

Tending the Cracks and Shifts: On Loops of Infinite Reception

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Over the course of Nora Khan’s year as Editor-In-Residence, we’ve heard an eclectic group of visionary artists ruminate, postulate, and present facets of their praxis that ground the embodied craft of maintenance. For women writ large (trans, cis, nonbinary, et al.) and across centuries, the maintenance of creativity has been inseparable from that of survival—composed of experimentation, play, subversion, intervention, and grief—the ongoing virtuosity necessary to *remain here* in the face of patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, and eco-destruction. As Nora’s Editorial Fellow, i’ve been thinking about her curatorial frame, and its always (re) emerging upsurges, spanning generations. Among the many things we are born into, an unavoidable position within creation is that of the future ancestor. With this in mind, i invited four of my favorite artists—Stephanie Acosta, Kimberly Alidio, Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves, and Melissa Lozada-Oliva—to articulate what they might offer future creatives, from the imagined vantage point of ancestor. What insights might they voice

across generations, looping time in what Greaves calls *networks for infinite reception*? The artists were given a set of constraints—two pages, two hours, the form open to interpretation, experiment, and play (lists, letters, poems, etc.)—with the hope that this small project might provide an opening to view experimentation and care in real time.

In the weeks leading up to publication, i've reflected on the relationship between narrative, linear time, and, generally speaking, European colonization across the globe. Perhaps this linear time is yet another categorical tool for organizing people, progress, acceleration (Sylvia Wynter). The prompt began to feel a bit naive. Luckily, these four artists must have felt something akin to this as well, and resisted offering hypothetical, positivistic advice to future artists with the complex, often contradictory, fragmented, and embodied pieces you'll experience below. As artists whose bodies work within the constraints and possibilities inherent in "woman," each of these makers seem to view their work as a kind of devotional—a practice of embodiment always in motion, and therefore, always an experiment—a porous site where linearity collapses in blooms of possibility. This, i believe, is one definition of experimentation.

– imogen xtian smith

Kimberly Alidio: Transmission

1.

I'm writing a book about the end of time. In the book, I say, "the end of history." I probably mean the end of a conception of time. I should say, "I've reached the end of my belief in time." Or: "this is the end of a kind of telling that assumes an unfolding of time."

But I'm devoted to time. I like narrative & arc, although I dislike reading novels & watching movies. Complaining that movies have gotten so long just reminds me of my age. To be truthful, I don't like continuities over several pages. It's more than an attention-span issue: I just don't believe any phenomenon continues without fundamental transformation threatening dissolution & unrecognizability; I think there are important intervals when the relationship, the investment, or whatever becomes unrecognizable, disorganized by perception & encounters with other phenomena.

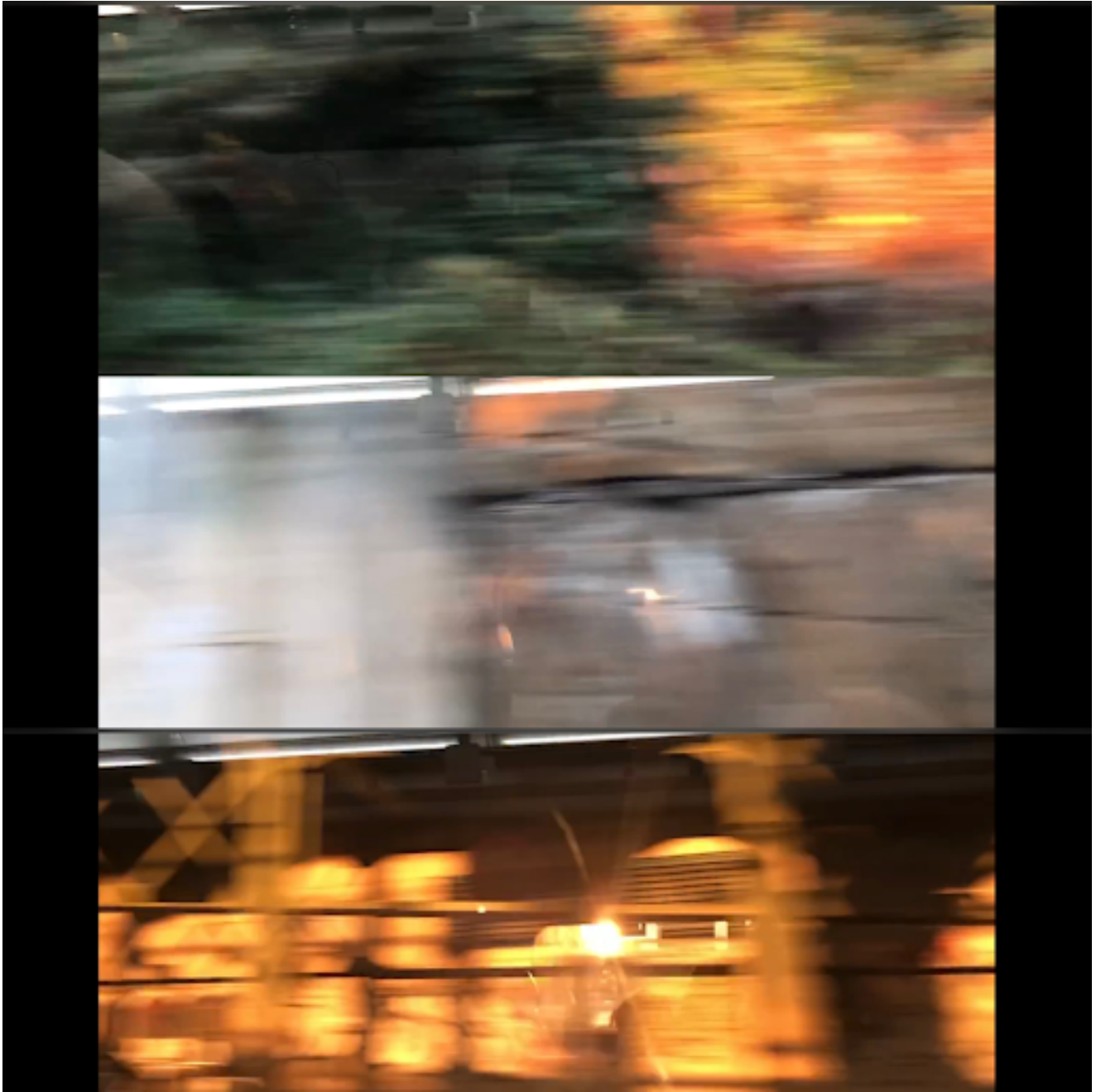


Image by Kimberly Alidio. Courtesy of the artist.

If you pay attention to the cracks & shifts of something alive, you might stay for its deaths & returns, even as it gets named & known & valued & commodified, becoming furniture in the room, put to work for something else.

2.

Being of service to other peoples' agendas & fantasies keeps me from noticing jagged or smooth arcs of our shared assumptions. Instrumentalizing my being & doing expresses my fitful need for order, an inherited anxiety & predilection for control, a thrilling experiment gone

too long in a life that would affirm & calm those anxious for my existence & anxious to assume my obligation. Any length of time spent being of use to others is not a meaningful experience of time.

Once in a while I live out a story, an arc of time, borne out of & meant for transaction, for pay-off. Once I said to you: “I could be/ I have been/ I am a thrillseeker & coward, seduced & conditioned the spectre of [art-world] opportunity, as speedy & as infinite as [————], doing what needs to get done, letting accumulative drive determine who & what shapes The Work, all just to see where a path goes through a public [art world], but would I then lose the thread of our subtle & dignified friendship grounded in a particular anti-institutional poetics of being on the wrong side of history & war, in our art dyke/genderqueer life of twinned obscurity/autonomy, and would/have I succeeded a bit more if I just had the knack for making a spectacle of The Work in a way that projects a persona compelling patronage & support, in a combination of evergreen and ephemeral ways that make it impossible to go on, just hanging around thinking & being in some kind of open conspiracy to persist in thinking & being?”

& to this you replied, “I love poets, I hate celebrities.”

