌘Freedom of artistic expression is a gift to the world for and with every culture in human existence. *The Gathering Project* as an artistic research process manifests the power to profoundly use voice and action in art and is a call to "reach deep within you to pull the powerful spirit energy forward" for it is our responsibility to evolve art and social consciousness as artists. **The Table.**

⊕Trust your instinct and heed your inner voice. Self reliance is key to artistic survival, in a country that has yet to financially and socially support artistic research & 'the artist'. The fork in the road of doing public art materially or continuing research no longer should be divided - bridging the gap between these processes which mirror the connection of humans to nature. As both scenarios are ever evolving and changing the landscape of our existence. In continuous reciprocity we circle in these truths. **The Circle.**

Intent physical context of work

The Gathering Project, proposes a conceptual template for a temporary outdoor public installation. A reclaiming of a once Indigenous space that is now 'derelict' and under-utilized. The site of the Northwest Portland Park Blocks is within an environment charged with unpredictable consequences from the community, where gestures of student life, kindness, and Portland 'homelessness' cross with those of anger, crisis, and aggression. The Gathering Project is intended to satiate the need of these community groups and Nature that exists within whilst using artistic research as an invitation to accept 'alternate knowledge' {ancestral and lived} as Art in a forward leaning way. The entire public art installation process that an individual artist is exposed to in Portland, Oregon: is one of the lines of inquiry and a direct reference to future artists. Another is the "embodied material knowledge" or auto-experience as the unfolding component to the public art process is experienced.⁵

⁵ Cotter, Lucy. *Reclaiming Artistic Research*. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2019, 24.

Using *The Gathering Project* as my thesis project injects a point of view which places the observer within a network of ecologically informed structures (bio-forms) that prove spatial and social tensions exist within city parks. These pressures are generated by urbanism. My aim is to use my bio-forms as soothers aesthetically, physically, and spiritually to these tensions. I am trying to achieve the buoyancy that momentarily relieves the human spirit of burdens and allows growth of the Natural elements within their rightful space. The project demands an intensification of attention and response from the observing participant. The stimulation of experience is what I seek from For, *The Gathering Project* includes that luxury whilst examining the surroundings. Not putting human comfort and service above Nature. Re-inventing the landscape of recreation to one of contemplation. In a way, my project is a space for experimentation for human and Nature's behavior within a procured environment. I can only imbue it with design and thought - what is taken or perceived from this installation is beyond my control or affluence - and I want it to be.

The proposed site/parks are communal space, even within its full Indigenous human existence and through its cultural colonization molding, it is and always has been, and shall never be owned by any being at all. It is a truly communal space. These types of projects in city parks reinvent and showcase the power of parks as a gathering space that once was 'common land'. Where the shift of an unused, abandoned, 'dead' or abused space circles into one of the engagement of all living beings necessary for cultural change and vibrant communities. *The Gathering Project* and these parks quell that human base-need of building community around the space where art can and should exist. Connecting humans to Nature once again can sometimes be a political and activist path.

Such redefining parks alongside some 'gorilla style' public art works currently exist, although mostly outside of the United States, much like the financial and institutional artistic research. Some notable examples that pay homage to land, ancestry, and thoughtful space occupation are:

*Atelier Acanthe & Gilles Clement, Le Domaine du Rayol, France
1997. <https://www.domainedurayol.org/en/> ⁶

*Hargreaves Associates, Plan for the Guadalupe River Park, U.S.,
1998. <https://www.hargreaves.com/work/guadalupe-river-park/> ⁷

Perhaps 'guerilla style' art has a similar, perhaps stronger, less bureaucratic, and direct way of connection in public spaces. The difference in the route in which I am 'legally' entering in with *The Gathering Project*, is asking (against my Indigeniety) for permission to be a part of a process in which I inherently and ancestrally already a part of. It is a direct channel of artistic expression that I am hoping to break apart and rebuild better which includes public, private, and Sacred places.

Possible Futures and Public Art Intervention

directions/questions

As *The Gathering Project* completes its phase as a BFA thesis, it is still in limbo as a temporary art installation and concept in regard to the city. As it was passed as a proposal from Portland City Parks to the desk of the Portland City of Arts and Culture, it currently has received the preliminary approval from the City Arts & Culture and will now continue with processing my application. It will be reviewed by PP&R and assigned a project manager. TBD. I will see the project to its next 'roadblock', and hope that my work will create space for more access to getting public land art within the city and access to that process as an independent artist not under any 'umbrella', as well as solidifying Indigenous presence and philosophy within the process. Having all beings at the seat of the table, evolving public land art within the city as we as a city deal with the growing pains of climate crisis, houselessness, a detrimental administration, and tethered finances. I wonder how I may continue being an artist that desires to change the

⁶Cerver, Farncisico, *The Big Book of Environmental Design*, Atrium International, Barcelona Spain, 2000,78.

⁷Cerver, Farncisico, *The Big Book of Environmental Design*, Atrium International, Barcelona Spain, 2000,52.

landscape of not only Portland Public parks in regard to art, but other cities, and how my two professional worlds of land and art can continue to evolve in tandem? My intent and hope as an artist remains even stronger - and that is to evolve art, society, and our communities through collaboration. The artist, in bringing forth new creations, in effect is assisting in the creation of the world.⁸ The sculptor is primarily taking an idea, selecting matter, giving it form, and through content creating a sculptural reality.⁹ What if I wasn't Indigenous? Or had lifelong working knowledge as a land steward? Or a formal art degree? How would an artist go about entering into public land based art spaces?

⁸ Cordova, V.F. *How it is: Native American Philosophy of V.F. Cordova. Ethics from an Artist's Point of View.* University of Arizona, 2007, 92.

⁹ Kelly, James. *The Sculptural Idea*, 3rd Edition. Waveland Press, Illinois, 1986, 103.

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