

Audio Transcript: Networks of Care Can and Should Be Contagious

December 21, 2020

Solana Chehtman:

Hello, everyone. Good evening, and thank you for joining us for our conversation, Networks of Care Can and Should Be Contagious. My name is Solana Chehtman. I'm the director of civic programs here at The Shed, as well as the organizer of our *Up Close* digital commissioning series. I am a Latina woman with short black, grayish hair, wearing an electric blue dress and red lipstick. Behind me are a couple of plants and some framed artwork from good artist friends, mostly in dark colors with some primary colors as well, which bring my home office so much joy. I want to start by letting you know that this digital conversation will include live captioning through a certified CART or Communication Access Real-time Translation provider, so feel free to activate captions by clicking on the bottom right of your Zoom screen. We will also have American Sign Language interpretation. And thank you so much for all of our access workers for being here. Finally, I and the rest of the group will also be providing verbal descriptions of ourselves and any other onscreen materials as things come up. As I said, thanks to our access workers, and also to our artists and our disability arts consultants for guiding us in the path to become a truly inclusive and equitable 21st-century organization for the arts. If you need anything else to fully participate today, or if you have any questions or comments now or at any point during the event, please let us know by clicking on the Q & A button also at the bottom right of your screen, or by reaching out to the email members@theshed.org and we'll try our best to address it. And I believe we've compiled some questions from you all in advance, but feel free to add any extra ones as they come up, and we'll try to get to them within the hour. I just wanna let you know also that the event will be recorded, so you will be able to come back to it at a later date, as well. I am delighted to be here with you all tonight, sharing space and most importantly getting to hear the reflections and exchange between these outstanding artists on the notions of collective care, community building of well-being, and why now, more than ever, we have so much to keep learning and keep doing. This conversation is taking place as a preview of the artists' collaborative piece, *Phases and the In-Betweens*, which will debut on our website on January 13 and evolve and transform until February 11. And it will be our 12th commission as part of *Up Close*, a program that was born this past April as a digital platform for artists' creativity in the midst of Covid-19, and as a platform has provided space for mourning, for joy, for questioning, for reflection. And we hope to continue doing so in 2021. I'd like to thank a number of our supporters who make the *Up Close* program possible, M&T Bank, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, who have all provided generous support, as well as our own Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch Commissioning Fund and the Shed Commissioners. I also want to thank the Howard Gilman Foundation for providing the Zoom platform that we will be using for this evening's conversation. And lastly, before I introduce our wonderful speakers, I want to welcome and thank very particularly all of our Shed members joining today. Many of you have been with our organization since before we opened in 2019, and you are all so important to us. You make our work happen and possible, and we hope you will enjoy tonight's conversation, as well as the future programming that we have in store for you particularly. And now, yes to our wonderful speakers. We are joined today by our moderator, Kevin Gotkin, who is NYU visiting

assistant professor of media, culture, and communication, co-founder of the Disability Arts Taskforce, and one of the most knowledgeable and generous with that knowledge people that I've had the privilege of learning from about disability artistry and activism. We are also joined by Ezra and Noah Benus, the New York City-based artists behind Brothers Sick, a sibling artistic collaboration on disability justice, illness, and care, as well as educators, curators, and activists. Ezra is currently a SHIFT artist-in-residence at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Project Space, and Noah is completing his masters in visual arts education at City College. We are also joined by Yo-Yo Lin, a Taiwanese American, interdisciplinary media artist who explores the possibilities of self-knowledge, using multimedia and live performance to create what she calls meditative "memoryscapes." She was a 2019 "Access" artist in residence at Eyebeam, and has very recently been announced as a member of our new Shed *Open Call* cohort, with her performance coming up in summer 2022. And we cannot wait to work with Yo-Yo again in that context, we're so excited. And last, but definitely not least, Danilo Machado, a poet, curator, and critic born in Medellín, Colombia, and currently living in Brooklyn. He's a 2020–21 Poetry Project Emerge-Surface-Be Fellow, and the co-founder and co-curator of the chapbook/broadside fundraiser already felt, poems in revolt and bounty, and is currently working as curatorial assistant at Socrates Sculpture Park. [Their] most recent exhibition was *support structures*, presented virtually by the 8th Floor and featuring the artists of Art Beyond Sight's Art and Disability Residency. Thank you all so very much for being here. I cannot wait. And I'll pass it off to Kevin. I'll see you later, bye, thanks.

Kevin Gotkin:

Thank you, Solana! Hello hello hello! This is Kevin Gotkin. I am a scruffy white person with short brown hair. I am wearing a black mock turtleneck with a thin silver chain, dangly gold earring. And I'm using a background. It's an image from Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, from a week ago. And it shows a tiny dot that is Saturn, on top of another tiny dot that is Jupiter. And they are having a little moment in conjunction tonight. And I just, I think what you'll find tonight, this event, is that accessibility is not something we do at the beginning and then get out of the way, but something that actually generates new forms of aesthetics and new kinds of artistry. So, I just want to mention a few of the forms of access here in this Zoom event. So, in the bottom of your window, there's a button that says Live Transcript, where you can find real-time captions. So you'll click that, and then click Show Subtitles, if you need those. The view for you is, it's called Side by Side mode. So there's these two vertical lines that separate the video or, actually, when we go into slides in a second, we'll go into that Side by Side view. And if you need the interpreters, you can pin them, but you can also drag that side-by-side view to the left of your screen so that they get larger. We're also gonna pause a few times so that our interpreters switch. So I'll just pause us then, and I also just invite you, maybe during those pauses and now, to just get in touch with your own access needs even if that is getting in touch with a sensation that's happening for you in your body-mind right now. The Shed team is incredible with running this event, but if a glitch does occur, we wanted to maybe just offer a little contemplative space for the glitches that seem to always crop up. So, let's say something happens that makes us pause, you might just wanna think about the moon, which is in its first quarter. That's a one-day event, unlike other phases, and it's waxing. So if we hit a glitch and we need to pause, maybe that's something we can all contemplate together. So, I'm gonna share some slides and get us

started here. Let's get this. Okay, so it is such an honor to be with these incredible artists. So the first question for all of you is, how did this work that you're gonna talk about today, how did it begin? Where did your collaboration start?

Ezra Benus:

Hi, Kevin. This is Ezra speaking. I am one of the two Brothers Sick, along with Noah, who will speak in a second. I'm a white Ashkenazi Jewish person living in Brooklyn on Lenape land. And I'm in my bedroom. And back of me is a white wall with some pink and blue artworks, a poster and a painting, and then another gilded-framed painting. And right above my left shoulder are some plants and a lamp sitting on a bamboo shelf. And to my right, just in this little corner here, you can see a peek of a canvas that I started painting. It's sort of a dark green. And I'm wearing a black turtleneck, as is the attire for tonight? I want to just thank everyone for being here as well. And just to give a little background of how we came to be, we're gonna go through these slides and Noah and I are gonna just mention a couple of more recent works from this year that sort of led to this thinking, and give a little background on that. And Yo-Yo Lin will be sharing some of her work, and sort of the ways that the things she's been thinking about make it into this work as well. And Danilo Machado will be talking about some projects that they're working on as well. And then we'll just close with a couple of slides giving you a very brief preview of still images, of sketches of the work that will be, that we all will be premiering called *Phases and the In-Betweens*, next month. So, I will share just quickly, we're called the Brothers Sick. And we were approached by Solana in, at the end of the summer to think about work that we, something new that we can explore during the pandemic through an online format. And as sick and disabled artists, both Noah and I have been thinking around topics and relationships with care and illness for a long time. We formed Brothers Sick a few years ago, after a learning from an artist, Gregg Bordowitz, who mentioned something around an army of people with HIV and AIDS, they're, we need to continue hearing from them throughout, from back when they were an activist to today, and that really stuck with us. And it also goes to another, it kind of comes out of another moment during the AIDS pandemic, the epidemic, from a Queers Read This poster called—a manifesto—called *An Army of Lovers Can't Lose*. And with that ethos and lineage, it's important for us to share that so many artists who are living now, who have passed, and ancestors who have come before us, made all this work possible. So that's a big background to the ways that Noah and I approached our work, as two people looking back, looking to the present, and the future about what it means to live in illness, as we all, and as we all do. As we all have and as we all will continue to be. And...

Kevin Gotkin:

Ezra, can I, sorry, can I just pause for one second so our interpreters can switch. All right.

Ezra Benus:

Great. I'm gonna pass it to Noah to share the first two works on this slide.

Noah Benus:

Hi, this is Noah, the other half of Brothers Sick. I am a white Ashkenazi male that looks like Ezra, with dark hair wearing a black turtleneck. I'm in a well-lit room with a white wall and a silver lamp over my left shoulder or my right

shoulder. I'm not sure how the camera situates it on Zoom. The first slide is two images formatted the same with different text on two blue face masks, centered in frame, arranged like a blue equals sign on a pale yellow background. The masks each have a red typed message on the fabric. Masks read, "An army of the sick can't be defeated. To be scared of the sick is to be scared of the living. Networks of care can and should also be contagious. Illness finds us all, but care unfortunately does not." So these came about at the very beginning of our experiencing quarantine and the pandemic. It was about a month after, kind of, New York City started shutting down. We were approached by Visual AIDS to host a web gallery of works from their archive. And as a response, Ezra and I were thinking about what care looks like in private, and what care looks like in public, and how that relationship of care is enacted in times of global pandemics. So, we were referencing, obviously, the mask, which is something that we know continues to save lives, yet is a contentious subject for some. And we really decided to focus on that as a symbol of what this pandemic, of what care, at the simplest form, looks like in this pandemic. And, so we were approaching a new format of digital works which was interesting for us and thinking about broadening the networks of care through our virtual galleries or through online art-sharing. So I think there was a little, I think on the next slide, Ezra, if you wanna describe the other works and how we transitioned from Visual AIDS to Shape Arts.

Ezra Benus:

Yeah. So Noah and I, thanks, Noah. This is Ezra speaking again. Visual AIDS is a near-and-dear arts nonprofit that supports artists with HIV and AIDS and has an archive of a lot of artists who are working through so many subjects and I really encourage everyone to go look. Shape Arts is another arts organization that invited Noah and I to respond to this prompt of an exhibition titled *The Future is Loading...*, with three periods after it. Thinking through inviting artists across disability communities and for all of us to respond to, "What does the future look like?" But for, I think Noah and I, our future is really, is about a present, and if we can't address the present needs, then there is no future. And what we come to think in our work is our experiences are moving through time and space as sick and disabled people in this pandemic. So, I'm gonna speak for Noah as well just on this that most of the time we leave our apartments to go out is to our medical appointments. Which are on a calendar, so become this sort of ritualized experience of outing, of receiving care, and also of navigating and negotiating this sort of medical gaze and medicalization of experience of that. But also to understand that, we are also quite privileged to access care in this time when care is also, in this world and this country that does not provide equal and equitable care. And so I just want to echo that, like, the ways that we are thinking through all this is from our perspective of the purview that we have, literally just in front of us. So the images that we use are from our actual times in the hospital. So they might look like stock photos, but they're actually from these intimate experiences of our personal care regimen. So, of the two slides on here are digital images. And one is an image on the left with a beige background, showing two IV infusion machines aligned in the center. The one on the left side is upright, and the one on the right side is, no, on the right side, is mirrored upside down. Two medication IV drip bags hang on the top loops of the IV pole with curving tubes connecting to the machine. It has a blue screen displaying text, some of which reads, "Give care take care," along with other medicine information. On both the left and right side of the

machines' digital display are numbers "20 20." Red text frames images of the IV pole which reads, "An army of the sick can't be defeated," twice with black equilateral triangles in each corner pointing in the clockwise direction of the border text. The image on the right, the digital image on the right, is an image in variance of gray-blue scale reminiscent of X-ray results, showing a glaring fluorescent room with five empty hospital beds and chairs on a diagonal arranged from bottom right of the image to the middle left section. The text on top reads, "Networks of Care Can and Should Be Contagious," and is layered from top right to bottom right of the image in transparent red and gray-shaded font. Each bed stall has numbered plaques from left to right numbering 8, 9, 10, 11 above the abstract floral patterned curtains that separate each stall. And to reference the ways, we are also looking to emptiness, to fullness, to being in space, sharing space amongst others in a pandemic, in these places of care, I also want to harken to the symbols that we included in the left image. The black triangles are taken from a group in Britain of disabled activists who were repurposing the black triangle, which was a symbol that the Nazis identified, had included on clothing for disabled prisoners, and have kind of taken it to become a symbol of disability resistance. And so we want to include that in here. And all this is to share that we are very much looking to others. We want to make work within community, for community, and by community. And the way Noah and I understand, nothing is only from our perspective. And it was really important for us to include other people. So when Solana asked us to create a new piece, of course, we start to think, "Who do we want to collaborate with this time?" And so we then approached Yo-Yo Lin and Danilo Machado. And I'll just, I'll pass it to Yo-Yo.

Yo-Yo Lin:

Hi, my name is Yo-Yo Lin. I am an interdisciplinary artist. I am Taiwanese American, I have newly dyed and cut purple hair right now. I have an earring that is a small moon on this side, and a small star on this side, which I'm very excited about. I'm also calling in from Taipei, Taiwan. So it's a bit early for me. And that is also considered Atayal territory. I'm also going to be sharing some of my work with you today. And right now, on the screen, is a GIF of three different circles, each of them filling up in different increments and different portions. So my practice engages with revealing and revaluing of realities, realities that are often unspeakable or rendered invisible. I create openings into these realities in the form of spaces, performances, or tools. So, this is a tool I created called the *Resilience Journal*, and it utilizes soft data tracking as a way of holding space and building language for illness. So in this, I'm tracking seven different dimensions of my illness. And the dimensions range from chronic pain levels to social pressures, to the number of times I ask for help. So this has been a way to understand my illness experience without being medicalized, and a ritual for me to present, to be present with my chronic illness. And in many ways, it has also become a form of tracking the number of times I ask for and receive care. So it's also been an experiment in seeing the ways in which my illness presents itself in daily life with and in relationship with others. And I think of, processes like these have always been something I've been really interested in because there's so very limited language, when it comes to talking about experiences like illness and pain and trauma. And I think creating spaces like this in which we can hold these experiences is a form of resistance and is a form of creating rituals. And thinking about how rituals are a way of creating more expansiveness in how we perceive time is something I've been

really interested in. And if you go on to the next slide, this was a show that was supposed to open in March that was closed due to the pandemic. This was a show that Ezra actually curated. And in the show, I was showing the *Resilience Journal*, which is on the right in a little wooden frame. So, yeah, like, originally, this was something that I would do in my own time and was something very private but it became very clear that this personal journal of mine was something that could actually be an opening point for discussion and an opening point for figuring out ways of talking about pain and illness. So, yeah, that's why it was incorporated into the show. And on the left of that wooden frame is another wooden frame with a wooden sculpture which is essentially the same visualization but cut into a piece of wood. And yeah, I'm really interested in finding the textual and the visual in sculptural language for abstract experiences like pain and medical trauma. And if you go on to the next slide, I have this GIF playing. I've been exploring disability aesthetics in digital media and creating performances that don't adhere to normative standards of performativity and challenge the way we use technology. So, this GIF is a moment in a performance entitled *Glitchuals* by me, Pelenekeke Brown, and Kevin Gotkin. So, yeah, exploring the glitch as a disability aesthetic and how the performance pays homage to the crip ritual of being together through the internet, transcending time, space, and borders through digital tools. And, yeah, and just like, wanted to reiterate how digital and virtual space has long been a place of crip wisdom, joy, and community gathering. So, this GIF is of multiple windows open in a computer desktop and is composed of windows of two dancers. The dancers perform in their rooms, lighting candles, washing their hands, offering fruits to the camera. There is a spinning rainbow wheel in the center. The image distorts into a liquid-like glitch. So yeah, that's like a little bit of my work. And I'm really excited to introduce Danilo, who will be sharing some of their work next.

danilo machado:

Thanks, Yo-Yo. And thanks all for being here. I'm so glad to share this space with everybody. My name is Danilo. My pronouns are he and they. And I am a Brown person, sitting in my bedroom, across the hall from Ezra's bedroom, in a room with pink walls. To, beside me is a black shelf, holding a postcard by Jenny Holzer reading, "words tend to be inadequate," a plant and a small painting by my friend, Becks Hutcher. I'm also wearing a black turtleneck and have a black mustache, black hair, and thin blue glasses, round glasses, and I'm wearing earrings and a necklace with sort of cosmic-inspired details borrowed from my partner's collection. And I wanted to share a few sort of pandemic-era projects I'm really proud of and excited about, and that sort of touch upon some of the continued ways that each of us work in our own individual practice, but most importantly, I think, collaboratively. And so this first slide has an image of a painting by Amaryllis DeJesus Moleski. And it is featured in the upcoming show *Even there, there are stars*. The painting is this celestial, starry, fluid composition, with limbs and heads between mountains, moons, mouths, and hands. Different celestial elements along with shades of pastels, pink and green and purple in gradient and a text that reads, "Even there, there are stars." So for this exhibition, which was originally planned for May and is now gonna be opening in January at CUE Art Foundation, I was selected to write, to contribute to the catalogue for the exhibition before it was mounted. And working with my mentor, Jillian, we sort of discussed this wish to both embody the ethos of the exhibition, which is about queer and trans and Brown

and femme futures and futurity. And so, how do you embody ethos in a piece of writing? And also, to sort of meet both of my practices in the middle. So I definitely consider myself a poet first, but I often also [am] writing art criticism. So what does it mean to sort of ignore any sort of difference between poetry and prose, between description and analysis, which was definitely something that I was thinking a lot about with this project with Ezra, Noah, and Yo-Yo. And so, with this essay, it sort of allowed me a space to both, to collaborate with my own practices even and to see and to embody the sort of queerness and the expansiveness that the artists in the show were embodying themselves in the work. And so next, the next slide is another sort of collaboration. This is a screenshot of an Instagram post by TK Smith and it is a proof layout of the upcoming issue of *Art Papers*. And you see like, mostly four pages of the publication fully visible and little bits of two on the side as well. And you see Instagram comments and captions on the right-hand side. And the pages of the publication are in shades of brown. And one of the pages has two titles, one of which reads, "and the body, Felix, where is it?" And the other one reads, "A Living Presence." So those two titles, "and the body, Felix," is a poem I wrote, and "A Living Presence" is an essay by my friend, Rehal Kushen, and we in collaboration, wanted to have this sort of have this conversation between a poem and an essay and Felix Gonzalez-Torres's work, particularly his billboards and particularly, in the context of this upcoming issue which is around monuments, and reading his work as monuments as well as memorials. And sort of, she really explores those two ideas in her essay. But in this collaboration, we felt really strongly about not providing a hierarchy for the reader between the poem and the essay and the works of art, but instead consider them sort of equal entry points and entry points always in conversation with each other, which is another sort of approach that you'll see in how we were approaching this Shed commission. And, yeah, I'm really excited about it. It'll be out soon. And it was, for me, it's always obvious that I, my best work is done with others. And I just get really excited to sort of ignore the one author sort of myth and sort of ignore any sort of clean boundaries between genre or medium and play and queer and poke. And the last project that I'll share, so these are two images. They are screenshots from a virtual exhibition entitled *A Language for Intimacy*. They both have a black background. And this exhibition paired nine artists with nine writers and had them respond to each other's work. And this, the image on the left contains the text, Jesse Chun, which is the artist I was paired with, and a friend, with writing by Danilo Machado. And you see an image of a hanging adapted speaker, which is representative of the soundpiece that Jesse had in the exhibition. And on the bottom, you see the title, "A Language for Intimacy." On the right hand is another image. It shows a still from...

Kevin Gotkin:

danilo, can I, sorry, can I just pause us for one second while we switch interpreters? [pause] Okay, thanks, sorry.

danilo machado:

No, no worries. So, the image on the right contains a still from her video *WORKBOOK*. And then a snippet of the poem that I wrote called "ESL." And the subtitle of the poem is "For, after, and for and with Jesse Chun." And I felt really strongly about that connection because I did it, I really saw it as a conversation and a collaboration. And the poem also functioned both like, I sort of refused a line between an analysis or a response to the work and a description of it and

sort of, I think you'll see some of that in this commission as well. And just to end, I'll read these first two stanzas from the poem, which are also visible on the slide but perhaps slightly small. So I'll read them. "Forced delineation structure / Twitched militant presents / Precincts pasts futued / Fill in blanks / Work sheet correctives / Sense sensed language" Thank you, I'm excited to continue the conversation.

Noah Benus:

Kevin, would you mind going to the next slide? Thank you. So this is an original, one of our first sketches. It's a digital layout sketch of the work proposed to the Shed team. So the center image is a video still of a brain MRI scan. It's of my brain overlaid with a grayscale calendar scroll titled "New York City Recovery Index," with dates from March, related to the Covid timeline. It is situated on a light peach pink gradient background with four squares in each corner of the rectangle, two yellow on the left, one gray top, one gray on the top right, and a red square in the bottom right corner, denoting the spaces for animated GIFs or GIFs, the icons. And in between each GIF is text that reads, poetic text/ image description eight words, as a placeholder poetic descriptions. And as Danilo had mentioned earlier, as we were conceiving of this work, one of the first things we had considered was entry points into the conversation and how all of us as contributing and collaborative artists can, as well, reflect our equal space in a discussion with the format that we want to present. And so, there is no hierarchy of information present. And, I think Ezra wanted to mention something quickly, before he describes the next slide.

Ezra Benus:

Yeah, this is Ezra speaking. I wanted to reference there are many, many ways of engaging with the work. So it has text description, audio description, and the video, that's also a poem. And video work and the backgrounds will be changing over time. And Yo-Yo created the GIF backgrounds. And so all of those also think through, like, how to engage with the work or where to engage with the work, and for us, we created all this together. So, there was not, I did this and that now I'm done, and you do this, everything that we, every part that we had, we went back to one another to think through this kind of nonhierarchical form of engagement with ideas and concepts and the work. And that, for me, really comes from thinking through sort of non-Western, non-capitalist lenses of knowledge and how we can engage in what knowledge we prioritize. And I look to the Talmud, which is an ancient Jewish rabbinic oral text that had been compiled into text around 500 CE. But the real way of engagement is, there's a central text, but all the text around it is commentary and discursive. And you can enter into the Talmud at any line with any commentary, at any point. And so the point for us is really looking to the internet as this mode that offers a sort of nonhierarchical engagement into this. And for us, that was really important in creating an artwork that represented what it means to think through disability as a multiplicity. Next slide. So, this is our final slide, and then we can get more into the meat of the discussion. This slide is a screenshot that we, of a video meeting that we recently had with attendees in a grid to the right of the screen. And we're all looking intently at the shared screen, many of us with our hands and fingers resting on chins, lips, and cheeks in a thoughtful and pondering gesture. The larger image here, which our group is looking at, is a draft of *Phases and the In-Betweens* as it might appear on the Shed's site. There is a green background with a lime green background and overlay of

veiny roots spreading. The GIF fills the view of the web page window. Each of the four corners of the window contains a smaller animated loop, but here is just a still image. On the top left corner, is an empty twin-sized bed with crumpled sheets. A portion of the poem to the right reads, “new moon aligns sun.” At the top right corner of the GIF is a new moon in indigo glowing gold on a red background. Below the moon is a poem that reads, “otherwise, obscured, indirect, look, fire, work, pain, highest.” Bottom right corner is an animated pale blue figure with thin drawn lines of white and red bursting out of its heart center like a firework. The bottom left corner is a circle gradient with red hues on yellow background, signifying high pain. Between the firework figure and the posing circle is a poem that reads, “Outward sparklers burn the earth ground roots grow.” Above the red pulsing ingredient and below the bed, is a poem that reads, “Bed frame sheets like billboard like Felix spirit.” In the center of the background GIF is an embedded looped video shifting through different scenes signifying bureaucratic, medical, and environmental views of the Covid pandemic in New York City along with medical imagery from the Brothers Sick, and here is an X-ray of two hands viewed from above, palms lay flattened, and captions on the video reads, “X-rays illuminate the bones of two hands.” So this is a very static quick glimpse of one of the five times that the work is going to be shifting based on the moon cycles, the major moon cycles throughout the month. And so we’re looking to time in very different ways here and through multimodal engagement. Thank you. And these are all the slides that we’ll be sharing.

Kevin Gotkin:

This is Kevin speaking. What an amazing tour of each of your art practices. But also the way that we can see the collaborative techniques that bring you all together. Like, we can trace the ways that each of you come to meet this work. And also, what a great teaser for this piece that’s coming out in just a few weeks. So I’m just looking at the time. We don’t have a ton of time left. But I wonder if maybe you can talk a little bit about what each of you did to contribute to the piece. There was a brief outline there. But it’s really an ingenious, iterative, profoundly collaborative piece. And as you said, Ezra, it’s not as simple as like, here’s my piece and just add it in. They’re, each of them respond to each other. And, of course, each of them is opening access in a different modality, which is, like, kind of intra-collaborative, like within the piece. So maybe, and of course, each of those things are inflected by crip time, crip space, the particularities of disability aesthetics. So maybe do you wanna kind of take an opportunity just to spotlight some of those, like examples of how the piece works together?

Noah Benus:

I’ll speak quickly about the, maybe, aesthetic value of the piece and then maybe, Yo-Yo, you can speak more towards the structural elements of the web design along with anyone else that would like, that would contribute something that I’m missing. But, when I was thinking about this piece, creating with the other artists, in my mind, we were creating our own clock and it’s, there’s a way that we begin personally, that I begin, to lose track of time during this pandemic and I don’t know who else has been experiencing that. But there’s this really, kind of this monumental shift in how I experience time in relation to work, how I experience time in relation to bureaucracy. And how I experience time in relation to being sick, and being bed-bound. So there are these ele-

ments at play where there's this private conception of time, as well as a public, more state-mandated version of time, which I think we explored through phases. We originally, Ezra and I, were thinking about the moon as this very organic and natural way to track time, especially in our Jewish heritage where we look at the moon for our calendar, where our rituals are based around the moon cycles. And I think that in creating this piece, each element has its own metronome and its own rhythm that contributes. So the pacing of the video in the center is one type of rhythm, the GIFs on top, in the top and bottom corners flicker at different speeds, and the poem is read, and also it can be interpreted, as a different pace. So there, for me, the modalities of entering the piece also had to do with how you experience time in relation to how we're creating the piece.

Yo-Yo Lin:

Yeah, absolutely. I feel like—this is Yo-Yo speaking—I feel like I've gained, like, an intimate knowledge of Ezra and Noni's care rituals. And just like the way that they have amassed numerous photos and videos and, yeah, data, essentially, about their experiences going to getting care, and moving through medical institutions and moving through New York City during pandemic times and, I've been collaborating with them for this project for a few months now, and just seen over time, this Google Drive that they've compiled of all of this, yeah, like, archive of the disabled body has been a big part of this project in how I've been experiencing it. Seeing as we don't really get to hang out that often during pandemic times. So, yeah, like, working with Noni and Ezra and danilo, it became very apparent that like, in this project, we were creating these archives together, while also personally experiencing and generating our own archives and getting a glimpse of each other's archives and taking video footage from Ezra's Covid test was interesting and kind of like collaging that into the piece and getting intimate glimpses of inside hospital rooms and inside the closed curtains of hospital rooms was just like a very, just like, intimate way of seeing our bodies and each other. So, in thinking about that, I think the ways in which we've been collaborating has been also just like a deep dive into our own experiences of navigating getting care during times of pandemic and yeah, just like experiencing that through creating the GIFs and like, taking different pieces from Ezra and Noni's care rituals and also my care rituals and seeing like where they come together has been really beautiful. There's one set of GIFs that we've created that talks about the natural elements. So, a lot of my work is influenced by Taoist philosophy and culture. So, one part of Taoist philosophy talks about like, the natural elements, like water, earth, fire, air. So we've incorporated that into a set of GIFs. And Ezra and I were talking, and it became very clear that it would be so much more interesting to explore how water, like, what is the disabled form of water? Like, what is the element of water like in disability form? And we were looking through different videos and images that we had and I came across Ezra's IV drip. And I was like, oh, that's such an interesting visual to represent that element, that natural element. And also yeah, like, going through different videos of, like, our beds. Just thinking about how the bed can also be the element for earth and like, the ground that we find ourselves on, as oftentimes the bed is like that grounding space for us. So yeah, like we were just like, really trying to like tweak and like figure out ways in which we can create, yeah, just like, a kind of language and a kind of philosophy around, like, nature-based ways of engaging with disability. So, yeah, I really also wanted to talk a little bit more about how danilo's descriptions and

poems actually utilize also only eight words. And I would love for them to talk more about that too.

danilo machado:

Yeah, I think, like, part of the fun and part of the challenge was sort of thinking about ways to have the language of the piece reflect the sort of breaking of all these different binaries and all these different discrete aspects. So, it's not, there's no, there's a blurred line between the bureaucratic and the celestial, between the descriptive and the analytical, between the sort of read and the seen and sort of how to make language that both sort of grounds like, reflecting some of the groundings of the piece, which sort of, was just described and also how to have language to also, like, reflect the way that the piece expands and sort of looks to beyond and looks to after, and looks to the post-fill-in-the-blank. And so that, in collaboration with learning more about these images, and also to having some, like, personal intimacy to these spaces whether direct or indirect, there's a scene that takes place around our corner and at the hospital that we can view from our window. So sort of matching those different kinds of intimacies in the language, as well.

Kevin Gotkin:

So, this is Kevin. I am heartbroken to say we have to wrap up. But I just wanna signal, before we go, how amazing it is. We had a few questions come in before the event. And you've kind of answered all of them, in amazing ways. And I just wanna signal them in case it's kind of fodder for contemplation when the piece debuts. But, one of them was about what gets lost because of ableism? What does ableism preclude? And I think this work and what you've talked about is kind of a direct response to that question. Another was about what kinds of intimacies have you been able to cultivate, especially in pandemic times? Amazing that you also seemed to directly name and illustrate some of those. And the last question was about how we might use the economic theory of the commons to think about ecologies of access. So maybe we just kind of like tuck those away, as little prompts for contemplation when we get to see this work in just a few weeks. I just wanna say thank you to each of you, it is just, I learned so so much from each of you. I'm so excited to see this piece go live. So thanks for having me, and the honor of moderating this event. And now, I will hand it back to Solana to close us out!

Solana Chehtman:

Thank you everyone so much. Thank you, Kevin, for your wonderful moderation. Thank you, Ezra, Noah, Yo-Yo, and danilo, for sharing your knowledge, for sharing your sensitivity. Your sense of collaboration, which is, as you all mentioned, so unique and so special. And it has been such a pleasure to be collaborating with you on this project for so many months and, again, learn so much from you all. I wanna remind everyone that *Phases and the In-Betweens* will debut on our website on January 13 and will evolve through February 11. So I'm hoping you can all come back and see it through its different phases. I'm hoping that you can also come to our website, TheShed.org, to catch all the other 11 *Up Close* commissions. So I think we're looking at that also as kind of an archive of these times that have shifted so much on us and we've shifted with them. And to me, it's always interesting to go back to some of the first ones and see. They are very reflective of their time because they're all new works. I want to thank all of you who joined us. I want to thank, once again,

our supporters, M&T Bank, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, as well as the Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch Commissioning Fund and the Shed Commissioners and the Howard Gilman Foundation again for providing the Zoom platform that we used on this evening's conversation. I invite you all to join us tomorrow at 2 pm to watch a conversation between Misty Copeland and Alex Poots. And I hope you will have a great and of this very, very, very challenging year. I want to wish everyone some resting and restorative time. I've learned not only from these artists but from my artistic community that this is time to meditate on abundance and well-being and on this collectivity of people. This is so special. So see you all at The Shed. Come see our Howardena Pindell exhibition through April. We have some public programs and conversations around her coming up as well. And see you very soon. Thank you all so much for your participation.