

Converge + Vertex



Santa Monica College Learning Guide
2024-2025

Statement of Intent

This learning guide was researched and written by students in the Santa Monica College art department under the direction of faculty Emily Silver and curator Cole James. We hope you will connect the artists' work with the relevant themes of our time, the past and the future, to your life, your studies, and your future dreams. This guide intends to inspire you to learn more and explore how these themes connect us all.

We also want to thank Black Lunch Table for their mission and for adding teaching content and discussion questions to this learning guide.

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Curatorial Statement

By Cole M. James

Black body-minds are spaces of convergence, evolving into vertices where our multifaceted identities intersect and expand. We embody the intersections of past, present, and future, with our collective humanity forming the vertex that marks our expansive evolution. “Converge Vertex” brings together eleven artists from the Los Angeles creative community who explore the planes of emergence, existence, and ascension through their art-making practices. This exhibition features works by Chelle Barbour, Lavielle Campbell, Noah Purifoy, June Edmonds, Ronn Davis, Cass Everage, Donel Williams, Kimberley Morris, Leah King, Michael Massenburg, and William Ransom. When archiving the presence of Blackness, our ties to the South and the journeys north and west are inextricable. For instance, Kim Morris’ photographs “Creole Queen” and “Bound” epitomize the spaces between the intersections of identity we navigate. These works visually articulate how we are connected to the past, even as we breathe in the present.

Capturing moments to fill the void left by oppression is crucial to archiving the vast Black experience. Michael Massenburg’s collages and paintings in this exhibition seamlessly traverse pieces of cultural memory and the ripeness of future fruits. Continuing within the vein of collage, Chelle Barbour’s photomontages invite viewers to rethink how our bodies might exist in the world of tomorrow. In alignment with the need to recognize both past and present, Leah King’s collage “Untitled (Tuskegee Airman, Poet, Dancer)” offers more than just the name of her historically significant relative. King captures the moments that define how Blackness requires movement and poetry to be woven into our collective archive. Our current challenges are never far from the surface. William Ransom’s sculpture, “You Can’t Love Your Country Only When You Win,” a wooden American flag, reminds us of the fragile bonds that unite us, while also calling for accountability and self-awareness as global citizens. This theme of duality is echoed in Alicia Piller’s “Memorials: From Sea to Shining Sea,” emphasizing the need to understand how we are both individuals and part of the whole, embodying Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness. The diverse range of material processes in this exhibition is intentional. The quilts of Lavielle Campbell and Cass Everage create a dialogue between the two artists—a call and response. Campbell reaches forward to find meaning, while Everage reaches back to understand what has come before him. Encircling all these artists are the works of Ronn Davis and Noah Purifoy. Davis’ experimentation with multiple mediums throughout his career speaks to the need to combine and assemble—a pivotal practice within the Black community for its ability to navigate semiotics and create new meaning through the juxtaposition of symbolic objects. Assemblages, as a form, embody both the past through the presence of historical objects and their solid presence in the now. Together, all the artists in the exhibition represent a multigenerational and diverse range of mediums, archiving our presence and offering a love letter to the essence of Blackness.

Black Lunch Table

Mission & Vision

Black Lunch Table (BLT) is a vernacular history archiving project. Our mission is to build a more comprehensive understanding of cultural history by illuminating the stories of Black people and our shared stake in the world. We envision a future in which all of our histories are recorded and valued. We are excited to continue disrupting the dominant historical narrative and the systemic othering of Black voices. We continue addressing historical omissions by empowering marginalized voices to record, transcribe, archive, and publish their stories.

BLT CV: https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vRsxBM24EodjgforPhSyYjktbHNQqJvISw8Z5JMvaoaGdeLz_Zb6APytDbbDpuouh2pbYBk_Y_Lwh2l/pub

Values

“Radical archiving”: If kids don’t see themselves in the world and in our stories; they can’t imagine that they can be and do more

Expansive and affirmative: The sum of all human knowledge includes Black stories

Self-authorship; We have to author our own narratives or else we will be omitted and misrepresented; there has to be an inception point to think about writing about something; people don’t recognize their own biases

Theory of Change

True resource equity means equal access to knowledge, health, wealth, and social resources for all. Equity is only possible with an accurate and comprehensive record of Black artists’ contributions to cultural, intellectual, and social life. We help build this record through our in-person roundtable sessions and online Wikipedia initiative.

Our roundtable sessions are lunch tables, literally and metaphorically speaking. They convene spaces for genuine dialogue on critical social issues, and we can capture and share the rich conversations from this communion.

Simultaneously, our online initiatives play a crucial role in facilitating the collective authoring and expansive collection of information about the lives and works of Black artists. This allows for a radical rewriting of history, ensuring all voices are included in the narrative.

Program Descriptions

Black Lunch Table’s (BLT) primary aim is to produce discursive sites wherein artists and local community members engage in dialogue on various critical issues. BLT mobilizes a democratic rewriting of contemporary cultural history by animating discourse around and among the people living it.

BLT, through our ongoing Wiki initiative, roundtables, and archive, continues to provide a unique, critical platform for exchange. We persist in countering dominant, exclusionary, historical canonization practices and propose new strategies for documenting stories and authoring histories, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to our mission.

The Artists’ Table + The People’s Table

Through the Artists’ Roundtable, we provide a forum for Black artists to discuss critical issues directly affecting our community, making the connections between contemporary artists of color visible.

At the People’s Table, community members discuss social and political issues affecting historically disenfranchised peoples and illuminate alignment points within local communities. These conversations lay the foundation for the collective work of dismantling institutional racism. This series is a collaborative effort, aiming to make visible the connections that exist within local communities while laying out new productive relationships.

The Archive

The Archive is more than just a digital space. It's a vibrant community where art, historical authorship, and discourse on Black studies and social justice issues come alive. We don't just organize and share recordings and transcripts from our roundtable sessions. We invite you to be part of the conversation, to see how these discussions relate not only to the individuals present but to a broader discourse about race unfolding within online spaces.

BLT addresses historical omissions by empowering participants to record, transcribe, archive, and digitally publish their stories for inclusion in our dynamic, searchable online Archive. Over 1,200 people from over 30 sites and three countries on two continents have contributed their voices and energy to BLT's Archive. The communities that build our Archive are not only identified within the material to construct unambiguous provenance but also to foster autonomy through the use of project-generated and crowdsourced meta tags to turn these collectively authored oral histories into data. The BLT archive is a unique and innovative fusion of Linked Open Data (LOD) principles, network-based interface and analysis, and user-generated content and curation. We envision our Archive as a catalyst for further discussion, development, and deployment of best practices, data standards, and a community surrounding LOD, Black studies, and Social Justice issues.

Our archive is a platform for all parties, including the artists and citizens offering testimony and contributing their lived histories; institutions who host our events; (art) historians interested in a particular movement, person, or issue; students and researchers; curators seeking a deeper understanding of a particular artist, issue or location; friends, neighbors, and web users; all those parties collaborating in the writing of contemporary cultural history.

Wikipedia Initiative

Wikipedia estimates that 77% of its volunteer editors are white on English Wikipedia, and 91% are men. Our work intends to shift this demographic along with the associated biases on the most popular encyclopedia of our time. Our Wikipedia project redresses these omissions by mobilizing a collective authoring of articles on the lives and works of Black artists. Our events equip new editors with the skills and resources to create, update, and improve Wikipedia articles.

One of Wikipedia's stated goals is to present and make accessible the "sum total of human knowledge" and while there are over 6,000,000 articles on English Wikipedia, there are still significant content gaps that exist. The focus of our particular knowledge gap is on Black artists, a crucial area where BLT's Wiki initiative began. Our ever-growing task list, which currently enumerates more than 1,400 artists whose articles need to be updated or written on Wikipedia, underscores the urgency and importance of our mission.

As our founders researched models for initially structuring the BLT archive, they found that Black artists were omitted even in traditional art historical archives. Having researched many model models, they wondered how the world's most widely referenced encyclopedia would hold up. Unfortunately, artist biographies they assumed or hoped were present were not, and they found the content gap vast. Influential figures such as Fred Moten, Peggy Cooper Cafritz, Valerie Cassel Oliver, and Hamza Walker did not have existing articles, and all began as BLT article targets.

BLT Foundational Texts

The Myth of the Comprehensive Historical Archive

valentine,j., myrie, eliza, & Hart, H. (2020). 17 The Myth of the Comprehensive Historical Archive. In :Wikipedia @ 20.

Summary:

In this essay, jina valentine, a co-founder of BLT, challenges the notion that historical archives are complete and unbiased repositories of the past. valentine argues that these archives often reflect the perspectives and biases of those in power, leading to the exclusion and marginalization of minority voices and experiences. She highlights the gaps and silences within archival records, particularly concerning African American art history. Valentine calls for a critical

reevaluation of historical archives, advocating for more inclusive and representative practices in documenting and preserving history. Through the work of BLT, valentine outlines the importance of recognizing and addressing the limitations and biases inherent in traditional archival systems.

Valentine begins:

From the outset, Wikipedia has espoused the ideals of free and open knowledge, catalyzing a mass authorship of cultural history worldwide. As the site on which narratives are drafted, contested, revised, and cited, Wikipedia attempts a hopeful and earnest approximation of a comprehensive and democratically authored history. This is of course an impossible goal. Realizing an archive that is both complete and democratic is a task of a mythic proportion. It would require establishing technological, educational, and cultural resource equity worldwide, and the deprioritizing of Eurocentric historical narratives and English-language Wikipedia. Nonetheless, Wikipedians are collectively invested in constructing an archive of infinite scope and complexity. We are enamored of this mythic, utopian vision.

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations about Race*. Penguin Books, 2021.

Summary:

Walk into any racially mixed high school and you will see Black, White, and Latino youth clustered in their own groups. Is this self-segregation a problem to address or a coping strategy? How can we get past our reluctance to discuss racial issues? Beverly Daniel Tatum, a renowned authority on the psychology of racism, argues that straight talk about our racial identities is essential if we are serious about communicating across racial and ethnic divides and pursuing anti-racism. These topics have only become more urgent as the national conversation about race is increasingly acrimonious. This fully revised edition is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand dynamics of race and racial inequality in America.

Relevant Quotes:

“We all have a sphere of influence. Each of us needs to find our own sources of courage so that we can begin to speak. There are many problems to address, and we cannot avoid them indefinitely. We cannot continue to be silent. We must begin to speak, knowing that words alone are insufficient. But I have seen that meaningful dialogue can lead to effective action. Change is possible.”

“Educating ourselves and others is an essential step in the process of change. Few of us have been taught to think critically about issues of social injustice. We have been taught not to notice or to accept our present situation as a given, “the way it is.” But we can learn the history we were not taught, we can watch the documentaries we never saw in school, and we can read about the lives of change agents, past and present. We can discover another way. We are surrounded by a “cloud of witnesses” who will give us courage if we let them.”

“The task for each of us, White and of color, is to identify what our own sphere of influence is (however large or small) and to consider how it might be used to interrupt the cycle of racism.”

BLT Vocabulary

Archive - A physical or digital collection of historical records, an individual record of continuing value or a curated collection of information and contextual data relating to a particular theme.

<https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/archive.html>

Collective memory - The information that serves to unify a group of people and provide a group identity

<https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/collective-memory.html>

Creative commons license - A Creative Commons (CC) license is a copyright license that allows the copyright holder to give others permission to use their work under certain conditions. CC licenses are based on copyright law and cannot be revoked. They are intended to encourage the sharing and distribution of creative work while still protecting the author's reputation.

Linked open data-Linked Open Data (LOD) is a collection of related datasets on the web that are both linked and open, and can be automatically read by computers. The goal of LOD is to create a global network of interconnected data that can be used for data integration, data mining, and knowledge discovery

Memory worker - A person who works with recorded information, particularly when accompanied by a focus on supporting justice and equity and protecting others from harm
<https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/memory-worker.html>

Open source code- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open-source_software

Wikipedia-Wikipedia is a free, open content online encyclopedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians. Anyone registered on the site can create an article for publication; registration is not required to edit articles.

BLT on SMC Areas of Interest:

Arts, Media, Entertainment

Black artists' underrepresentation in the art world extends beyond galleries and museums to the broader landscape of arts media, including influential platforms like Wikipedia. This imbalance results from systemic biases that have historically marginalized Black voices and narratives. In the art world, Black artists often face fewer opportunities for exhibitions, critical reviews, and institutional support, leading to their diminished presence in mainstream discourse. This marginalization is mirrored in arts media, where coverage and recognition of Black artists are disproportionately low compared to their white counterparts. On Wikipedia, which relies heavily on existing sources and contributions from a predominantly white, male editor base, this underrepresentation is perpetuated. The lack of comprehensive, equitable coverage on such a widely-used platform underscores a broader issue of visibility and recognition for Black artists. This digital disparity reflects and reinforces the structural inequities within the art world, perpetuating a cycle where Black artists' contributions are overlooked or inadequately documented. Addressing this imbalance requires concerted efforts to elevate Black voices, ensure equitable representation in arts media, and diversify the contributors and sources that shape public knowledge.

INVESTIGATION:

How do structural biases within major art institutions and media outlets contribute to the persistent underrepresentation of Black artists, and what specific measures can be implemented to address these disparities?

In what ways does the underrepresentation of Black artists on widely-used platforms like Wikipedia affect public perception and historical documentation of Black art and culture, and how can the Wikipedia community address these gaps to ensure more inclusive coverage?

Further resources:

[Art-equity-is-still-a-long-way-off-in-us-institutions-new-study-reveals Exactly How Underrepresented Are Women and Black American Artists in the Art World?](#)

[Race- and gender-based under-representation of creative contributors](#)

[PERSONAL FINANCE How representation of Black artists in galleries, museums is changing](#)

[Black Artists and Modernism](#)

[A Case Of Exclusion](#)

[With Our Faces to the Rising Sun: A Conversation Between Thelma Golden and Glenn Ligon](#)

Culture, History, Languages

Our organization is deeply committed to documenting and archiving the contributions of Black artists to the art world, recognizing that these contributions have often been marginalized or omitted from mainstream historical narratives. Through our oral history interviews, we capture the firsthand accounts and experiences of Black artists, preserving their voices and stories for future generations. Additionally, our Wikipedia editing initiatives address the digital underrepresentation of Black artists by ensuring that their biographies and achievements are thoroughly and accurately documented online. These efforts are critical in correcting historical omissions and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the art world's diversity.

We recognize our responsibility not only to ensure that our stories are told but also to amplify the voices of other marginalized groups and the communities we live within. By extending our efforts to include the narratives of various underserved and underrepresented populations, we contribute to a broader, more inclusive historical record that reflects the richness and complexity of our collective cultural heritage. This holistic approach not only honors the legacy of Black artists but also fosters solidarity and understanding among diverse communities, promoting a more equitable and informed society.

INVESTIGATION:

What are the most significant challenges in correcting historical omissions and achieving accurate representation of marginalized groups in digital and traditional archives, and how can these challenges be overcome?

What are some ways an organization or individual might collaborate with communities and cultural institutions to create a more inclusive and accurate historical record, and what impact might these collaborations have on public awareness and social justice?

In what ways does archival material contribute to the creation of historical narratives? How does what is saved influence whose stories get told and are represented in public and collective memory?

Further resources:

<https://www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg>

[African American History](#)

<https://www.theblackivists.com/>

[South Side Home Movie Project](#)

[Sixty Inches From Center](#)

[Hartman On Working With Archives](#)

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/collection>

[Archiving While Black](#)

[Black Film Archive](#)

[Liberated Archives for Black Lives](#)

[Archivists for Black Lives](#)

[Mapping the Black Digital and Public Humanities](#)

Business

In America, the pervasive influence of capitalism profoundly shapes social trends and attitudes, exerting significant effects on individuals' lives and livelihoods. Businesses drive consumer culture, dictate market trends, and influence societal values, creating an environment where economic success is often equated with personal worth. For Black artists, this reality is compounded by systemic racial inequities that pervade every aspect of life, from education and employment opportunities to media representation and cultural validation. While all citizens navigate the pressures of a capitalist society, Black artists face additional hurdles, including limited access to funding, fewer opportunities for exposure, and the persistent undervaluation of their work. This economic marginalization means that very few artists, especially those from marginalized communities, can sustain themselves financially through their art alone. Consequently, many Black artists experience financial precarity, balancing multiple jobs and struggling to secure stable income, which hinders their creative output and exacerbates feelings of instability and stress. Recognizing these intersecting challenges is crucial in understanding the unique position of Black artists within a capitalist framework and advocating for more equitable support structures.

INVESTIGATION:

What are the psychological and social impacts of financial precarity on Black artists, and how does this instability affect their creative processes, artistic output, and overall well-being?

How do systemic racial inequities within a capitalist framework exacerbate the financial challenges faced by Black artists, and what specific measures can be implemented to address these disparities and support their economic stability?

How does the commodification of art and its contemporary positioning as financial investment impact the diversity of artists and types of work available in the market?

Further resources:

[Americans For the Arts](#)

[The Creative Economy](#)

[Linda Goode Bryant](#)

[JAM @ MoMA](#)

[STUDENT LOAN DEBT AND AMERICAN ARTS GRADUATES](#)

[Art and Debt](#)

[Race and Sociology of Art](#)

[A Basquiat Sells for 'Mind-Blowing' \\$110.5 Million at Auction](#)

Education

Our project delves into the critical issue of authorship by examining who controls the creation and preservation of historical records, thereby shaping collective memory and identity. The act of writing the record is not neutral; it is influenced by the perspectives and biases of those in power, leading to the inclusion of certain narratives while others are systematically omitted. This selective authorship is a form of gatekeeping that grants authority and legitimacy to specific voices and experiences, often at the expense of marginalized communities. By determining what knowledge is produced and disseminated, these gatekeepers also define who is considered "other" and establish the parameters within which these groups are understood and treated. Consequently, authorship is not merely an act of recording history but a powerful tool for reinforcing social hierarchies and perpetuating exclusion. Our project aims to uncover these biases, question the dominant narratives, and advocate for a more inclusive approach to documenting history that

recognizes and validates the diverse experiences of all people.

INVESTIGATION:

In what ways does the control over knowledge production and historical authorship affect contemporary societal structures and power dynamics, particularly regarding the treatment and perception of marginalized communities? How is this reproduced in our education systems?

How do the identities and perspectives of those who author and steward historical records influence which events, cultures, and narratives are prioritized or marginalized in our collective memory?

Further resources:

- <https://wikiedu.org/>
- [Teaching To Transgress](#)
- [Decolonizing Education](#)
- [Decolonizing Methodologies](#)
- [What Is An Author?](#)
- [What is recorded is never simply 'what happened'](#)
- [Confronting Our Failure of Care Around the Legacies of Marginalized People in the Archives](#)

Health and Wellness

Representation in art for Black people yields significant positive health and wellness benefits, both mentally and emotionally. Seeing their identities, cultures, and experiences authentically portrayed in art can enhance self-esteem and foster a sense of pride and belonging, combating the harmful effects of systemic racism and marginalization. This representation can also provide a therapeutic outlet, allowing individuals to process and express their emotions, leading to improved mental health outcomes. Artistic representation creates spaces for Black people to connect with their heritage and community, promoting social cohesion and reducing feelings of isolation and alienation. Additionally, engaging with art that reflects their own experiences can be a source of joy and inspiration, offering a respite from daily stressors and contributing to overall emotional well-being. By validating their stories and perspectives, representation in art helps to dismantle internalized negative stereotypes, empowering individuals to embrace their identities more fully and fostering resilience. Overall, the positive health and wellness effects of representation in art for Black people are profound, enhancing mental health, emotional well-being, and a sense of community and identity.

INVESTIGATION:

In what ways do Black visual artists address and portray mental health issues within their work, and how do these portrayals contribute to broader conversations about mental health in the Black community?

How does the presence (or absence) of Black representation in visual arts impact the mental health and self-esteem of Black viewers, and what specific aspects of representation (e.g., themes, authenticity, visibility) are most influential?

Further resources:

[Being Seen Podcast](#)
[When Representation Is Not Enough](#)
[Mental Health, Systemic Racism, and Young Black Artists, Designers, and Activists](#)

STEM

Wikipedia's prominence in search engine results means it often serves as a primary source of information for people seeking knowledge about various subjects. When Black artists are underrepresented or absent from Wikipedia, it not only diminishes their visibility but also perpetuates the marginalization of their work in the broader cultural narrative. Inclusion in Wikipedia helps counteract this by providing easily accessible, reliable information that acknowledges and celebrates their achievements. This visibility can lead to increased recognition, opportunities for exhibitions and collaborations, and greater financial support, thereby contributing to the artists' career sustainability and mental well-being. Additionally, a more comprehensive representation on Wikipedia can challenge existing stereotypes and biases, promoting a richer, more diverse understanding of the art world. Ultimately, ensuring the presence of Black artists on Wikipedia is a crucial step towards equity and inclusivity in digital spaces, reflecting the true diversity of artistic contributions and histories.

INVESTIGATION:

How does the underrepresentation of Black artists on Wikipedia and other digital platforms influence public perception and recognition of their contributions to the art world, and what are the broader cultural implications of this digital exclusion?

What systemic barriers prevent the inclusion of Black artists' biographies on Wikipedia, and how can these barriers be addressed to ensure a more diverse and accurate representation of artists from marginalized communities?

Further resources:

[History of Wikipedia](#)

[How Google Uses Wikipedia](#)

[How Does Google Process Information](#)

[How Google Uses Wiki To Optimize](#)

[How to un-erase Black artists overlooked by history?](#)

[10 years of tackling Wikipedia's equity gaps](#)

[Black Artists Say A.I. Shows Bias, With Algorithms Erasing Their History](#)

People and Society

Black people and Black artists have been foundational in shaping American culture since the earliest days of the nation, beginning with the forced migration of enslaved Africans. This influence is pervasive, deeply woven into the fabric of American life through music, art, language, cuisine, and social movements. From the rhythms and melodies of spirituals, blues, jazz, and hip-hop to the visual storytelling found in African American folk art and contemporary works, Black cultural contributions have continually redefined American artistic and cultural landscapes.

Musically, genres such as jazz, blues, rock and roll, and hip-hop have roots in African American communities, evolving from spirituals and work songs sung by enslaved people. These genres have not only shaped the soundscape of America but have also influenced global music. Artists like Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, James Brown, and Tupac Shakur have not only entertained but also articulated the complexities of the Black experience in America, impacting societal attitudes and inspiring movements worldwide.

In visual arts, from the quilts of enslaved women, which carried hidden messages and histories, to the powerful works of contemporary artists like Kara Walker and Glenn Ligon, Black artists have been at the forefront of challenging narratives and depicting the multifaceted nature of Black life. Their work often addresses themes of identity, resistance, and resilience, offering profound critiques of social injustices and envisioning new possibilities for the future.

Moreover, Black literature and thought have profoundly influenced American intellectual traditions. Figures like Frederick Douglass, Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison have provided critical perspectives on freedom, identity, and democracy, shaping American literature and thought.

Black people and Black artists have been central to the development and enrichment of American culture. Their contributions are so integral that it is arguable American culture, in many respects, is Black culture, reflecting the profound impact of African American creativity, resilience, and resistance throughout the nation's history. This deep interconnection underscores the importance of recognizing and honoring Black cultural contributions as foundational to understanding America's cultural identity.

INVESTIGATION:

How might the argument that American culture is fundamentally Black culture challenge conventional narratives about American identity, and what implications does this have for addressing systemic racism and promoting cultural equity in the United States?

In what ways can contemporary cultural institutions, such as museums, schools, and media platforms, better acknowledge and integrate the contributions of Black people to American culture, and what steps are necessary to ensure these contributions are adequately represented and preserved for future generations?

Further resources:

[Celebrating African Americans and the Arts](#)

[African American Art](#)

[Harlem On Whose Mind?](#)

[BLT Task list](#)

<https://www.studioinoizepodcast.com/>

[Bow Down:Women in Art History](#)

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/oBumtXmx1VADkkI9ogmTi3?si=7a1dfdc5b6394923>

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1Hd50PcPH8FFkBhXOZFihk?si=4265964c44714077>

[Shade Podcast](#)

[30 Americans](#)

[Kerry James Marshall: In Conversation | Tate Talks](#)

<https://manpodcast.com>

Converge + Vertex Artists

Chelle Barbour

Lavialle Campbell

Ronn Davis

June Edmonds

Cass Everage

Leah King

Michael Massenburg

Kimberly Morris

Alicia Piller

Noah Purifoy

William Ransom

Donel Williams

Areas of Interest

Arts, Media, &
Entertainment

Business

Culture, History,
& Languages

Education

Health &
Wellness

People &
Society

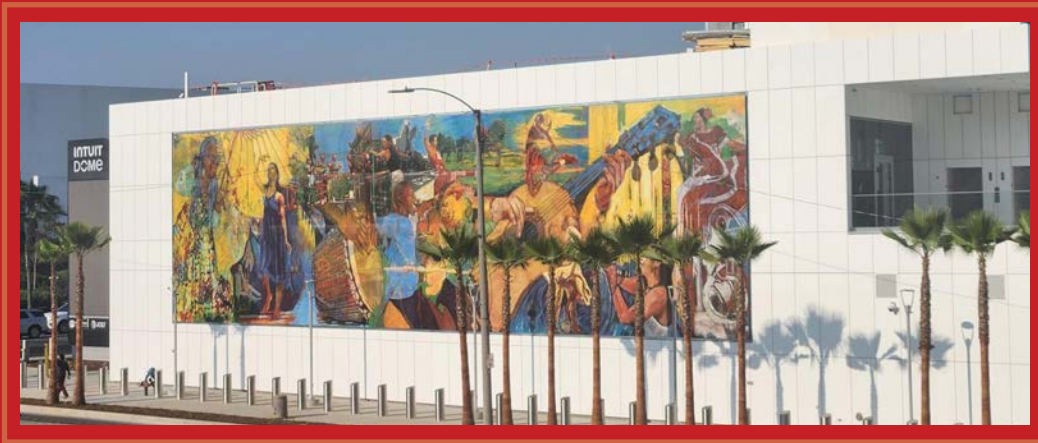
STEM

People & Society

"Artists are the Voice of the People." Michael Massenburg

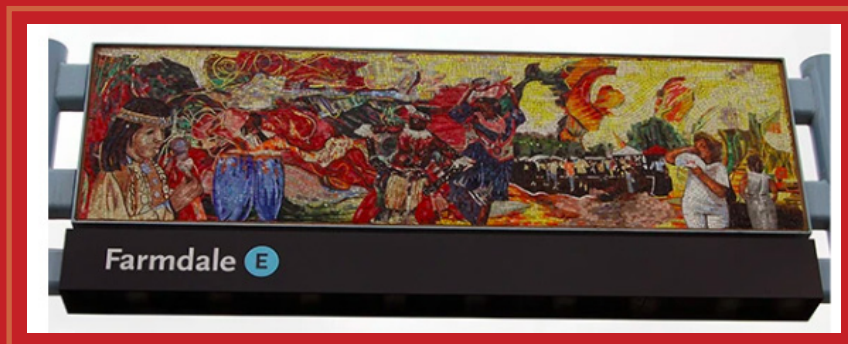


Visions, Michael Massenburg, 2006, Acrylic, Leimert Park, Visions Theatre, Los Angeles, California



Cultural Playground, Michael Massenburg, 2024

Porcelain enamel (mixture of mineral content glass and inorganic pigments) fused to steel; 25 x 100 ft, Commissioned by the LA Clippers



All in a Day, Michael Massenburg, Farmdale Station Mural on Expo Line

Art Activism/Community Healing Through Art

Artivism combines activism and art, where art serves as a reflection of activism. It's a potent and effective tool, fostering empathy crucial for social and environmental justice. Art can tap into our innermost healing potential and foster community. In the act of viewing an artwork, we become linked not only to the artist but also to those having shared a similar experience in the past, present, or future. This connection, both to ourselves and to others, lies at the heart of art and its role in healing.

Artists who were mentored by older and more established artists, who now mentor those coming up, see how vital this process is to build thriving communities. Community-connected artists give hope and healing through elevating marginalized voices and advocacy for equitable policymaking. By expressing emotions about the challenges of our times, they promote accessibility, change, witness, validation, and healing.

Artist Michael Massenburg actively engages in art education, lectures, and community organizing. He advocates for marginalized voices and social justice causes. He views art as a tool for community upliftment, promoting well-being, self-esteem, and beauty.

As an “artist,” part of your art centers on community wellness. How has art healed you and those around you? “Art has provided an outlet for expressing my feelings that were difficult to verbalize. Through art, I was able to explore my identity, values, and sense of awareness and empowerment. Art has helped create a sense of belonging and connection with others.” Michael Massenburg

“The Watts Towers influenced my early art beginnings. With a mission to make art that builds community, my principal pursuits have been creating informed art, educating, and practicing civic and cultural advocacy to improve access to skills throughout Los Angeles and abroad. That sense of social purpose has propelled my practice as a contemporary artist.” Citation: <https://www.michaelmassenburg.com/about>

INVESTIGATION:

Who are mentors in your community who have positively impacted your life? What kinds of art do you see in your community? Has it had a positive impact on your community?

Think about how art has inspired you to create or has connected you to a place or time, past, present or future that evokes emotions or a sense of connecting to a larger community.

How is cultural memory passed down to younger generations? Discuss legacy, intergenerational advocacy, and mentorship.

Public art is a strong community builder, and Michael's public murals are found all over Los Angeles. One work entitled All In A Day at the Farmdale Station on the Expo Line is a collage of his long life of experiences. It contains important Los Angeles figures such as artist and gallery co-founder Dale Brockman Davis and Black journalist Libby Clark. “I wanted this piece to be like a time capsule -- he says motioning to the original panels that line the walls of the studio, “because I want generations later to know who was here and what we were like back in this time.”

Michael also co-founded The Collective, an organization promoting Black Los Angeles artists.

Info about The Collective:

<https://www.residencyart.com/exhibitions/then-the-collective>

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62c4a8e85935046b68e07fe5/t/62e9f64b93ecf90ac6eb737f/1659500107173/The+Collective+Press+Release.pdf>

You mentioned your art Collective during our visit. Is the Collective still active? *“We are not active as an organization but we are active as a family. We see each other and still work and create together. This is a bond that will last a lifetime.”* Michael Massenburg

What advice would you give to artists wanting to start their own Collective? *“Create a group that shares the same goals and values. Create authentic relationships. Create what’s missing in the culture.”* Michael Massenburg

Noah Purifoy was a pivotal Los Angeles artist, community builder, and art activist. As director of the Watts Towers Cultural Center during the August 1965 riots in Watts, Noah Purifoy witnessed the devastating aftermath of armed conflict and widespread destruction. Following the unrest, Purifoy led students in salvaging debris from the rubble to create assemblages exhibited in a show titled “Sixty-Six Signs of Neon.” The title referenced melted neon signs from burned-out local stores, transformed into surrealistic shapes by the heat of the community’s anger. Purifoy repurposed these glass drippings into elegant artworks, serving as both witnesses to and products of the tumultuous events.

“I do not wish to be an artist, I only wish that art enables me to be.”

– Noah Purifoy, 1963

“I had these things inside of me ready to be expressed, but I didn’t have a media through which to express them,” he told UCLA. “I tried social work, that didn’t work. I’d try this and that, didn’t work. It didn’t communicate to the people my deep feelings. ... And art, being a nonverbal language, enabled me to feel I at least understood myself.” Noah Purifoy Quote: Purifoy as told to Michel, *Junk Art: 66 Signs of Neon*, n.p.



Drum Song, 1966 by Noah Purifoy. Courtesy of Tilton Gallery/Noah Purifoy Foundation ©2024

In “Drum Song,” Purifoy commemorates the Watts uprising by repurposing debris from the protest into artworks symbolizing communal renewal. Exploring “Charcoal Alley,” the epicenter of the unrest, Purifoy collected transformed remnants, including a lead flow from a broken neon sign, which he found particularly compelling for its symbolic knots of metal. This transmutation mirrors the complex metamorphosis of Watts itself. “Drum Song” served as both a public declaration and a call to action, embodying Purifoy’s belief that “art of itself is of little or no value if in its relatedness it does not effect change.” Included in the 1966 exhibition “66 Signs of Neon,” the artwork aimed to empower the Black community in Los Angeles and advocate for equality, aligning with Purifoy’s vision for societal transformation.

INVESTIGATION:

What similarities and differences exist between art inspired by the Watt's Rebellion and Black Lives Matter?

EXPLORATION:

Think about how art has inspired you to create or has connected you to a place or time, past, present, or future, that evokes emotions or a sense of connecting to a larger community.

READ:

“Art can harness the healing power within each of us and help bring us into community with one another.”

“The Healing Power of Art”

<https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/629>

The Connection Between Art, Healing, and Public Health: A Review of Current Literature

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2804629/>

LISTEN:

The Soul of California, Noah Purifoy - Junk's Deeper Meaning, Discusses Noah's life and art in Los Angeles and Joshua Tree, his lasting legacy, and the influence of the Watts Rebellion on his art.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-soul-of-california/id1012858394?i=1000395032976>

SOTA, State of the Arts: Noah Purifoy and the Watts Riots (aka the Watts Rebellion)

Like George Floyd's death, the Watts Rebellion began with a Black man's arrest by a white officer, igniting a community uprising against systemic oppression. This discussion of Noah Purifoy examines how social upheaval launched his renowned art career and how his legacy continues through his work.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/sota/id1401055295?i=1000480291366>

UCLA Library: Center for Oral History Research

Interview of Noah Purifoy 1990, Joshua Tree by Karen Anne Mason

There are six vocal recordings where Noah talks about his life and history and what inspires and frustrates him. <https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/catalog/21198-zz0008zm4z>

How does hearing Noah Purifoy's voice and thoughts on art change what his art means to you? How would the world be different if more artists were recorded, archived, and made accessible to learn from?

Michael Massenburg: Artists are the Voice of the People

Not Real Art

In this podcast interview, Michael talks about his socially informed practice of art and activist work in his community, the value of travel, founding the Collective, and the importance of Black art.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/not-real-art/id1380303490?i=1000616782692>

WATCH:

ARTBOUND: Junk Dada: Behind Noah Purifoy's Joshua Tree Sculptures

The Noah Purifoy Outdoor Desert Art Museum showcases the artist's vision from the last 15 years of his life.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/noah-purifoys-desert-art-museum/>

Redlining: Little New Orleans, West Adams, Venice

INVESTIGATION:

Have you seen the effects of gentrification in your neighborhood?

What is one policy change that you think could be made to uplift the lives of black students at SMC?

How have students in Los Angeles historically participated in resistance movements?

EXPLORATION:

“Bruce’s Beach Returned To Family, Righting A Nearly Century-Old Wrong”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlljxharv_Q

How can we shift our consciousness and perform acts of reparations that would restore justice and power to members of the African American community who were erased from history?

“Black Californians have long celebrated cowboy culture. We’re just catching up”<https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2022-12-04/californias-black-cowboys-and-equestrians-go-west-their-own-way>

How can we celebrate the more hidden parts of black society? How can we investigate a hidden culture and bring it to the forefront?

Arts, Media, & Entertainment



Michael Massenburg, *Jazz Eras*, Painting, collage, and sculpture, American Jazz Museum - Kansas City

INVESTIGATION:

What would the music landscape be like if more Black artists had been recorded, credited, compensated fairly, and archived for future generations to be inspired?

Artist Michael Massenburg was a DJ on his journey to becoming the artist he is today. Music continually inspires him to create with jazz improvisation as a guide. His early roots were 1970's funk and soul music. Hip-hop was the music he came up with and DJ'd. He started hearing jazz elements in the music. He discovered artists like Herbie Hancock and Miles Davis and liked the idea of "not staying in the same lane" by combining different genres.

Regarding art and music, "It's the same energy, sound and sight." Michael is inspired by jazz Bebop improvisation. In an interview for this exhibit, Michael relates to a story from Herbie Hancock, who said that as he performed with Miles Davis, he hit played the wrong chord on his piano accompaniment. Miles paused his trumpet improvisation, took a breath, and then integrated Herbie's new notes into the improvisation and learned "there is no such thing as a wrong note."

Michael makes it a goal to let the "mistake" inform his work. "In fact, when I make a mistake, it frees me. Because, before I was trying to make it perfect, so if I make a mistake, I don't care about it no more. I walk away, and I come back and I see, OMG I couldn't have done that if I tried to. But because I let go, it becomes the best part." Michael Massenburg

DISCUSSION:

Can you think of other examples of artists and music informing each other? In what ways have mistakes freed you to do your best work? How would "not staying in your own lane" change your creativity?

WATCH:

Herbie Hancock: No Such Thing as a Wrong Note | MasterClass Moments | MasterClass

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-GrRIgdmW8>

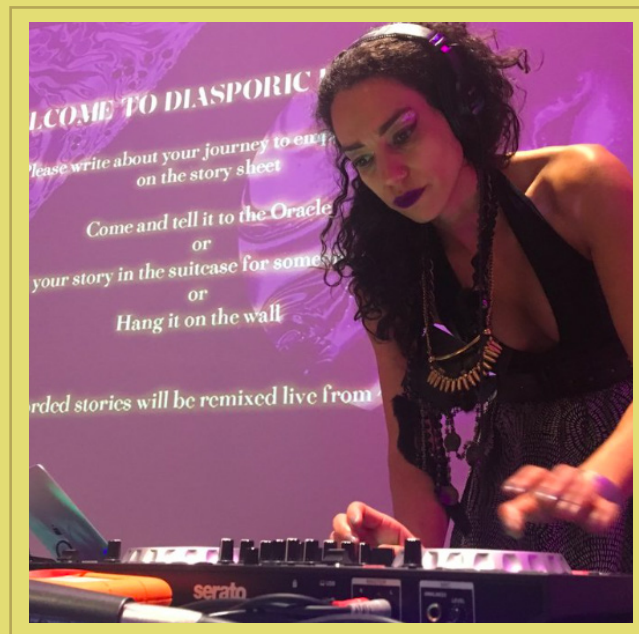
“Try to make anything that happens into something of value” Herbie Hancock

Artist Leah King uses music as a perspective-expanding and unifying tool in how she presents and creates a sonic, multi-sensory, multi-dimensional, story-telling, time-traveling art and music. The Afrofuturism movement was the fusion of imagination and mysticism, technology, liberation, and the future within the African diaspora, drawing from some ancient African traditions and contemporary cultural influences. Futurism is revisiting some of the ideas of Afrofuturism and has shaped some of her art and music. As Futurism grows more popular, its music and art welcome a hopeful vision of empowerment and endless cosmic possibilities for a historically marginalized community.

“On a more futuristic note, my dad is a huge music head. He loves blues, funk, soul, rock—real Black roots music. He was very into Sun Ra when I was a kid; I remember watching a few recorded live concerts. I would ask my dad, “Wait a minute, so you are also into this dude that wore outer space outfits with giant headpieces, and he’s different than the Parliament mothership?” In our home growing up, there was also a lot of James Brown and Tina Turner and other very specific Black and proud identity pieces that were a big part of my artistic evolution.” Leah King

DISCUSSION:

Think about how music has inspired you to create or has connected you to a place or time past, present, or future that evokes emotions or a sense of connection to a larger community.

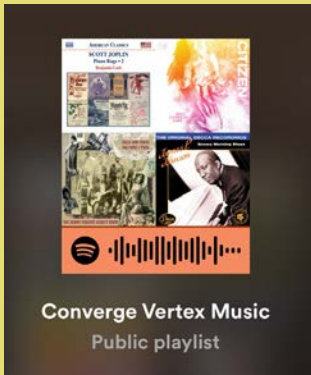


Leah King, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco

In what ways has Black music been pivotal, or has it fueled Black empowerment and justice movements past, present, and future?

EXPLORATION:

LISTEN: Spotify playlist developed in collaboration with SMC faculty and artists from Converge Vertex.



<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6u5Be6IiiTFm586evKLS3G?si=yMrs3f8CSXSPo6oCoKDXsw>

EXPLORATION:

During the 1950s and 1960s, Dootone Records emerged as a groundbreaking Black-owned record label in Los Angeles, founded by entrepreneur Dootsie Williams on the back porch of his Watts home, who not only helped launch the careers of multiple Black artists but also built a community by pioneering Black representation and challenging racial hierarchies by providing a platform for Black talent in his Compton music/event center. Sadly, his plans for a Black-owned media empire to uplift Black artists in music and drama did not come to be, and he wasn't properly credited for his decades of service.

How has this type of story changed in recent years, and what still needs to be done to ensure future generations can learn and build upon groundbreaking and inspiring efforts like this?

LISTEN:

Press Play podcast: Music historian delves into LA's rich jazz scene and how clubs were an 'oasis from racism'. <https://www.kerw.com/news/shows/press-play-with-madeleine-brand/coronavirus-presidential-transition-free-speech-jazz-la/sittin-in-la-jeff-gold>.

How did the great migration and racial segregation within LA change what music was being performed in Los Angeles?

From Afro-futurism to Futurism: Groundbreaking, genre-crossing artists like Kamasi Washington are fusing elements of hip-hop and jazz with a Futuristic vision for the future of music and video. Listen to artists like Kamasi, Thundercat, Herbie Hancock, Sun Ra, Eryka Badu, Betty Davis, George Clinton/Parliament Funkadelic, Janelle Monáe, Flying Lotus, and more on the Converge Vertex Spotify playlist

"Without new visions, we don't know what to build, only what to knock down." Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

DISCUSSION:

As you contemplate the future, how do the ideas of Afro-futurism and Futurism inspire you to explore your possibilities? How does the Afro-futurism movement of the past differ from today's Futurism movements?

For you, what's hopeful for the future?

"Lately, it's been very hard to access hope. All we can count on for building the futures we want to see are young people (yes, that means undergrads at SMC) and artists - demographics whose imaginations are still intact. I hope to continue to surround myself with folks who aren't afraid to keep dreaming and being active." Leah King

READ:

The Epicness of Kamasi Washington and the West Coast Get Down

<https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/artbound/the-epicness-of-kamasi-washington-and-the-west-coast-get-down>

Kamasi Washington on how South Central shaped his experiential new record. <https://www.dazeddigital.com/music/article/39754/1/kamasi-washington-heaven-and-earth-interview>

Kamasi Washington shares his influences and inspirations. <https://www.huckmag.com/article/kamasi-washington>

WATCH:

Kamasi Washington, Truth (Director's Cut) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtW1S5EbHgU&t=760s>

Kamasi Washington, Dream State (feat. André 3000) (Official Visual) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxMol-O9CEaU>

What elements from Afro-futurism or Futurism can you hear and see in the music video of Kamasi Washington? How do these elements relate to some of the art from Converge Vertex?

READ:

Artists Who Define Afrofuturism In Music: Sun Ra, Flying Lotus, Janelle Monae, Shabaka Hutchings & More <https://www.grammy.com/news/10-artists-who-define-afrofuturism-in-music-sun-ra-shabazz-palaces-janelle-monae-eryka-badu-grace-jones-flying-lotus>

Jazz and hip hop, both American art forms, have profoundly influenced American culture and music and helped express Black Americans' struggles. Jazz emerged from a blend of African, Latin, and European elements, while hip hop arose in the 1970s; hip hop helped to voice inner-city social issues, using turntables and microphones as instruments.

New York Jazz Workshop, What are the connections between jazz and hip hop?
<https://newyorkjazzworkshop.com/what-are-the-connections-between-jazz-and-hip-hop/>

In 2022, Carnegie Hall held a citywide Afrofuturism festival featuring concerts at Carnegie Hall. This historic festival explored Afrofuturism's expansive aesthetic, where music genres like jazz, funk, R&B, Afrobeat, hip-hop, and electronic intersect with visual arts, science fiction, technology, and more.

<https://www.carnegiehall.org/Events/Highlights/Festivals-and-Artistic-Focuses/Afrofuturism>

LISTEN:

Afrofuturism and the Future of Democracy. [A Carnegie Hall Podcast](#)
Host Reynaldo Anderson leads a multigenerational discussion on the significance of Afrofuturism in contemporary democracy and society.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/afrofuturism-and-the-future-of-democracy/id1651661889?i=1000584615745>

Audience live interviews and DJ set of Leah King <https://soundcloud.com/leahkinglive/diasporic-futurism-ybca-6119>
Live DJ set from a performance at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, 2019. Gallery visitors were responding to the prompt:

“Think about what your journey to empowerment has been like. In one paragraph, share a story of a time when you felt closest to your most powerful self.”

CHECK OUT:

Head out to see some living Los Angeles history and support the future at the Central Ave Jazz Festival <https://centralavejazzfest.com/> and check out an improvisational jazz jam at Leimert Park World Stage <https://www.theworldstage.org/events.html>.

The Central Avenue Jazz Festival, held annually in July, celebrates Central Avenue's treasure of jazz heritage, rooted in the vibrant music scene of the 1930s and 1940s. During this era, racial segregation confined African American musicians to areas like Central Avenue, where iconic venues like the Dunbar Hotel and Club Alabam flourished, serving as launching pads for renowned jazz and blues artists. Many greats, such as Duke Ellington, Eric Dolphy, Art Pepper, Chico Hamilton, Clora Bryant, and Charles Mingus, performed at the Central Ave Jazz Festival.

Founded in 1989 by Billy Higgins and Kamau Daáood, The World Stage in Leimert Park Village is a hub for African American cultural expression in Los Angeles. It offers workshops and performances to promote music, literature, and oral traditions locally and beyond.

Discovering the roots of LA music, how are you linking the music you listen to today with elements fused from the past?