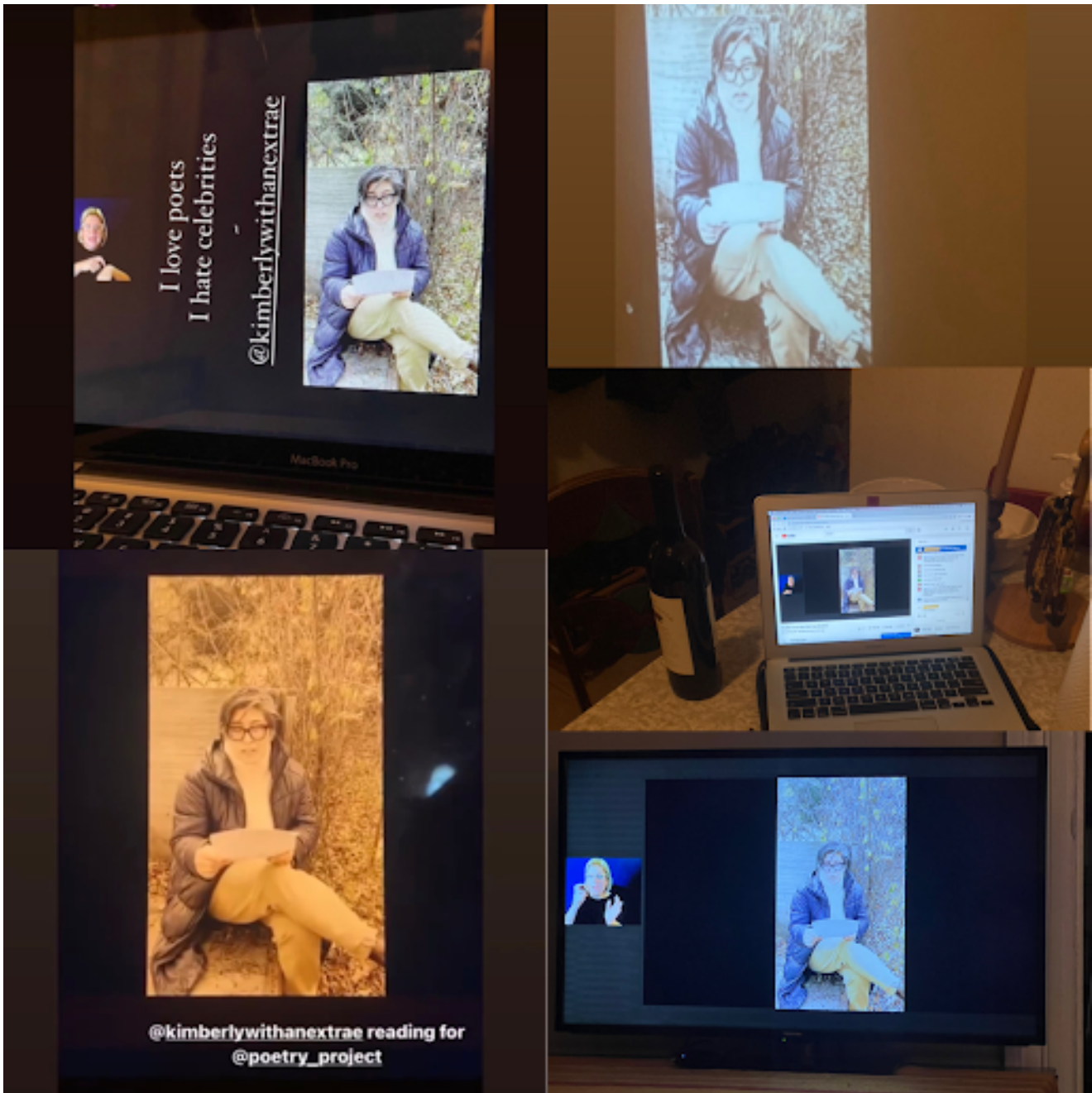


Image by Kimberly Alidio. Courtesy of the artist.

3.

The present has brought an end to any story I've told about myself & us & art. The present—my own & the one I think we share—, is a chaos of unceasing unfolding, shocks & awe, losses sounding a long precarity once contained by memory, the end of trust in the institutions that unfold time.

If I had to say, & I promised to do so, what sustains experimental thinking over time, I might say, ok, here are all time-based things that no longer do it for me: the drive to make, innovate, effect, mark, become, strike, or overcome; the high, thrill, absolute focus, calling, lineage, desire to be known, deepening your craft, communing with language, or lifelong

friendships; the readings, shows, bookmaking, or ephemera; the trauma, haunting, transmissions, caring for elders, crushing your enemies, or seducing your crushes; the ethic & politic of mutual aid, evolution of theory, social movements, style, altered states, or recovery; giving back, staving off death, dancing with death, imagining otherwise, world-building, or representation; reparations, language revival, or language justice; the vow, content creation, influencing, ancestors, future generations, self-identified identities, unidentified identities, any history, historiography, or particular word.

Any career projection or retrospective could, & sometimes should, go into the art of being a being in these broken times, & what I might say is that just being a being, rather than putting your beingness to work in the guise of a set of questions or aesthetics or cultural capital, is experiment itself.

4.

When you attune to cracks, moments of illegibility, & the series of transformations affected by encounters with phenomena & perception in a dance of shifting positions & perspectives, a word alters directions, a flood arises with a sound, a touch, an image, & a life is living & time is.

Some people, some artists, experiment & investigate the ways they over time wield the world-building power of engaging a medium such as language to organize & disorganize meaning. Not enough people talk about this. Too many artists leave it to biographers & critics.

I just want to hear a writer say as boldly as any contestant on a reality tv show competition: “I’ve made myself into a [non-] person whose every aspect is a resource of fluctuating value, including the liberal imperative to reconcile brutal exploitation with some idea of being a private citizen of soft patriotic loyalty & social good, a person who takes & gives abuse, but hates it & has a really good excuse—anyway it doesn’t define who I am—and while I’ve given up on the random vitality of being in right relation to all the beings in my world, my work & success serves my community, family, & society at large by contributing to important conversations & showing young people that hard work & sacrifice & persistence pay off, & for these reasons I’m most deserving to win the prize.”



Image by Kimberly Alidio. Courtesy of the artist.

& then: “& it works for me.” Or: “So, now, what?” Especially: “Here’s where my being of use is relational in its flux & contingency ...,” “Here are morbid transactions,” & “Here is a scatter, an interregnum, & an unfolding.”



Portrait of Kimberly Alidio. Photograph by Stacy Szymaszek.

This selection of short features was curated and edited by imogen xtian smith.

Stephanie Acosta is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, and curator who places the materiality of the ephemeral at the center of her practice, questioning meaning-making and manufactured limitations, blending performance with practice-based and studio research. Engaging ensembles in facilitated processes, she creates fleeting performance works that examine site, space, and perception in shared experiences. Acosta has presented her works with and for Museum of Art and Design, Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago, Chocolate Factory Theater, Knockdown Center, the Current Sessions, