

THE PORTLAND ART MUSEUM PODCAST EPISODE 22 TRANSCRIPT



JALEESA JOHNSTON

This is the Portland Art Museum Podcast — a channel between the Museum and you. Our goal is to amplify community voices through conversations and personal stories — and we’re here to facilitate respectful dialogue, debate, and the free exchange of ideas.

To participate, submit your idea at pam.to/podcastidea. We invite you to connect with art through your own experience, voice, and personal journey. Relevant links and transcripts for each episode are available at portlandartmuseum.org/podcast.

My name is Jaleesa Johnston and I’m the Programs Lead here at the Museum. A big part of my job is to connect our visitors with art and artists through public programs, all of which are listed on the Museum’s website. On this episode of the Podcast, we’d like to present the January 16th Artist Talk, which features Portland video and performance artist, maximiliano. The Artist Talk series presents a small in-person audience with a local artist or figure in the arts community as they explore their work as it relates to a piece currently on display, and usually in the Museum’s collection. maximiliano chose to speak about Jeppe Hein’s 2015 neon installation, “Please Participate”. Feel free to check out this episode’s description for a link to this piece. Here we are at the Artist Talk...

JALEESA JOHNSTON

Okay, it looks like everyone’s here and we can get started. So we’re going to start by introducing maximiliano. We’re very fortunate to have them here and for them to be able to share their work with us. maximiliano born in 89 is a performance and video artists using maroon space societies and systems billions of years ago, as impetus of a black mythos-epoch. Sampling and rupturing audio and video spatially, forming black wave aesthetic (black reclamation rococo) unMOORing (othellx) mulattidad; ideas of pre-earth blackness. And it’s my pleasure to introduce maximiliano.

MAXIMILIANO

Thank you, Jaleesa. Hello. Thank you for being here. Thank you to PAM. Thank you to Jaleesa. My name is maximiliano. Maxie, Mad Max. What’s up? I’m going to be talking about myself a little bit, be talking about my practice, and I’m going to be talking about this piece, “Please Participate” by Jeppe Hein. I did my research and made sure that is how you pronounce his name. So I’m going to start by reading the piece. “Please participate. Be grateful. Enjoy, focus. Meditate. Feel. Open up. Interact. Smell. Try. Brief. Forgive. Wish. Be aware. Smile. Wonder. Dream. Taste. Do yoga. Kiss. Love yourself. Search. Relax. Touch. Swing. Choose your way. Expect a miracle.” Yeah, so that’s the piece and we’ll be diving into that like back and forth throughout. I’m a conceptual artist currently working in performance, video, collaboration, curation, sculpture, chips, text, and zines. I’ve been in Portland for about five years. I moved here in the summer of 2015. Then go to school at Pacific Northwest College of Art, and I graduated with my MFA in visual studies in 2017. So I’ve been out of school for a couple years now, trying to stay out of trouble, trying to

keep my head above water. Um, so I've been working on a bunch of different art projects. Um, you know, I love collaboration. So I'm always working with other people seeing what kind of stuff can be created when I go outside of myself, when I joined forces with others, and to see what we can create. One of my projects collaborations was "cvllejrx". That's kind of right. Which was a POC, fashion, performance, collective, from 2016 to 2018. And we are currently on an indefinite hiatus as the other half of "cvllejrx" currently lives in New York City. And Jelica Milan, another great artist. "cvllerex" was about upcycling fashion and garments. We would go to the bins in South-East a lot and scavenge for fabric, for old clothes. And then we would repurpose them. A lot of times it was finding different uses for whatever materials were, what else can a jacket be besides a jacket, the things we were exploring. We would use artists of color. It was about celebrating ourselves and showcasing. We were really interested in collapsing value, and different ways of thinking about fashion and art. So a lot of our performances were like these fashion show based performances. Where instead of a runway, there was a lot more performative and there's a lot of audience interaction. We will get the audience involved and get them to try on garments we had accumulated, as well as playing dress up is really generated a really generative space. Um, so that's, yeah, one of my collaborations "cvllerex". Another collaboration I do is "nat turner project" with Melanie Stevens, which is still currently going. A black radical art space, here in Portland, a fugitive art space. We don't have a fixed location. We are traveling. We are being hosted and existing in different spaces all the times. So we just like don't have overhead and are able to hop around from projects and places to other projects and places. Which has been real nice. And it's allowed us to focus a lot on the concepts and the ideas, and then working with others to make it happen. Then a little about some of the things that turned the project is up to. We currently have a podcast, "who all gon be there", which is one of the things I'm most excited about. We've started it near the end of last year. It is available on YouTube, on iTunes, on Stitcher, on Google Play, and pretty much anywhere you can find podcasts. You can type in "nat turner project", or you can type on "who all gon be there", minus the E. But yeah, we have five or six episodes out. We're gonna start making some new ones for 2020. We interview people, we also talk amongst ourselves, me and Melanie, about art, about pop culture, about movies, about things we're up to. We've interviewed Rose City Antifa, which was a really cool interview. A couple artists from town Ariella Tai, a video artists here. Jarry Dodd, a poet, and artist here, are both podcast episodes we have "who all gon be there". "nat turner project." "nat turner project" has also been up to a thing we call the drinking gourd fellowships, which was our first round of micro grants, which we gave out to 10 fellows. \$4,475 to 10 fellows we gave out and there wasn't that many restrictions on the grant. They could apply. It could be for their practice, it is not project specific. And if they wanted to be, they're gonna be participate in an exhibition at the end of the year, that just ended at Ori Gallery on Mississippi. That was up pretty much for the month of December. So that's been a really cool project. We were able to find the "Drinking Gourd Fellowship" through the "PICA: Precipice Grant", and through a few generous donors, we're able to raise all that money. And that's something we definitely want to keep pursuing and continue to do in the future. Hopefully, we continue to get funding to give out targets of color, black and artists of color. So that's kinda what "nat turner project" is about. A little bit about my solo practice, I do a lot of stuff involving live performance, video performance. And then that has evolved into visual poems, which are videos and zines based off of video performances, and then collaged with like paintings and sculptures, and audio and video samples from different media, and they exist as videos and zines. Things I'm looking forward to in 2020 is I will be choreographing a live performance this fall, a rack funded project grant, which I'm really excited about. I'm really excited to choreograph instead of just being a participant. And to push some new ideas and themes and concepts. And then my work conceptually exists, following what Jaleesa said, in mythos-epoch creating spaces through performance, video, zines, imagined narratives, taking from the past, potential futures, sampling audio, TV and film, paintings and sculptures, thinking a lot about maroon space societies, black people existing before the Earth, thing as a student of history, thinking about maroon societies, as a site of successful black resistance and liberation. Something that's not taught that much in history, but history throughout North, Central and South America, the Caribbean, with Haiti being a black beacon of a Black Republic, and the successful overthrow of white control, and other maroon sites throughout, mostly moving and hidden and only accessible by being guided, or have protected knowledge, a rest spite. That's cool. So throughout this talk, one of the things I experiment with is audience, the audience has material audience interaction, but also with this text with this piece. So I'll be reading it several times. And then maybe if we're lucky, I'll ask you to read it, we'll see. But yes, to lead up to the second reading. One of the things and thinking about this piece was thinking about this space, this piece and habits. I'm really drawn to this space. Beyond just the piece, the idea of

like kind of five different rooms coming together here. This, those stairs over there, these stairs here, those stairs over there. There's an elevator right here. And then you can clearly see in two different rooms. You can see into the patio you can see outside you can even see into the other side of the museum. You can see upstairs. This is like a room where a lot of different rooms energy come together, which was one of the main attractions about this space. I love these stairs. "Please participate. Be grateful. Enjoy. Focus. Meditate. Feel. Open up. Interact. Smell. Try. Breathe. Forgive. Wish. Be aware. Smile. Wonder. Dream. Taste. Do yoga. Kiss. Love yourself. Search. Relax. Touch. Swing. Choose your way. Expect a miracle." Thank you. So now I'm gonna jump into the piece a little bit and think about all the different words and what they mean separately and what they mean together. "Please participate." I think that's interesting. It feels like a directive. I feel like as an artist, I usually come from a place a little bit more of suggestion. Instead of asking somebody to drink a glass of water, I will just put a glass of water in front of them. "Be grateful." I'm def down with that. I don't feel bad about that being a directive. I think being grateful is a really important thing, and really adds to happiness. And it really spreads ripples throughout existence in life. Gratitude is really important and simple, but can never be overlooked. "Enjoy." Super enjoyment. I think that's important to enjoy. I think enjoyment can be radical joy, can be radical. "Focus." That one didn't really move me as much. I didn't really put anything down or focus. But it's important to focus or maybe it's not. Maybe sometimes when you don't focus is when you see the thing. "Meditate." I'm a little: "Meh." I'm not. "Feel." Oh, my god, yes, i def feel. Feel too much. Feel too little. Feel too often. Feel far away. Feel feel, feel, feel, feel near. "Open up." Again I would suggest more than state. Maybe ask if you feel so inclined. Open up or maybe, maybe I would lead by example, and open up and then hope others would open up. "Interact." Interact with this piece, interact with the space, interact with each other, interact with time, interact with self. I like to think we're doing all of those. So if this was a checkbox we say yes, interact. "Smell." This one of my favorites. I love smelling things. I love being a smell, having a smell. Smell is delicious, bad smells, old smells, new smells, good smells. "Try." Again idk how I feel about this? Idk how I feel about trying. I think trying is attempting versus doing. Like Yoda, no baby. So idk about try aka doing too much. "Breathe." I think "Breath" is a good one. And calming with the white light. The suppose white is set it. Maybe a little sinister and false. "Forgive." Easy to say hard to do. What is forgiveness of yourself, of others, of world factors? Can you unforgive? Can you take back a forgive? That I'll ask the audience: can you unforgive? And what is unforgiving to you? So you think you could like forgive somebody of something and then later take back that feeling? So you think forgiveness is impermanent? It's always like it's a constant state of change. Yeah, forgive is hard. And I guess we have to choose to forgive all the time. "Wish." Which also one of my favorites. Growing up I would say, you know, "I wish this or I wish that." And... my mom would always say: "You're gonna wish your life away." So I stopped saying like: "I wish this I wish that." I don't say that stuff anymore because I don't want to wish my life away. So there you go, mom. "Be aware." This is tangential but important nonetheless. I recently started playing Pokemon Go. I know I know, several years late to the party. But when you turn on the game, there's a warning sign on the game that reminds you to be aware of your surroundings. You know, so you don't walk into traffic. You don't walk into a construction site. You don't fall into a hole. If I was completely consumed in in the game, that I'd be aware of the game in that world, but none else. "Smile." I love smiling, but that doesn't feel directive, idk. "Wonder." Wonder, thinking about words. Stevie Wonder. I like wondering. I think is a good use of time and really freeing. Wondering. Mine wandering. Hey. "Dream." While sleeping, while waking, daydreaming, dreams, goals, visions, ideas, aspirations, this unknown space, depths counterfeit, memories, futures, unknowns, pre knowns, past knowns, post knowns. "Taste." Makes me think of Tyga's song "Taste". 2018 was Tyga's come back here. It's really impressive. I love taste. I feel like I can see taste, taste with eyes. "Do yoga." It is kind of an iral and where the piece works. This piece could be in a yoga studio, a yoga gallery. "Kiss." Maybe overused. But idk I love kissing. "Love yourself." I'm super about this especially cause it's cold. To me happiness is warmth. So I just see a bunch of pillows and blankets. That's what "love yourself" is to me right now. And maybe some unreleased TV show with infinite seasons in a space outside of time and age. I hyperbolic time chamber of TV bingeing. What a doubleish delight. "Search." I like this. I think searching is fun. Not necessarily finding the thing, but searching and finding when not searching. Search inside, search outside, questing even maybe. "Relax." I guess, relax still has its merits. "Touch." Don't touch the art. Like the snake whispering teeth directive or non directive. "Swing." Danish for sving. I enjoy svinging. I was never really good at it. I couldn't get the best form or whatever. But I did enjoy it as I got older. But still, I was a middling svinger at best. "Choose your way." Yeah, I mean, I wonder about that one. "Expect a miracle." That's almost to feel guilty. But I appreciate it. Now, would anybody from the audience like to read this piece out loud for us?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

“Please participate. Be grateful. Enjoy. Focus. Meditate. Feel. Open up. Interact. Smell. Try. Breathe. Forgive. Wish. Be aware. Smile. Wonder. Dream. Taste. Do yoga. Kiss. Love yourself. Search. Relax. Touch. Choose your way. Expect a miracle.”

MAXIMILIANO

Awesome. Thank you. That was fantastic. Why this piece? So I walked all around the museum a bunch of different times trying to think about what piece I wanted to talk about. There are several pieces I enjoyed. But I didn't necessarily want to discuss. I was also looking at spaces, as I'd mentioned. What spaces would be cool for a talk, for an audience inhabit. A space to be activated. There's also another room for those of you that know the museum, a room full of silver, silverware. I thought about that room a lot. I thought it would be really cool to do something in that space. And there's a few other spaces that I thought were real cool. Have you stairwells the Center for the Contemporary Northwest art. I also really enjoyed that space. I was thinking about how to engage a space, how to activate a space, ways the space is designed to be activated, ways to use a space against its design. But as I mentioned earlier, for me it was all the different stairs, all the different access points to this room that you can view so many different rooms from this room, all the different meeting points that this room converges on. And then, of course, the piece itself. Had this piece not been here, I might not have chosen this space. So definitely the peace played into my channel. My decision the way this piece inhabits this space, the presence it takes and the space how the space normally is. It's just with that leather bench right there, a time for you to reflect on this piece, maybe participate, maybe do the things it says, or maybe just read the peace. There's this warmth that comes from the light from this aesthetic that potentially can trigger an idea of calmness of warmth. The fact that um... you know, doing a little research about Jeppe Hein. Has a previous version of this piece from 2008 with the slightly varying texts. In that earlier piece, some text is actually crossed out and scratch out. Like there's a phrase that says "Touch neon", and then that's crossed out. But then there's also a phrase "Touch", which isn't crossed out. So it's nice to see the evolution. This piece was created in 2015 of that of that idea. The space of the way you inhabit this space. This artist is also known for interactive, public works. Some of his most famous pieces have to do with like fountains and creating rooms, through public sculptures, through fountains. He has a fountain that simulates a Foursquare game. If you're familiar with Foursquare. And then different sites the walls are activated throughout. He seems like he thinks about rooms a lot. How we inhabit a room? How many people can exist in a room? And how those people inside that room can exist together? And I think that was also echoed here with this piece and this space being another one of the reasons that I chose this piece and space to this talk to interact with you all here, to be present here in this space. With everyone here. It all seems so fitting and appropriate. With this piece, I'm also interested in texts. In relation to this piece in relation to my own work, I can see the text and the body existing together or being interchangeable. In my own practice, I use the body a lot and work from the body. And here I see the text functioning as body, as a way of taking space, as a way of activating, as a way of telling a narrative. The body in text can function the same way and telling a story. And I see for me similarities with this text, so the way I would use a body in space. "Please participate. Be grateful. Enjoy. Focus. Meditate. Feel. Open up. Interact. Smell. Try. Breathe. Forgive. Wish. Be aware. Smile. Wonder. Dream. Taste. Do yoga. Kiss. Love yourself. Search. Relax. Touch. Swing. Choose your way. Expect a miracle." Speaking of space, there's this time lapse video of the Universe that I've really been influenced by recently. Everybody should go check it out. It's on YouTube, it's about half an hour long. And it like jumps every five seconds. So stars 2020 and then at the end it ends trillions and trillions and trillions and trillions of years from now in the future, at the suppose it into the Universe. But there's this age of the Universe. As you know, we have a yellow Sun at the center of our Solar System. And I remember like already learning that at some point, this Yellow Sun is going to expand and grow bigger and bigger and turn into a ed giant, you know, 5 billion years from now our Yellow Sun's gonna turn into a red giant and it's at then you know, like, life from in the Earth have burned away. But then it all like eviscerate the Earth with this heat as it grows and grows. And then this red giant will explode and have a star death. And then it will turn into like a supernova and just a light up the sky, the Universe. And then after this explosion, there will be a white dwarf, which is like the core of what the Sun used to be. But it'll still be glowing because of so much energy. And a white dwarf where the Sun is currently will still emit a much light as if it was a full moon in our own sky. And then this act, this process will happen to every

star and the universe will be star deaths all across the Universe. Then there will be a time where there's only white dwarfs in the Universe, and there's only moonlight lighting up the Universe. To think about the Universe just full of moonlight of these white dwarfs, emitting moonlight, to think about what kind of beings would inhabit that space, how slowly they would have to move, the amount of energy they would take, the amount of light they would take, and how maybe they would take in less light, but they would take it in over thousands and tens of thousands of years. So that's something I've been thinking about, especially in relation to this piece, with the glow, the feel, and maybe that like, really slow entropy that gradual decline that in borderline. The idea that the Universe and light like exist for point .0000000001 of the present of the Universe. Let me check my notes again. And then together with that, I think of this quote: "What is to give light must endure burning." by Viktor Frankl. I think about that when I usually think about the cautions of the ambition of wanting to shine and hustle, but it could have a lot of different meanings. It's like the SoundCloud sad clown. "Please participate. Be grateful. Enjoy. Focus. Meditate. Feel. Open up. Interact. Smell. Try. Breathe. Forgive. Be aware. Smile. Wonder. Dream. Taste. Do yoga. Kiss. Love yourself. Search. Relax. Touch. Swing. Choose your way. Expect a miracle." Does anybody want to share their thoughts about this piece?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

How much of our interpretation of what the artist is trying to say is based on the fact that he chose to use "please participate" first? What if he hasn't used that?

MAXIMILIANO

Yeah, definitely. Um, when thinking about this piece that was something I thought about. As far as like, does the context of these words the word comes before and after words like give so much more meaning to the word itself, that a word is kind of like an obvious thing. But then how we can abstract word either through context or through even repetition. Does anybody else want to share?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

And to expand a little bit on your idea, it's the wires that connect all these words, they don't follow a pattern. It's, you know, you'll have "please" which is connected to "yourself" which is, or "focus" which is connected to "be" and "do". But, yeah, that, you know, it's it's not something that just follows a straight line but intermingles.

MAXIMILIANO

Awesome. Thank you. Does anyone have anything they wanna add?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I wouldn't actually touch the neon.

MAXIMILIANO

How how far do I take it? How real do I get with the piece? Is it like an introspective touch? Is it an actual touch? Well, cool. Thank you for being on this adventure with me, I hope you enjoyed it. Experiment. But yeah, I'm maximiliano. Thank you for being here. Thank you to Jaleesa. Again, thank you to PAM. Thank you to each one of you for being here. Thank you to all the staff and interpreters and tech people.

JALEESA JOHNSTON

Thank you for listening to the Portland Art Museum Podcast. I invite you to visit our programs calendar online to learn about upcoming Artist Talks and other public programs. And if you have a moment, we encourage you to rate and review this podcast on Apple Podcasts - it helps others find out about us more easily and we value any and all feedback. In the words of Jeppe Hein, Please Participate.

ARTIST TALK:

maximiliano - January 16, 2020

PLEASE

PARTICIPATE BE GRATEFUL ENJOY FOCUS
MEDITATE FEEL OPEN UP INTERACT SMELL
TRY BREATHE FORGIVE WISH BE AWARE
SMILE WONDER DREAM TASTE DO YOGA
KISS LOVE YOURSELF SEARCH RELAX TOUCH
SVING CHOOSE YOUR WAY EXPECT A MIRACLE

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