READ:

Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination, by Robin D.G. Kelley.

“Based on Kelley’s belief that to make a better world we must first imagine it, this brilliantly conceived and written book recounts the accomplishments of black activists and thinkers over the past century who have been committed to remaking the world.”

—Library Journal

Hamilton, Elizabeth Carmel. Charting the Afrofuturist Imaginary in African American Art: The Black Female Fantastic. New York: Routledge, 2023. This book delves into Afrofuturism within African American art, particularly exploring representations of black women.

Sci, LaFrac and King, Leah. On Music, Ritual, and Ancestral Futurism CJM, August 2021 https://www.thecjm.org/learn_resources/761

Investigation:

How does Leah King use sound to create space?

Exploration:

Read <https://timeline.carnegiehall.org/genres/house> and listen to some of the artists listed in the timeline - Do you recognize some of the beats in music that you listen to on your own?

Architecture

INVESTIGATION:

How is creating space critical to equity?

EXPLORATION:

Watch Architecture, to me, means power: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAZWpdMZmLo>

How can architecture build a powerful community?

EXPLORATION:

Read about the Cultural Landscape Foundation, and identify cultural landscapes that are present in your life or community. <https://www.tclf.org/places/view-city-and-regional-guides/african-american-cultural-landscapes/african-american-cultural>

Fashion:

INVESTIGATION:

Why do you think the fashion industry has traditionally hidden the achievements of black fashion designers, models, and creative directors? How do you see black creatives creating space for themselves today?

EXPLORATION:

Watch The Rise, The Fall, The Revolution of Hip Hop Fashion: 50 Years Fly <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZriQnoYDd-8>.

Do you see trends in which you, your friends, your family, or your favorite hip-hop artists have participated? Did you know their origins?

Business



Untitled, Propaganda Quilt, Cass Everage, Repurposed fabric

Cass Everage's work explores how Black bodies are used to represent American excellence. He uses images of Black athletes in an assemblage of fabric in a similar tradition to quilting. Building upon the established cultural tradition of African quilting, Everage practices "neo-African American quilt-making" that incorporates the same technologies and skills used in his Streetwear practice. The innovative quality of Everage's art embodies an entrepreneurial spirit that is expanding our understanding of art practice.

Citation: <https://www.otis.edu/news/otis-college-charles-white-scholarship-recipient-cass-everage-interview>

An artist is oftentimes wearing many caps at once; by taking on many different projects and tasks, one becomes more adaptable and skilled which shows up in the artwork. Everage embodies this notion through his many projects and undertakings, "whether it be, coaching, working as a behind-the-scenes professional for streetwear brands based in Downtown Los Angeles, or trying to expand my language and arsenal of Black American aesthetic." Further explains that these different roles are hard to rank, for "they are all an important part of what I call my practice and function as a context for how I approach whatever I am focused on at that given point." Guided by his passions and drive, Everage carves his own unique path not defined by a specific set of standards and static rules. In business, breaking the rules is how new ideas are born. Putting time into the process of where you want to go is a key theme within both art and business.



Cass Everage, *Trinity*

INVESTIGATION:

How does Everage's work call upon familiar motifs in the media?

Driving products in our global market is the principle of innovation. Everage agrees that innovation is important because it is sharing new ideas, but also points out that the idea of what is innovative is different for everyone. Depending on our personal life experiences, the communities we are a part of, and the people we engage with, ideas are always being passed around and trends follow a cycle. Keeping true to one's creative vision has been a lesson that he has had to learn while pursuing a purely innovative practice. In Everage's point of view, "Innovation can be a great thing but if used without mercy, it can become flat, ugly, and boring." Catering to this idea of always being fresh and new is unattainable and unrealistic because it removes the soul and beliefs of the person creating the project. Creations that are purely being driven by innovation are disingenuous in Everage's case.

As an emerging artist and designer himself, Everage himself is still putting in the work to cultivate his skills. He would describe his brand identity "is really involved with my relationship to streetwear and media." Someone that Everage takes inspiration from as a creative who is working as both designer and artist is Bryant Giles, who creates artworks and campaigns using imagery of the nostalgic and mundane that are imbued with the energy of play and youth. Giles both shows his work in exhibitions and uses his skills to design for brands such as New Balance. Following Giles' journey, Everage wants to explore "what I think of as the duality of flash and function" within his endeavors in fashion. He continues to explore his brand identity as an artist by creating work themes that interest him the most. His inspirations draw upon the visuals he saw as he "grew up into Black culture through popular media," and dissects this representation in the pieces he makes by thinking, "about how those depictions function to the outgroup of society and the ingroup of people of a Black American experience." His work also explores the "intersections between old and new, composed and sampled, rap and jazz," which one can see through the physical and symbolic layering found within his work. As an artist, and as the direction of the work changes, one is rebranding and redefining their drive to create. The reasons for our creation are not static as new sources of inspiration pop up in this lifetime.

CHECK OUT:

Bryant Giles' work: <https://www.instagram.com/bryantdgiles/?hl=en>

Who are some of the people you look up to who inspire how you create your product or business model?

His advice to those looking to break into the fashion industry and or the art scene is, "to start getting good at whatever it is that you do," and "if that thing changes in a year from now, just keep grinding and expose yourself to different ideas." He also emphasizes the importance of the connections that you make as a creative, advising to "just be kind and

friendly to people that you meet, even the ones you despise because people will remember that you're a good person and do good work." Being kind to others is how you can create a professional environment that you want to actively participate in. As Everage warns, "you don't want to climb the ladder and then realize you don't like anyone around you." Be genuine about your intentions, because with strong connections "your resume is almost a formality."

Who are the people around you, and what are their goals? What are some of the current projects that you are working on now? How are you developing your ideas?

INVESTIGATION:

How did Black entrepreneurship build Los Angeles - what were the specific Black enclaves that saw thriving Black businesses?

Where do artists fall into our economy? How can art support our communities and their economies? What are some ways that artists support their communities?

EXPLORATION:

Watch the Keller Center Resources on the History and Legacy of Black Entrepreneurship in the United States: <https://kellercenter.princeton.edu/events/history-and-legacy-black-entrepreneurship-united-states>

How have cultural traditions within the Black community created the basis for Black entrepreneurship today?

How can Black entrepreneurship be seen as an act of resistance?

Read the Library of Congress' List of Black Businesses and Black Entrepreneurs: <https://guides.loc.gov/african-americans-in-business/businesses-industries/entrepreneurs-brands>

Are there names that you recognize? Which ones stand out and why?

What are some of the Black-own and run businesses that are found within your community? What are some ways that they are currently innovating the market?

LEARN about The Johnson Publishing Company Archive: <https://getty.libguides.com/jpcarchive>

Who was the Johnson Publishing Company? <https://www.johnsonpublishing.com/>

Started by African American Entrepreneur Johnson H. Johnson, the Johnson Publishing Company would become one of the largest Black-owned public companies in the United States during the later half of the 20th century. Johnson started the company in 1942, and created mainstream publications including Ebony and Jet would highlight Black creatives and their excellence. This was during a time of Segregation, where access to libraries was barred to the Black community and positive coverage of Black culture was rare. The Johnson Publishing Company's work has allowed for a 21st century audience an extensive and comprehensive look into what the Black experience was like during the historic times of the 20th century.

How are initiatives like the Johnson Publishing Company Archive highlighting the achievements of Black Entrepreneurs?

VISIT the Santa Monica History Museum and Learn about The Broadway Neighborhood: <https://santamonicahistory.org/>

[org/exhibitions/exhibitions-perm/quinn-gallery/#SPONSORS](https://www.washingtoninformer.com/exhibitions/exhibitions-perm/quinn-gallery/#SPONSORS)

How do Black and Brown people develop their own communities?

What were some of the local businesses within the Broadway community?

<https://www.washingtoninformer.com/african-american-arts-entrepreneurship-comedy/#:~:text=Artistic%20business%20ventures%2C%20such%20as,producing%20and%20promoting%20Black%20art.>

<https://aadn.gsd.harvard.edu/places/los-angeles/>

VISIT Black-Owned Businesses in Los Angeles- see the guide

Culture, History, & Languages

Black Diaspora

INVESTIGATION:

The first Black people in Los Angeles were Afro-Mexicans who immigrated to California from northwestern Mexico. Many communities of Black diaspora today exist in and around Los Angeles, including Louisiana Creole and Afro-Latino people from Central and South American countries, Nigeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Belize, Honduras, Panama, Ghana, and more.

How has the Black diaspora changed communities within Los Angeles?

How does it feel for you to check a box on a form that doesn't match your identity?



Kimberly Morris, *Faith Mask*, Human Hair

Artist Kimberly Morris embraces her multi-ethnic Creole identity in her artwork, often delving into beauty standards and racial markers. She challenges conventional ideas of aging and cultural identity by incorporating hair, vibrant colors reminiscent of Mardi Gras, and woven patterns inspired by traditional African and African American hairstyles, Creole Mardi Gras masks, and commedia dell'arte costumes.

"I am African-American Creole, so that really influenced the way I grew up because I grew up here in Los Angeles so my grandparents were part of the great migrations, both sets of grandparents and came here to California. Actually, this neighborhood and this area used to be called Little New Orleans."

“I had a lot of experiences where I come from a very mixed family in the sense that we’re all black, but we present physically differently to the world. So I had two sets of grandparents that passed for White, but my father is a very dark-skinned man, born to a man that lived his life navigating for survival as a white man because he was drafted into WW2, and that’s how he survived, but he also protected the soldiers of Color because they thought he was white. So he would like sneak into barracks at night and let them know what was going on, what was transpiring because they had racial issues within the military. They still do so. I grew up hearing all of those stories and my own experiences with my own community and my community outside of me and how that has shaped how I navigate the world. And also understanding how racial issues still exist and how people navigate those things not only in the US but also throughout the diaspora.”

“I would say that as a woman of color my identity is constantly being challenged and that is just a fact of life for me. Be it through systematic racism, media, or individual interactions. My advice would be to continue being you, don’t back down. Challenge those that are challenging you be it an institution or an individual. Continue to strive so that your voice is heard through your action and success.”



Michael Massenburg, *Still I Rise*



Michael Massenburg, *Sy by Sy*

Michael Massenburg's exhibit "Spiritual Nature" explores the African diaspora's journey in the Americas from 1619 to the present day. Inspired by his travels and employing diverse artistic methods, including drawings, writings, paintings, collages, and found objects, Massenburg delves deep into this historical and cultural narrative.

"Being able to [visit] different areas [and see] different cultures was important because it changed my whole perspective about being an African born in America"



Leah King, *Oakland Garden*, paper collage, glitter

Leah King's exhibit, "Diasporic Futurism: Taking Up (Outer) Space," presents a collage series inspired by Afrofuturist themes centered on reclaiming ancestral narratives. Each artwork features a family member of the artist reimagined within an otherworldly setting, creating a fresh narrative intertwining their past and future. In speaking about her mixed race ancestry, "It's connected but different at the same time: struggling with the legacy of trauma and outsider-ness; the difficulty of forced diasporas, but having a lot of those stories documented and still told, so much so that we, Jewish people, have multiple holidays and opportunities of observance per year.I was always interested in that juxtaposition, and that my two parents could connect on the trauma, and truly heal in their union." "My goal is to recognize and celebrate ancestral capacity to find release and hope in the darkest of places - and bring those freedom dreams to light.

INVESTIGATE:

In what ways has Black Diaspora inspired the art of Kimberly Morris, Leah King, and Michael Massenburg?

What is the future of the Black diaspora?

EXPLORATION:

READ:

The Met's Exhibition, *Before Yesterday We Could Fly*, a project rooted in Seneca Village's history, centers on generations of African diasporic art by embracing Afrofuturism to speculate on past, present, and future interconnectedness and celebrating Black imagination and creativity. This conceptual room design presents a vision of what Seneca Village could have become if it had flourished into the present and future.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/afrofuturist-period-room>

In what ways has the art of the Black Diaspora been marginalized? What would the present and future look like if this past art had been uplifted and accessible?

WATCH:

Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room Virtual Opening | Met Exhibitions

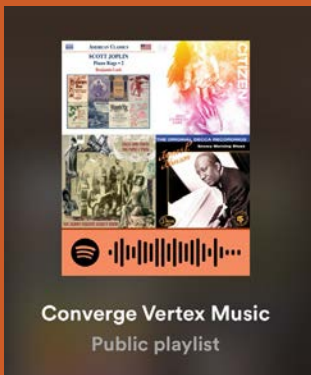
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_1QbBQ5pag&t=33s

LISTEN:

Leah Kings, Live DJ set from a performance at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, June 1, 2019.

<https://soundcloud.com/leahkinglive/diasporic-futurism-ybca-6119>

LISTEN: Spotify playlist featuring music from the Black Diaspora developed in collaboration with SMC faculty and artists from Converge Vertex.



<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6u5Be6IiiTFm586evKLS3G?si=yMrs3f8CSXSPo6oCoKDXsw>

What is the soundscape of the Black Diaspora? How has it influenced what you listen to?

READ:

Artist Kimberly Morrison talks about how her Creole ancestry informs her art.

<https://artandcakela.com/2019/03/11/kimberly-morris-at-cerritos-college-art-gallery/>

Are there ancestors from the Black diaspora in your family heritage? If so, how does that change or challenge your present identity?

Black Art History in Los Angeles



Watts Towers, Simon Rodia



Watts Towers, Simon Rodia

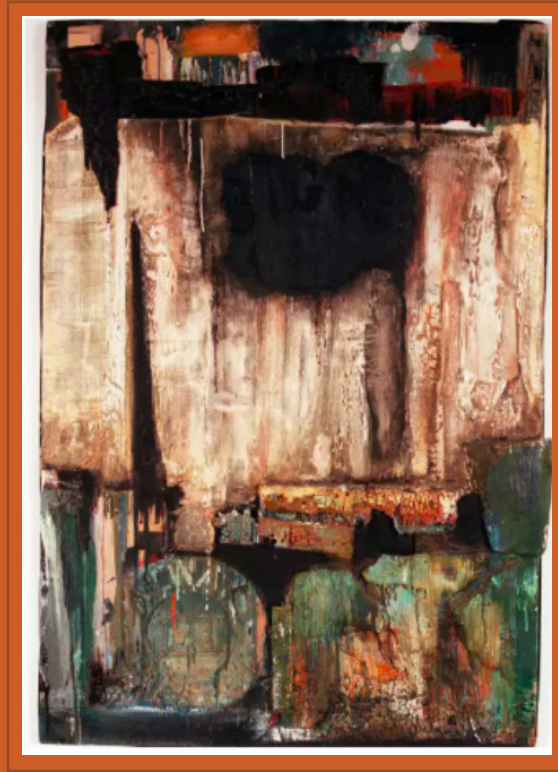
INVESTIGATION:

Watts Towers are a significant hub and inspiration for artists of all kinds, including several from Converge Vertex. It is a historical landmark in Los Angeles. Using concrete-covered steel embellished with assorted found materials such as mosaics crafted from tile, shell, and glass, Simon Rodia fashioned intricate sculptures, including three towering structures standing nearly one hundred feet tall.

His method of recycling junk to make a beautiful monument helped to inspire the art as found-object movement. The late 1950s saw the rise of found-object assemblage as a significant Modern art movement in Los Angeles, serving as a source of inspiration for numerous artists, including Noah Purifoy. This artistic approach offered a means of portraying the dignity and struggles of African Americans, expanding upon existing humanist perspectives in art. Found art assemblage is one common thread of the artists in Converge Vertex, such as seen in the art of Noah Purifoy, Alicia Pillar, Will Ransom, and Michael Massenburg, who has a direct connection to the generous spirit of teaching and mentoring young artists at the Watts Tower Arts Center.

The Watts Towers assumed greater symbolic significance during the 1965 Watts uprising, representing the rise of a Black nationalist movement. Its community arts center became a focal point for a burgeoning Black avant-garde engaged in assemblage art. In the late 1960s, there was a resurgence of interest in the work of untrained artists, prompting curators in the mid-1970s to feature the Watts Towers as a prime example of American folk or visionary art environments alongside similar large-scale backyard installations in museum exhibitions.

Today, the Watts Towers Arts Center offers a variety of programs aimed at cultural enrichment, including classes in painting, sculpture, photography, and music, conducted in a supportive and non-competitive environment led by professional artists. The center also provides tours, lectures, and exhibitions featuring local and international artists throughout the year.



Watt's Riot, 1966 by Noah Purifoy. Courtesy of Noah Purifoy Foundation ©2024

DISCUSSION:

Consider the value of items; some consider them “junk.” What possibilities open up when you think about who decides the value of these items and how you might value them differently than typical systems of capitalism? How does this valuation translate into people, Los Angeles’s geographical areas, and the value of artistic expression?

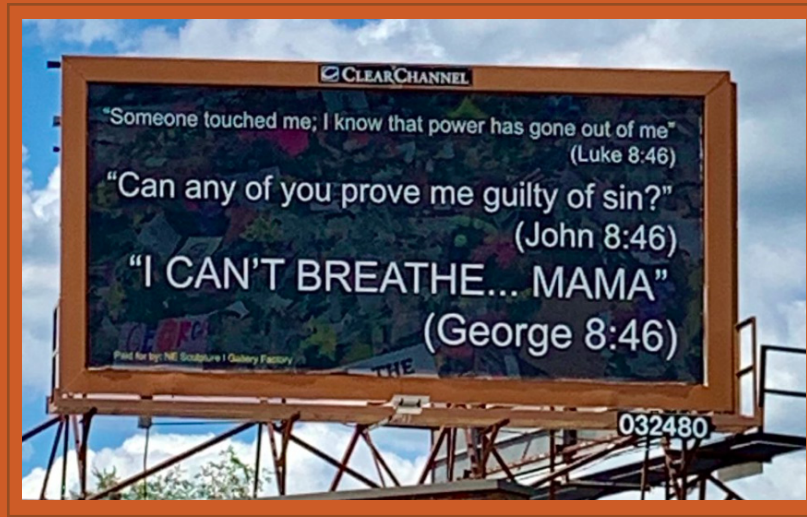
CHECK OUT:

Visit the Watts Towers and the Arts Center. How does it inspire you to reimagine discarded items in your life? Who were your mentors, and how has it changed your life? How does the art concept of assemblage connect to Watts Towers and the artists in Converge Vertex?

WATCH:

The Towers Documentary by William Hale 2010 Remaster <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9L3hIXe3-Uc>

How has Watts changed in the years since Simon Rodia started building in 1921? Is it more diverse or less? What similarities can you see between the almost destruction of the towers due to a lack of valuation of the art, artist, and community built on and around it and other important Black architecture, art, or communities that have been historically undervalued? How would value change if there were more visibility and access in the archiving and documentation of this important landmark of Los Angeles?



The Gospel of George, William Ransom, 2020

LISTEN:

SOTA, State of the Arts: Noah Purifoy and the Watts Riots (aka the Watts Rebellion)

Like George Floyd's death, the Watts Rebellion began with a Black man's arrest by a white officer, igniting a community uprising against systemic oppression. This discussion of Noah Purifoy examines how social upheaval launched his renowned art career and how his legacy continues through his work.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/sota/id1401055295?i=1000480291366>

What similarities and differences exist between art inspired by the Watt's Riots and Black Lives Matter?

How has the Black Art movement influenced the creation of art and its presentation in Los Angeles?

How has the art of David Hammons and Charles White influenced the artists in Converge Vertex?

Who were the first artists to use assemblage of found objects?

How did the use of assemblage help Black artists make sense of the Watts riots and other major socio-political movements impacting Black lives past, present, and future?

READ/LISTEN:

Soul of a Nation 2017, The Tate, Zoe Whitley

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/music-black-power>

Zoe Whitley on Betye Saar

The Great Women Artists

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-great-women-artists/id1480259187?i=1000459807292>

[Dustin Steuck // Noah Purifoy Outdoor Museum](#)

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/sota/id1401055295?i=1000448820330>

[Noah Purifoy and the Watts Riots](#)

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/sota/id1401055295?i=1000480291366>

[The Noah Purifoy Desert Art Museum](#)

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-atlas-obscura-podcast/id1555769970?i=1000559661860>

[Noah Purifoy - Oral History](#)

<https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/catalog/21198-zz0008zm4z>

Bayo Akomolafe

Postactivism: “the concept that informs my notion of making sanctuary, is a matter of irruptions and eruptions, breakthroughs, cracks, flashes, fissures, fault lines, discontinuities, blasts, splits, rifts, ruptures, seismic shifts, world-ending openings, miracles, strange encounters, and the yawning maw of a monster.”

READ:

Parable of the Sower - Octavia Butler

DISCUSSION:

How has the Afro-futurist movement influenced black poetry and literature?

How did the Black diaspora influence the literature of Black authors, past, present and future?

How did the poetry and literature of Black authors influence the artists of Converge Vertex?

Who are/were the most influential Black poets in Los Angeles? How did their work make positive changes for the future?

EXPLORATION:

Visit Octavia’s Bookshelf in Pasadena or <https://www.octaviabookshelf.com/>, the only Black woman-owned bookstore in California featuring literature by BIPOC writers

LANGUAGE:

African American Vernacular English or AAVE is a living, ever-evolving language spoken by many Black Americans.

DISCUSSION:

Think about AAVE what parts of AAVE have found their way into your vernacular, did you know it was AAVE?

Ancestry, Spiritualism, Symbolism and Legacy:

Spirituality is a connection to the divine or sacred that goes beyond organized religion, intertwining with personal growth, self-discovery, and the quest of life’s meaning.

Spirituality in Black art often reflects a sacred creative impulse from the beliefs, values, and traditions of different societ-

ies included in the wide range of Black diaspora that permeates the collective consciousness, influencing Black philosophy, cosmology, and artistic expression. Manifesting through symbolism, dance, music, and rituals, spirituality in Black art represents a rich tapestry of cultural heritage. Euro-centric biases often lead art scholars and viewers to overlook its significance due to cultural unfamiliarity.

INVESTIGATION:

How has your ancestry shaped your identity, world view and spirituality?

The artistic works of Converge Vertex artists Kimberly Morris, Alicia Pillar, and Michael Massenburg are deeply influenced by ancestral connections and spiritualism. They frequently employ symbolism to establish links across time, bridging the past, present, and future.



Lavaille Campbell, *Gwen*, Cotton



“Locs of Majesty,” Kimberly Morris

Cowrie shells, representing “the mouth of Orisha,” serve as spiritual symbols for powerful oceanic deities like Yemaya, Olokun, and Mami Wata, who offer them for protection. Used for divination, currency, and adornment across cultures, cowrie shells symbolize fortune and fertility. Historians suggest that enslaved ancestors brought them to America as protective charms against enslavement.

What do you want future generations to gain, remember, or feel about your work? *“I hope that my work will inspire conversations or even question their feelings about the work.”* Michael Massenburg

INVESTIGATION:

How does the symbolism in the art you are seeing in Converge Vertex relate to each other? Have you seen symbolism in different areas of your life? Are there symbols that have deep meaning to you? What do you think future generations might make of these symbols?



Haiti Rise, Michael Massenburg

Michael Massenburg travels to places like Columbia, Haiti, and Senegal to learn about and be inspired by the rituals and culture of the African diaspora.

“My path is about painting the African diaspora experience in the Americas. This journey is about survival and salvation to empowerment, how rituals, cultural and spiritual practices transferred and evolved into our current times. My interest in historical, cultural, and personal narratives has always evoked questions about my place in the world. Inspired by these travels, I get to touch, see, and feel how we are still connected. It’s about tearing down walls of separation of false narrative. It’s about seeing our humanity.”

INVESTIGATION:

How has traveling and learning about different cultures changed your identity or mind? What do you like to see or learn about when you travel? Has some of the art in Converge Vertex changed your ideas about what travel might mean to you?

READ:

Spirituality in African Art: Exploring the Connection <https://momaa.org/spirituality-in-african-art-exploring-the-connection/>

The Ancestral Sacred Creative Impulse of Africa and the African Diaspora: Ase, the Nexus of the Black Global Aesthetic

Marta Moreno Vega, <https://www-jstor-org.smx.idm.oclc.org/stable/4177077?seq=1>

Voyage of the Sable Venus (2015), Robin Coste's book of poems, Recasts 40,000 years of imagery of Black women.
'Neither on Our Knees nor Hanging From Trees' - Alison Saar and Toni Morrison Foster the "Cycle of Creativity" of Black Women <https://jerseyartsfeatures.com/content/2023/3/23/neither-on-our-knees-nor-hanging-from-trees-alison-saar-and-toni-morrison-foster-the-cycle-of-creativity-of-black-women>

WATCH:

The Saar family, Alison Saar, Betye Saar, and Maddy Leaser segment from the INSPIRATION episode talk about their connection to Watts Towers, Simon Rodia and Noah Purifoy, symbolism and how any found object can be art.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNWqsC7bQ5s>

In watching these videos, what do you think about the value of craft vs art? Who decides the value of craft or art? What makes one more valuable than the other?

Craft in America: Artist Alison Saar on her work - bonus video from INSPIRATION episode <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBkFiP1JHnM&t=23s>



June Edmonds, *Monarch Over Indigo*, acrylic on canvas

Education



Michael Massenburg in the studio

COMMUNITY AND MENTORING:

Michael Massenburg, educated at California State University Long Beach, and the Otis School of Art and Design, creates artworks inspired by his travels and filled with a variety of mediums and techniques. Massenburg currently lives in Inglewood, but is originally from San Diego, his art is shaped from his upbringing in South Central and has a deep sense of cultural impact and social purpose.

“I grew up in an era where they said Christopher Columbus discovered America, and now we know what happened. They embedded that in our brains so much that we never questioned it” - Michael Massenburg

In his art, Massenburg explores themes of survival and empowerment within the African diaspora and weaves together historical, cultural and personal narratives and perspectives. With his successful, prolific artistic career, Massenburg has had exhibitions and public art commissions all over the world. He is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of artists as a teacher at Watts Towers Arts Center, he says “And so off being in this community has been really great, to be able to see some of the positive and unfortunately some of the negative, as far as what’s been happening in our culture and society now. But I do believe in the next generation as far as being as performance as possible, using new tools, while also understanding the histories and what happened in the past” Massenburg believes in mentoring tomorrow’s talent, he emphasizes the impact that mentorship had on his own artistic journey, and how important it is to be open to new generations but also remembering the past to develop our society.

INVESTIGATE:

BANNED BOOKS:

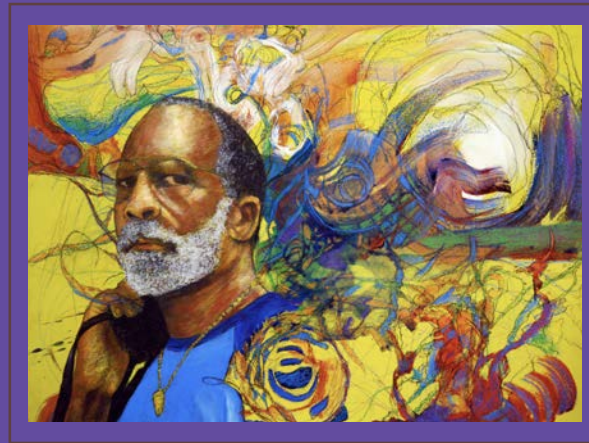
These books offer a unique insight into African American culture and history and powerful stories that touch on important themes and issues that are still relevant today.

How has banning books and literature affected education in terms of giving students a broader understanding of differ-

ent perspectives, history, and social issues?



Michael Massenburg, *Morning Dawn*



Michael Massenburg, *Calvin*

“The Color Purple” By Alice Walker - A powerful story of race, gender, and survival in the 20th century American South.

“Beloved” By Toni Morrison - A gripping novel about a former slave struggling with the trauma of his past and the difficulties of building a new life.

“Their Eyes Were Watching God” By Zora Neale Hurston - A classic story of a young black woman searching for love, independence and identity in the 1930s American South.

“Invisible Man” By Ralph Ellison - A groundbreaking novel that explores racism, identity and invisibility in American society.

“Song of Solomon” By Toni Morrison - An epic tale of a young man’s journey to discover his family’s history and his own heritage.

“Native Son” By Richard Wright - A powerful novel about a young black man struggling against poverty, racism and societal prejudice in 1930s Chicago.

“Go Tell It on the Mountain” By James Baldwin - A moving story about a young man growing up in Harlem and his struggles with religion, racism and sexuality.

“The Autobiography of Malcolm X” By Malcolm X with Alex Haley - An inspiring autobiography that tells the story of Malcolm X’s life and his struggle for black rights and independence.

“Uncle Tom’s Cabin” By Harriet Beecher Stowe - A controversial novel depicting the cruelty and oppression of slavery, which played an important role in promoting abolitionism in the United States.

“Kindred” By Octavia Butler - An exciting science fiction novel about a young woman who travels back in time to the era of slavery and confronts her own past and her family’s history.

“Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom” By Bell Hooks – A prominent American writer, feminist and social activist. The book explores the role of education in promoting freedom and social justice.

INVESTIGATION:

EDUCATION STRUGGLES PAST AND PRESENT

“Jim Crow’s Schools” <https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2004/irons>

What was education like for Black Americans during the time of Jim Crow laws and school segregation?

“The Struggle Against Segregated Education” <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/struggle-against-segregated-education>

What were the main challenges that Black students and teachers faced in schools during school segregation and Jim Crow Laws?

“Unequal Opportunity: Race and Education” <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/unequal-opportunity-race-and-education/>

How does the lack of equal access to resources, funding, and qualified teachers affect Black students’ education and academic achievement in the past and today?

What strategies and methods were used by Black communities to counteract the lack of equal opportunity in education?

EXPLORATION:

WATCH:

“The Power of Privilege” Tiffany Jana at TEDxRVAWomen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoacvkHiiZs>

In this talk, Jana examines the concept of privilege and its impact on education. She discusses how systemic inequalities affect opportunities and outcomes for Black students.

What strategies can teachers use to promote equity, address privilege, and create inclusive learning environments in schools?

LISTEN:

“‘Teaching While Black’: a poet explores racism in the classroom” <https://lesley.edu/podcasts/why-we-write/teaching-while-black-a-poet-explores-racism-in-the-classroom>

This podcast episode dives into the experiences of Black educators and explores how a poet navigates and sheds light

on racism within the classroom environment.

What are the consequences of the challenges faced by Black professors and educators? How does this affect student outcomes and educational equality?

READ:

“Privileged” article by Kyle Korver

<https://www.theplayertribune.com/articles/kyle-korver-utah-jazz-nba>

How can educators and leaders use their privilege to integrate anti-racist practices into teaching, curriculum, and school policies, fostering inclusive environments for Black students?

How can they also push for systemic changes in education to address disparities and ensure equity for all students, regardless of race or background?

“African Americans say the teaching of Black history is under threat” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/02/23/schools-black-history-month-crt/>

What positive impacts can increased inclusion of Black history in school curricula have on Black education, students, and society?

“Education Innovation” <https://naacp.org/issues/education-innovation>

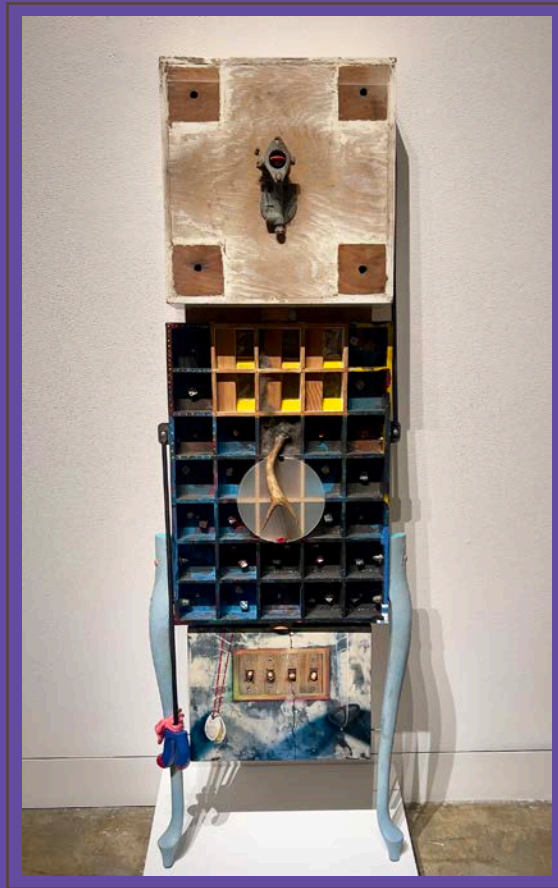
How can fostering a fair and equitable justice system positively influence young African Americans’ educational opportunities and outcomes?

“Jim Crow Laws” <https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws>

How did Black Americans navigate challenges posed by Jim Crow laws to access education, and what positive strides have been made toward achieving educational equity today despite lingering effects?

“The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness” Book by Michelle Alexander <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/new-jim-crow-mass-incarceration-age-colorblindness>

How does the author Michelle Alexander show that mass incarceration in America is a new way, modern way, of oppressing black people, similar to the old Jim Crow laws? How do her arguments affect your own thoughts about race and justice?



Ronn Davis, *In The Zone*, Oil, dices, horn, metal, pistachio nut shells and wood



Ronn Davis, *In His Shoes*, Oil on canvas

Health & Wellness



Alicia Piller, *Across the Wasteland, a Twisted Melody,, Matter and Spirit, Spirit of The Times*, Lowell Ryan Projects

How do you maintain spiritual, physical, and mental well-being as an artist?

Alicia Piller's art themes and installations, such as the above image, deal with sometimes intense subjects, such as environmental degradation and historical traumas, such as gun violence and white supremacy. She works these themes weaving into biological forms such as whale bones and cellular biology while inspired by anthropology and human form themes from her father's medical reference books.

"Mimicking forms of cellular biology as a method to locate the root of human histories; my mixed media practice is as much about materiality as it is about content. Stemming from a craft background, mixed media works investigate the relationship between the macro and micro perspectives within systems of knowledge, meaning, and bodily form. Capturing the energy surrounding physical matter and/or a particular situation is key; presently attempting to reconcile questions about the current state of our times. Examining traumatic histories, both political and environmental, I have begun to use my own body (and others) to activate a sculptural work. I document these moments with digital photography and video, later utilizing the photos as objects within a sculptural piece."

Alicia balances her sometimes very physical sculpture work with physical and mental wellness practices such as hiking in nature.

DISCUSSION:

How can Santa Monica College create a culture of health and wellness through environmental changes?

How do specific topics in “Converge Vertex” such as environmentalism, and cultural influence affect students’ health choices?

How can we solve the disparities within the healthcare industry systematically impacting the Black community?

How can on-campus health and wellness resources change institutional discrimination and make sure they include Black students?

What steps need to be taken to engage students in college to commit to health and wellness?

EXPLORATION:

READ:

Alicia Piller, *Weathering Climates* where she discusses how ideas of environmental
<https://artspiel.org/alicia-piller-weathering-climates/>

LISTEN:

Alicia Piller interviewed on The Conversation Art Podcast
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/epis-278-los-angeles-based-sculptor-alicia-piller/id481461646?i=1000493483061>

Health Justice:

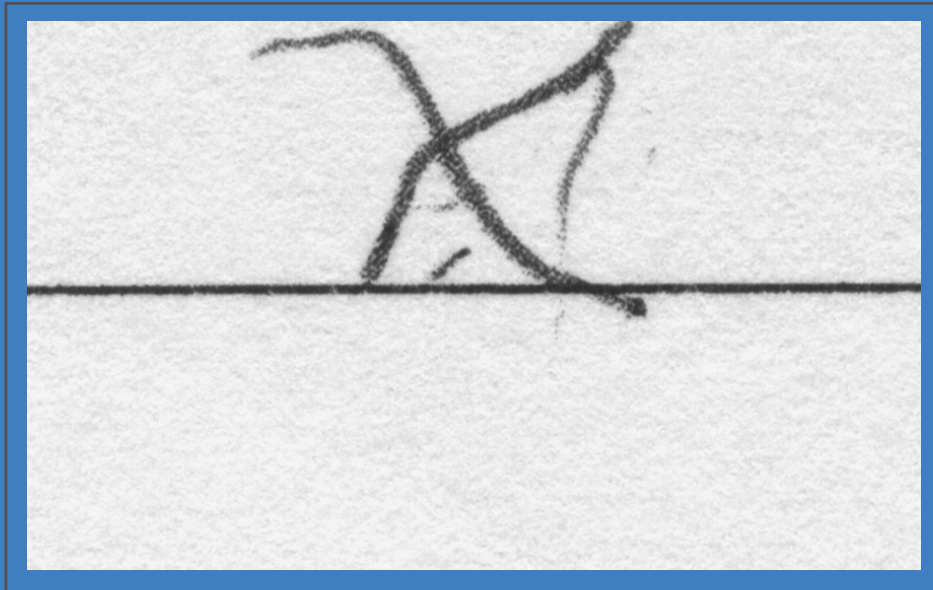
EXPLORATION:

Health justice is a movement to eliminate health inequities and secure access to health care and healthy living conditions.

Have you experienced barriers to equal access to quality healthcare in your life or family?

Donel Williams is a multidisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles, CA. Williams explores the lasting effects of observing his familial battles with aging and illness and their lasting effects in both mental and physical spaces. Using abstracted common items, he attempts to cultivate specific memories in an effort to reproduce imagery born from specific trauma. His academic journey includes community college studying journalism, where he took a pivotal class in photography. He is currently a student at USC completing an MFA. He has worked at various jobs, including UPS mail processing clerk and a wine and spirits buyer. His work investigates a personal identity shaped by a strong relationship with an elderly stepfather, the most prominent figure in his life. Williams explores the lasting effects of observing his stepfather’s battle with aging and illness and their personal impact in both mental and physical spaces.

“A lot of work is dealing with critiquing institutions of hospitals; housing. My mother ended up, we did all this to protect her from losing the house, and she still ended up losing the house. And it’s one of those things where they were like, well, she has a great job, but the renting in a nursing home was like \$5000- \$6000 a month. Yeah, ‘cause it’s 24 hour care, so you’re paying for a lot of things. My mom was literally skipping out on mortgage payments to make sure that my father was receiving the care that he needed. And in doing that, she fell behind. Did not tell me this because I was in school, She didn’t want to worry me. And then by the time I graduated, a year passed and default foreclosure, it’s like very fast. So a lot of this work is like thinking about those, the fragility of not only human life but family. Also because one domino falls and it could affect your entire family lives like a family home gone, your memory’s forever like jaded.”



These marks were made in a room that smelled of stale urine and fresh tears.

An existence reduced down to two stokes of an ink pen.

I guided his left hand, the hand that still functioned after the stroke.

We made this mark, together?

I made this mark for him.

Anthony Marshall Owens

X

Donel Williams

“I found this weird beauty in the marks that we made ‘cause I had to help his hand do it because he was paralyzed from one side and he was just completely out, like in there. So in front of witnesses and lawyers, I took his hand and we made these marks ‘cause we had to make X’s, specifically X’s ‘cause he couldn’t sign his name anymore. And I went back to the document. I found those, like, there was something very haunting about those images and just about those X’S. The fact that this mark, these marks carried so much weight and legality also stirred up a lot of questions in me and wanting to critique why these institutions do these things, to why are these things acceptable.”

“The loss of my father certainly had a negative effect on me, and caused me to withdraw from art and the world in general for a while. Yet at the end of the day, I found some part of me healing in sharing his story, because as unique as his story may be, it is not singular, particularly in communities of color. At the end of the day, I look forward to sharing his story, and engaging in conversations regarding the shortcomings of our country’s medical infrastructure.”

READ:

Meet Donel Williams

<https://shoutoutla.com/meet-donel-williams-artist/>



Donel Williams, *Unskilled Repair*, Oil, acrylic, wood stain, aluminum, linen, and thread on canvas drop cloth

“It’s depressing the sights, the smells, not a good place to be. And I would start associating. So I’ll start looking and finding like these references to what I was learning about in class, in a nursing home. So stains on a bed sheet became colourful paintings for me, body fluids are like paint. It was just one of those things where I was finding these connections and I would find these odd little moments of formalism in these very disgusting places. So yeah, that’s what the work is kind of about. It’s about me trying to balance that and with other things. Our bodies are like these mark makers of time, of trauma, of happiness, of memory.”

EXPLORATION:

READ:

This quote by Donel Williams talks about how art can be transformative in surprising ways.

“So, those X’s were the last commemoration of something, which is also kind of ironic and bittersweet. I have to tell the story now. About three or four weeks ago, they sent, a private shuttle to the moon to drop off some litter. I was on this ship with about 135 other artists. They converted our art to tokenize our works into NFTS with the goal of archiving them on the moon. And my dad’s three signatures are on the moon now, which is kind of a cool. So the fact that I was able to do that was really kind of bittersweet. Like, yeah, I put my old man on the moon in a weird way.”

How can creatively envisioning the future create inspiration, hope and transformative experiences?

<https://voyagela.com/interview/meet-donel-williams-donel-williams-los-angeles-ca/>

How can painters and artists like Donel Williams, who are currently in college, help create a culture of awareness around ideas surrounding health and wellness?

Beauty:

“Hair for many black women is a racial identifier; it often speaks for us before we have an opportunity to speak for ourselves.” Kimberly Morris

Black Hair

Black hair care is an intricate and tailored process that addresses the unique characteristics of textured hair, which ranges from curly and coily to kinky and wavy. The structure of Black hair often makes it more susceptible to dryness and breakage, as the natural oils produced by the scalp have a harder time traveling down the hair shaft. Consequently, Black hair requires products and techniques that emphasize moisture retention, gentle handling, and protection from damage.



Kimberly Morris, *Masquerade*, Digital Photo, 2016

“So this work, this braid is actually braided into my hair and then I’m bound. So it feels a lot how it felt as a child trying to do my hair and the frustration and like I would literally break out into sweats and have anxiety attacks, so I stood in this work for probably about an hour and it was itchy and tight and it kind of simulated that feeling that I used to get like ‘til I was in tears.”

So it’s really about how we feel bound about which direction- do I want to straighten my hair or well what is my brethren going to think if I do that? Or do they think that I’m trying to fit in? Sometimes I am trying to fit in. Sometimes I do this because it just looks cute. You know and so you have all of these thoughts that run through your head that I know other ethnic groups don’t have when they make decisions about how, it’s a very conscious decision. I’ve let a lot of that go and had a lot of unlearning, but I still have those experiences. Well, am I going for an interview? Where am I interviewing? Is it a corporate job? Is it an art job? All of that determines how I want to present myself. So that’s what this work is really about.” Interview with Kimberly Morris- Learning Guide team

EXPLORATION:

WATCH:

Artist Kimberly Morris created this video art about her hair.

HOT,WET,BURN_3

<https://vimeo.com/237190428>

What emotions come to mind when you watch this video? Do you feel any tension? Does this remind you of a time in your life when you felt beauty was a high price in valuing your identity?



Kimberly Morris, *Creole Queen*, Digital photo, 2019

WATCH:

Textures: For Black Women, Embracing Natural Hair Is About More than Style

Lindsay Opoku-Acheampong's film "Textures" follows three women through the private and meaningful rituals of caring for their hair.

<https://www.newyorker.com/video/watch/textures>

READ:

"For Black Women, Embracing Natural Hair Is About More Than Style"

Lindsay Opoku-Acheampong's film "Textures" follows three women through the private and meaningful rituals of caring for their hair.

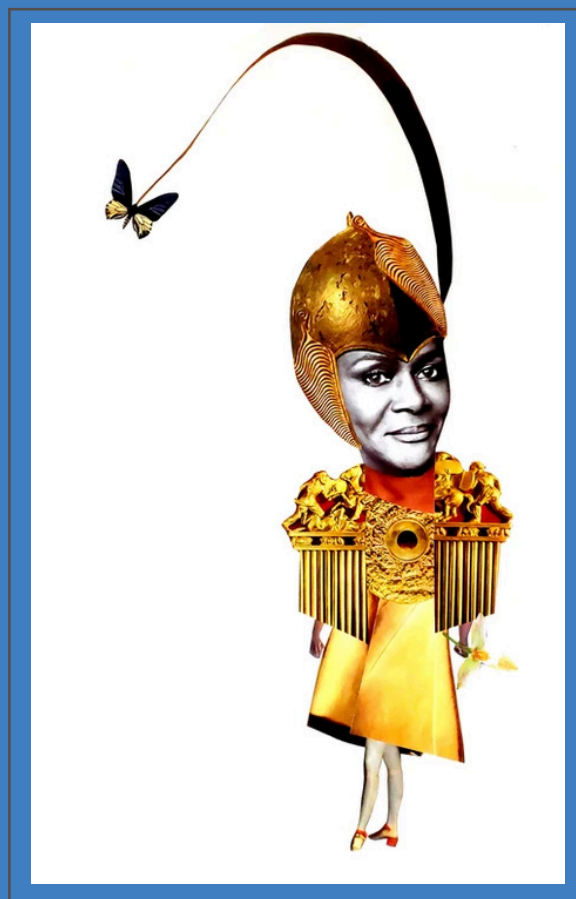
<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-documentary/for-black-women-embracing-natural-hair-is-about->

[more-than-style?utm_source=nl&utm_brand=tny&utm_mailing=TNY_Daily_032024&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_medium=email&utm_term=tny_daily_digest&bxid=5bd66d1c2ddf9c619437dof0&endid=14982507&hasha=27d5a94c0541f55de8658350eefdb173&hashb=of7b7714dcd5cc9960c7b755d875615b91cf38fe&hashc=4112fa960cf2468a33abcfe7e5a041150d6e54982cc24146fe4638bbf5034a41&esrc=AUTO_PRINT](https://www.tny.com/more-than-style?utm_source=nl&utm_brand=tny&utm_mailing=TNY_Daily_032024&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_medium=email&utm_term=tny_daily_digest&bxid=5bd66d1c2ddf9c619437dof0&endid=14982507&hasha=27d5a94c0541f55de8658350eefdb173&hashb=of7b7714dcd5cc9960c7b755d875615b91cf38fe&hashc=4112fa960cf2468a33abcfe7e5a041150d6e54982cc24146fe4638bbf5034a41&esrc=AUTO_PRINT)

WATCH:

“The Hair Tales is a new docu-series about Black women, beauty and identity through the distinctive lens of Black hair. From executive producers Tracee Ellis Ross and Michaela Angela Davis, “The Hair Tales” will lead the audience through a revelatory journey of connecting the personal tales of phenomenal Black women to broader societal and historic themes. The stories shared in the series offer an honest and layered look into the complex culture of Black hair and ultimately Black women’s identity, creativity and contributions to society. Featuring stories from Oprah Winfrey, Issa Rae, Chlöe Bailey, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, Marsai Martin and Chika.”

<https://press.hulu.com/shows/the-hair-tales/>



Chelle Barbour, *Golden Lady*, Collage

Self-Care:

EXPLORATION:

What does art therapy mean to you?

Have there ever been times when words weren’t enough to express the things you needed to express?

Has creating art ever helped you feel more seen and heard?

How has art brought your community together?

Quotes from Converge Vertex artists:

What are a few of your self-care tips as an artist?

“Sleep, hydrate, and get fresh air! Also, do something creative every single day. If we wait for inspiration, we will just be waiting. A creative life doesn’t just happen to you; you have to make it.” Leah King

“BALANCE!!! I think it is so important to make sure you are having fun (doing things that make you happy) that are NOT related to your art practice. Meditation! This can be by sitting, laying, or my favorite...walking!...in nature especially! Helps to keep you grounded!” [Alicia Piller](#)

“Art has provided an outlet for expressing my feelings that were difficult to verbalize. Through art I was able to explore my identity, values, and sense of awareness and empowerment. Art has helped create a sense of belonging and connection with others.” Michael Massenburg

CHECK OUT:

Painted Brain, a nonprofit organization, addresses mental health challenges and social injustice impact through arts, advocacy, and enterprise, offering a safe community space promoting mental health and community building. Through galleries, open studios, and events, they provide access to arts materials and workshops, facilitating their mission of fostering mental health support and creative expression.

<https://paintedbrain.org/>

How would you change by being offered safe spaces to talk and create art in community? How does this help communities socially and economically in regard to mental health?

LISTEN:

Unapologetically Black Unicorns is a monthly conversation podcast hosted by Keris Jän Myrick, a nationally recognized mental health advocate. Each episode engages with guest speakers advancing mental health, health equity, and overall human well-being in a 9-episode series focused on Black mental health. The UBU Podcast provides additional resources and discussion guides on its webpage to ensure accessibility and empowerment in addressing Black mental health needs.

<https://paintedbrain.org/about/unapologetically-black-unicorns-podcast>

How does the conversation need to change, or how does it differ for Black communities regarding mental health from other communities?

Communities Create’s mission is to restore a sense of belonging and empowerment for individuals experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles. Well-Being workshops can provide social interaction, evocation of emotion and imagination, and cognitive stimulation.

<https://communitiescreate.org/home/programs/our-approach/>

Do you think a difference could be made if people experiencing homelessness could have access to creating art in community?

WATCH:

“Black women talk mental health and healing in a powerful roundtable discussion.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOQsiSjih4>

How has the “strong black woman” trope negatively affected black women, and how can we shift the paradigm? How can community care make a positive impact?

STEM



William Ransom, *You can't love your country only when you win*, wood, clamps, and paint, 2022

As an artist, William Ransom's artwork reflects a common theme running through his life: balance. This concept is evident in his upbringing as a biracial man growing up on a farm in Vermont. Ransom would describe the role of farmer as "a jack of all trades," which would equip him with the skills to "adapt, learn, and improvise" with conditions that are "rarely within one's control." The same principles would apply as he would find his place living in an urban setting when he grew up in an agrarian community. In the city Ransom would think about "his connections to the land and the daily labors on the farm" that were practiced by him and his family. The work, *Cut Chart, Stone Boat*, touches upon his personal agricultural experiences, but as a whole, the collective knowledge and history of agricultural practices. A cut chart is a guide used to break down the pig's body into parts to be used for meat consumption. Pork is sold in packages in a grocery store in the city, a scene that separates the result from the actual process of food production. A stone boat is a tool used in the fields to remove rocks, or as Ransom describes it, to get "nature out of the way." The industrialization and mass production of agriculture become viewed as separate from the natural world, and nature is considered an obstacle rather than the guiding principle within cultivation practices. It is the disregard for "the cycles and rhythms of the natural world" that have contributed to the climate crisis and the increased frequency of natural disasters.

DISCUSSION:

How can we as a society live in harmony with nature, while also meeting the food demands of a growing and expanding population?

Ransom's time in Los Angeles would have him thinking about the landscape in which he inhabited. The solution of bringing water from distant natural sources to the Los Angeles basin is how humans have learned to adapt to the distinct characteristics of the desert region. With this knowledge in mind, Ransom would express that LA is "where humans are just not supposed to be, or at least just not in the numbers that they are." As California's population continues to grow we see the changes within the landscape to meet the demands of water. The state is facing significantly less water, "from the overused Colorado River, one of its main sources" (Walters). The resource of water, and its use, throughout the first half of the twentieth century disregarded the environmental impacts of draining natural resources in order to meet demand. What was first seen as an engineering problem, the state of California would implement solutions to increasing the water supply by "catching winter rains and spring snow runoff by damming rivers; moving water from its source to where it was needed for farms and homes via canals and pipelines; and drilling wells to augment surface diversions" (Walters). During the 1970s, there was a movement to become more environmentally conscious, which would highlight how actions taken to increase water supply need to account for its environmental impact and its sustainability.

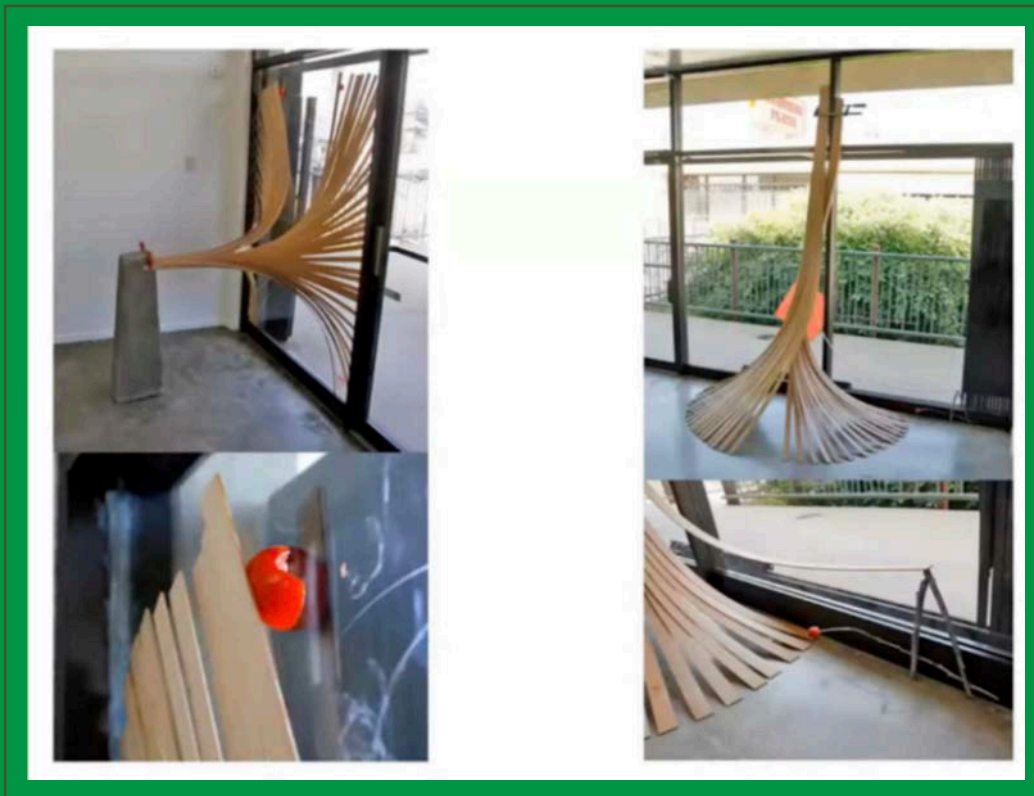
While attending graduate school at Claremont Graduate University, he would pass by a running stream that would travel along the streets. This steady flow of water wasn't occasional flooding or run off, and had enough momentum and substantial supply to support what Ransom claims was "an entire biotic community." He would come to learn that it was a naturally occurring spring, and decided to make work by diverting the spring, with 700 feet of tubing, into a gallery space.



William Ransom, *Taser*, Burned wood, pine tar, and hoodie, 2021

DISCUSSION:

How do we factor sustainability when supplying water to the Los Angeles basin?
What are the environmental consequences of building a large city within a desert?
How can we make sure that everyone is getting the water that they need?



William Ransom, Putting By (left), Eat of the Land (right)

While in the LA urban landscape, Ransom grappled with his agricultural roots, and his experiences with food production in a large city. Both works are a commentary on the impracticalities of a DIY, do it yourself, mindset. The title Putting By refers to the action within farming practice of placing food into storage after the harvest. The work is made up of thin, flexible planks of wood that are held together at one end by a clamp, a tool used in building and making to hold material in place, which represents the potentialities of the future reflected in his work. The conditions of our lives are bound to change, and the release of this clamp reflects the “less predetermined” nature of his artwork. The top planks of wood held tomato halves against a window. An elaborate contraption to create the product which we know as sun-dried tomatoes. The extraneous efforts that go into growing food without the same resources he had while growing up on a farm were not sustainable for Ransom. Fat of the Land reiterates this point by its structure representing a literal trap. Using a small guava strawberry as bait, Ransom would engage with “this romantic notion that I could live off the land in my urban enclave.” This idea of living a self-sufficient life where one is able to grow and cultivate one’s food is a luxury that not everyone within the city of Los Angeles can afford. Ransom feels that it is naive, “to think that we can go it alone in this interconnected global marketplace in the world.”

DISCUSSION:

With traditions and knowledge of food being lost due to the transition from farm to city, how can we as a society combine these lifestyles?
How can we ensure that everyone is getting access to healthy and nutritious foods?
How can coming together as a community aid in this role?

INVESTIGATION:

How do agricultural practices and nature currently interact with each other?

How has factory farming changed the physical landscape?

What are some of the ways that we can incorporate sustainable farming practices that support our communities while also being environmentally conscious?

What are some of the contributions the Black community has made to agriculture practices?

EXPLORATION:

READ:

The impacts of urban farming and its impact on the Black community in Philadelphia, PA <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10049229/>

What are some of the collective results that agricultural practices had on the Black groups interviewed?

How can urban farming be used as a tool to strengthen community?

How can urban farming help to alleviate the conditions of climate change?

LEARN:

Small Business Hank's Mini Market as a community hub bridging gaps in food equity and providing a platform for the arts

A family-owned business, Hank's Mini Market first opened its doors twenty years ago in South-Central LA. Previously operating as a liquor store, Hank's daughter Kelli Jackson would reimagine the space to uplift and strengthen the community the market is based in. To alleviate the conditions of the present food desert in her neighborhood, Jackson's vision for the market is to provide healthy and nutritious food options that are affordable, and accessible to those in the immediate community who do have the transportation resources, such as a car, to drive to the closest supermarket. Along with the market's emphasis on readily available healthy food options, Hank's also offers amenities, including toiletries and house essentials. The storefront also houses a space for the community to engage with events, workshops, and art that helps to highlight the unique culture found in South Central Los Angeles.

Citation: <https://lastandardnewspaper.com/index.php/health-1/698-hank-s-mini-market-becomes-the-store-that-south-l-a-deserves.html>

To find more about Hank's Mini Market mission and its programs:

<https://www.instagram.com/hanksminimarket/?hl=en>

DISCUSSION:

Where do you buy your groceries? What does food equity look like in your community?

How can we foster community spaces around the culture of food? What are some ways that we can ensure resources are accessible to our communities?

How can we help support community-based initiatives to fill the gaps in its infrastructure?

Urban Gardening

READ:

<https://ronfinley.com/>

Ron Finley initially began gardening to combat food apartheid, promote healthy eating, and enhance the landscape of his neighborhood. He advocates for everyone, regardless of background, to grow their own food, dubbing himself an “ecolutionary” fighting for the planet. Recognizing health as holistic, Finley transformed his grassy median into a productive garden in 2010, facing city resistance that led to a petition with 900 signatures and eventual endorsement by the city council. Inspired by this success, he partnered with LA Green Grounds to educate South Los Angeles residents on urban gardening, particularly aiming to engage children. Collaborating with predominantly African American and Latino youth, Finley empowers them towards sustainable living, envisioning a community with shared gardens and repurposed shipping containers promoting appealing and empowering edible gardening practices that gained 900 signatures, and along with a Los Angeles Times feature about his plight, the city council changed their tune and endorsed Finley’s gardens.

WATCH:

https://www.ted.com/talks/ron_finley_a_guerrilla_gardener_in_south_central_la?language=en

“Food deserts” are geographic areas where access to affordable, healthy food options (aka fresh fruits and veggies) is limited or nonexistent because grocery stores are too far away.

About 23.5 million people live in food deserts. Nearly half of them are also low-income.

United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. “Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences.” United States Department of Agriculture, 2009.

Web Accessed February 23, 2015.

USDA, Characteristics and Influential Factors of Food Deserts: https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45014/30940_err140.pdf

READ:

Food Access Research Atlas

Presents an overview of food access indicators for low-income and other census tracts using different measures of supermarket accessibility <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/>

<https://www.lagreengrounds.org/>

WATCH:

“Can You Dig This” delves into the urban gardening revolution unfolding in South Central Los Angeles that some have called a “food desert”. This documentary tracks the uplifting stories of five ‘gangster gardeners’ as they sow the seeds for a brighter future through gardening. <https://tubitv.com/movies/327016/can-you-dig-this>

WATCH:

Bestselling author and podcaster Baratunde Thurston investigates how diverse landscapes influence work, recreation, and outdoor interactions as he delves into his adopted hometown of Los Angeles. He examines how Angelinos connect with their sprawling city’s outdoors, from kayakers revitalizing polluted rivers to urban gardens fostering community nourishment. <https://ca.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/los-angeles-its-a-vibe-video/america-outdoors/>

Environmental Justice

The combination of environmental pollution and climate change poses complex challenges for Black neighborhoods and requires comprehensive strategies to reduce risk and promote resilience. Historical factors such as segregation and discrimination have played a significant role in concentrating Black populations in areas with poorer infrastructure and resources. This has resulted in Black neighborhoods often ending up close to industrial plants, landfills, and other sources of environmental pollution. In addition, discriminatory planning practices, marked by racism, have resulted in Black neighborhoods being disadvantaged in terms of access to infrastructure, green spaces, and protection from environmental pollution and flooding.

Socioeconomic disparities and lack of financial capital in Black communities also complicate the implementation of measures to protect against and adapt to environmental pollution and climate change. In addition, many Black neighborhoods suffer from underfunded and deficient infrastructure, increasing vulnerability to climate-related risks such as flooding. Political disempowerment is also a factor, as Black communities have historically had less political power and influence, which has made it challenging to influence decisions and policies that could protect them from environmental pollution and climate change. These factors together contribute to the disproportionate burden of environmental pollution and climate change that Black communities face.

Environmental pollution increases health risks for Black communities, which can lead to problems such as respiratory problems, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. Climate change can also cause economic losses through flooding, storm damage, and crop destruction, especially for those working in agriculture or low-wage jobs. Additionally, Black communities are more vulnerable to natural disasters because of where they live and the lack of good infrastructure, which can lead to people losing their homes. Climate change can also make water, food, and other necessities more challenging, exacerbating economic gaps and inequality. Finally, environmental issues and climate change can cause social tension and conflict in Black communities when resources become scarce or when people are forced to relocate due to climate-related threats. Addressing these issues requires a strategy that considers the specific needs and experiences of Black communities to reduce their vulnerability in the future.

INVESTIGATION:

What are the key environmental challenges facing Black communities?

How do historical factors contribute to environmental injustice in Black communities?

What initiatives and projects exist to promote sustainability and justice in Black communities?

How effective are current policies and programs in addressing environmental justice issues in Black communities?

How can education and awareness-raising efforts contribute to addressing environmental justice issues in Black communities?

What factors contribute to the unequal distribution of environmental pollution in Black communities?

EXPLORATION:

LISTEN: Community Voices for Action

https://www.aamchealthjustice.org/our-work/environmental-justice/storytelling?gad_source=1&gclid=CjoKCCQjw-oMexBhD3ARIsAEI3WHIm8hWiMSCEUg45Nu3WvCIId1oqSplDqMi95dFSiRyoVx24sgAbnL50aAgztEALw_wcB
“Environmental Justice Now” - A podcast series that explores environmental justice issues, including episodes specifically focusing on the environmental challenges facing Black communities.

DISCUSSION:

What are some specific environmental challenges that Black communities face?

What role does systemic racism play in exacerbating environmental challenges for Black communities?

In what ways can listeners contribute to environmental justice efforts in their own communities, particularly concerning issues affecting Black neighborhoods?

READ:

Racism, Inequality, and Health Care for African Americans. A research-based article that explores the links between pollution exposure and health outcomes in Black neighborhoods.

https://tcf.org/content/report/racism-inequality-health-care-african-americans/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjoKCQjwoMex-BhD3ARIsAEI3WHKdfoq-RHkxXBD6egeDgJTglC_uF3riEdBaDj2q4RCz88r5ok5YstQaAsbLEALw_wcB

DISCUSSION:

How can healthcare and public health agencies better meet the needs of Black communities impacted by pollution-related health issues?

How do the environmental challenges discussed in the article intersect with other social determinants of health, such as access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities?

What successful strategies exist for addressing pollution-related health disparities in other communities, and how could they be applied to Black neighborhoods?

WATCH:

How Air Pollution Exposes America's Racial Disparities | NowThis
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Od7v2pd2eic>

Environmental activists are exposing how air pollution is intrinsically linked to racial disparities in America.

DISCUSSION:

How can policymakers and regulatory agencies respond to the issues raised in the video to ensure environmental justice for all communities?

How can individuals and communities advocate for cleaner air and environmental equity in their neighborhoods?

What challenges do environmental activists face in raising awareness about the intersection of air pollution and racial injustice?

Glossary &

Terms

AAVE: African American Vernacular English is a living, ever-evolving language spoken by many Black Americans.

Black Diaspora:

-DI-AS-PO-RA / n. a dispersion of a people, language, or culture that was formerly concentrated in one place, to scatter, to displace, to live in separated communities.

-AFRICAN & BLACK DIASPORA The African Diaspora is the voluntary and involuntary movement of Africans and their descendants to various parts of the world during the modern and pre-modern periods.

Citation: <https://las.depaul.edu/centers-and-institutes/center-for-black-diaspora/about/pages/defining-diaspora.aspx>

Afro-Futurism: Afrofuturism is a cultural aesthetic, philosophy of science, and history that explores the intersection of the African diaspora culture with science and technology. It addresses themes and concerns of the African diaspora through technoculture and speculative fiction, encompassing a range of media and artists with a shared interest in envisioning black futures that stem from Afro-diasporic experiences.[]

Citation: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrofuturism>

Radical Empathy: “moving beyond an understanding of others’ lives and pain to understand the origins of our biases, including internalized oppression”

Citation: <https://www.terrigivens.com/radicalempathy/>

Postactivism: Postactivism, developed by Bayo Akomolafe, challenges the “us vs. them” mindset of traditional activism. It emphasizes nuance, uncertainty, and the imperfect nature of healing while questioning if traditional activism perpetuates the same logic that created the problems it seeks to address.

“The concept that informs my notion of making sanctuary, is a matter of irruptions and eruptions, breakthroughs, cracks, flashes, fissures, fault lines, discontinuities, blasts, splits, rifts, ruptures, seismic shifts, world-ending openings, miracles, strange encounters, and the yawning maw of a monster.”

Citation: <https://www.bayoakomolafe.net/post/what-i-mean-by-postactivism>

Outsider Art: Outsider art is created by self-taught individuals who lack formal training and have minimal contact with traditional art conventions.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outsider_art

Assemblage: “Assemblage is a style of sculpture inspired by the idea of introducing pre-existing, non-art objects into an art context”

Citation: <https://www.theartstory.org/definition/assemblage/>

Food deserts: geographic areas where access to affordable, healthy food options (aka fresh fruits and veggies) is limited or nonexistent because grocery stores are too far away.

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What Is Afro-Futurism?

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Culture, History, and Language:

About — ALICIA PILLER

Center for Wellness & Wellbeing - Santa Monica College (smc.edu)

In Focus: Alison Saar | NMWA

Health and Wellness:

Citation: <https://artandcakela.com/2019/03/11/kimberly-morris-at-cerritos-college-art-gallery/>

Citation: <https://www.newyorker.com/video/watch/textures>

https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-documentary/for-black-women-embracing-natural-hair-is-about-more-than-style?utm_source=nl&utm_brand=tny&utm_mailing=TNY_Daily_032024&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_medium=email&utm_term=tny_daily_digest&bxid=5bd66d1c2ddf9c619437dof0&cnid=14982507&hasha=27d5a94c0541f55de8658350eefdb173&hashb=0f7b7714dcd5cc9960c7b755d-875615b91cf38fe&hashc=4112fa960cf2468a33abcfe7c5a041150d6e54982cc24146fe4638bbf5034a41&esrc=AUTO_PRINT

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Black Owned Business Directory

Eateries

Casual

Uncle Andre's: Down home Southern eats served in unsuspecting strip mall surroundings. 1175 Moorpark St, Studio City, CA 91604

Say Cheese: Gourmet sandwich and cheese shop. 2800 Hyperion Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90027

Honey Kettle: Voted best fried chicken in Los Angeles by LA Food Magazine and TimeOut LA. 9537 Culver Blvd, Culver City, CA 90232

My 2 Cents: Southern comfort foods made modern with gluten free and vegan items ranking highly on the menu. 5583 W Pico Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90019

Bo Daddy's Bbq: Unfussy smokehouse turning out bbq platters and sandwiches. 1415 S Hill St, Los Angeles, CA 90015

Cea-Lo: "Food for the soul." 5150 Sepulveda Blvd, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

Les Sisters: The valley's premier spot for Cajun cuisine. 20450 Nordhoff St, Los Angeles, CA 91311

Two Hommes: West African fusion restaurant. 902 N La Brea Ave, Inglewood, CA 90302

Upscale

Alta Adams: Soul food staples, upgraded. 5359 W Adams Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90016

Barsha: High end Tunisian fare. 1141 Aviation Blvd, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

Post & Beam: The place where pizza, Californian cuisine and soul food meet. 3767 Santa Rosalia Dr, Los Angeles, CA 90008

Coffee & Snacky Bits

Lou The French on the Block: Weekend only Burbank coffee shop featuring high quality pastries. 4007 W Riverside Dr, Burbank, CA 91505

Patria Coffee Roasters: Cozy Compton cafe featuring coffee, tea and vegan pastries. 108 N Alameda St, Compton, CA 90221

Coffee and Plants: Sold along with the coffee are houseplants and succulents.

Multiple locations: 62 W Union St, Pasadena, CA 91103, 12334 Ventura Blvd, Studio City, CA 91604

Obet and Dels: Retro themed Thai Town cafe offering a mix of classic and unique fare.

5233 Hollywood Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90027

Sip and Sonder: Cafe doubling as a recording studio and event space, co-owned by Shanita Nichols and Amanda Jane Thomas. 108 S Market St, Inglewood, CA 90301

Ora: Vegetarian cafe and social enterprise. 4331 Degnan Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90008

Coffee del Mundo: Fully vegan coffee and retail shop. 7414 S Vermont Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90044

Mingles Tea Bar: Unique tea bar offering over two dozen loose-leaf tea varieties. 8443 Crenshaw Blvd, Inglewood, CA 90305

LA Grind Coffee and Tea Bar: Small coffee shop serving fair trade Cameroonian coffee, founded by Vanessa Punche. 1412 Redondo Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90019

Bohemian House of Espresso and Chai: Cozy free-spirited coffee shop, owned by Farah A. Hagar. 109 W 6th St, Los Angeles, CA 90013

Super Domestic Coffee: Coffee shop named after a competitive French cycling term.

10054 Culver Blvd, Culver City, CA 90232

Cafe Ruisseau: Coffee shop founded in 2005, with the goal of providing a bespoke coffee experience.

Multiple locations: 2834 Colorado Ave, Santa Monica, CA 90404, 12150 Millennium Dr, Los Angeles, CA 90094, 345 N Maple Dr, Beverly Hills, CA 90210

Flowerboy Project: Coffee and light fare served in a contemporary space also offering flowers and home goods. 816 Lincoln Blvd, Venice, CA 90291

Pop-Ups

Pizza Ananda: Sourdough pizza courtesy of Brandon Stanciell. Location varies, check their Instagram @pizza.ananda for weekly location updates.

Burgers For Life: High end Smashburger made with Australian Wagyu beef and fried in duck fat. Location varies, check their Instagram @_burgersforlife_ for weekly location updates.

Hugh's Hot Bowls: Vegan food truck owned by chef and rapper Hugh Augustine. Location varies, check their Instagram @hughshotbowls for weekly location updates.

Dessert

The Gourmet Cobbler Factory: Longstanding family owned bakery featuring Southern style cobbler and pies. 33 N Catalina Ave, Pasadena, CA 91106

Big Man Bakes: Cupcakes from the mind of Chef Chip Brown. 413 Main St, Los Angeles, CA 90013

Harriets Cheesecakes: Cheesecakes served up the same way since 1983. 1515 Centinela Ave, Inglewood, CA 90302

Happy Ice: Philadelphia water ice with a LA twist. 7324 Melrose Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90046

Beauty

LBI's Platinum Shears Hair: Barbershop and salon co-owned by dynamic husband and wife duo. 15650 Nordhoff St UNIT 103, North Hills, CA 91343

Nikie2Icy: Mobile teeth gemming and whitening company. Mobile

Lauren Pickard Skin: Esthetician specializing in corrective skincare. 151 S Doheny Dr Suite 12, Beverly Hills, CA 90211

Threo Skin: Multi-cultural skincare studio focused on results based skincare services. Burlington Arcade, 380 S Lake Ave #203, Pasadena, CA 91101

Atrium Nail and Beauty Garden: Creative full service nail salon. 5035 W Slauson Ave Suite F, Los Angeles, CA 90056

To Cut and Dye For: Salon offering hair styling services and body sculpting services. 20961 Devonshire St, Chatsworth, CA 91311

Locafella Loc Studio: One stop shop for loc care. 7653 Melrose Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90046

Rehab Salon: Long standing Hollywood Salon. 1515 N Cahuenga Blvd, Hollywood, CA 90028

The Girl Cave LA: Beauty supply founded by Lia Dias and Ashli Brown. Multiple locations: 1855 W Manchester Ave # 103, Los Angeles, CA 90047, 10901 S Crenshaw Blvd # C, Inglewood, CA 90303, 1301 Rosecrans Ave #112, Compton, CA 90221

Braid Queen LA: Beauty supply and salon owned by Lucy Lomuro. 3959 Wilshire Blvd a25, Los Angeles, CA 90010

Benjamin Salon: Upscale salon founded by Benjamin Mohapi. 148 N Wetherly Dr, West Hollywood, CA 90048

Powder Beauty Co: Full service luxury nail salon specializing in the powder dip technique. 777 S Alameda St UNIT 146, Los Angeles, CA 90021

Body Butter Lady: Hub for all natural homemade skincare products founded by Marianne Ndiaye. 320 S Market St, Inglewood, CA 90301

Bookstores

Malik Books: Specializing in books full of cultural diversity. Multiple Locations: 3650 W Martin Luther King Jr Blvd Ste 245, Los Angeles, CA 900086000 Sepulveda Blvd Suite 2470, Culver City, CA 90230

Reparations Club: Concept shop, creative space and bookstore founded by Jazzie McGilbert. 3054 S Victoria Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90016

Octavia's Bookshelf: Pasadena's first independent bookstore highlighting BIPOC authors. 1365 N Hill Ave, Pasadena, CA 91104

Clothing

Golf Wang: Tyler the Creator's flagship streetwear boutique. 350 N Fairfax Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90036

Union LA: Hub for high end streetwear brands. 110 S La Brea Ave, Los Angeles

Beatology Vintage: Vintage clothing and records. Find them every Sunday at the Melrose Trading Post, Space P7.

Millers Room: Carefully curated vintage store, founded by Marquise Miller. 112 W 9th St Los Angeles, CA 90014 Unit 525

Lace by Tanaya: Glitzy jewelry store founded by model and actress Tanaya Henry. Book a private shopping experience on their website: shop.lacebytanaya.com

Cultural Institutions

Art & Practice: Exhibition space dedicated to celebrating artists of color. 3401 W 43rd Pl, Los Angeles, CA 90008

Band of Vices: Contemporary art space in the heart of West Adams. 5351 W Adams Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90016

African American Firefighter Museum: The African American Firefighter Museum is dedicated to collecting, conserving, and sharing the history of African American firefighters. 1401 S Central Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90021

Kaos Network: Artistic cultural oasis in Leimert Park Village founded by Ben Caldwell. 4343 Leimert Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90008

Homewares

Tansy: Joyful plant and home decor store co-owned by best friends, Shawna Christian and Colette Fowler. 2120 W Magnolia Blvd, Burbank, CA 91506

45 Three Modern Vintage Home: Furniture store specializing in mid-century modern furniture, founded by Staci Cain. 1051 1/2 South Fairfax Ave, Los Angeles, California 90019

Cultural Interiors: View Park's premier home decor and ethnic gift store. 4421 W Slauson Ave, View Park-Windsor Hills, CA 90043

Fitness

Glovieworx: State-of-the-art boxing training studio founded by Leyon Azubuike. 1415 Wilshire Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90403

Hills and Heights Pilates Studio: West Adams Pilates studio, founded by Los Angeles native Brandy A. Robinson. 5124 W Adams Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90016

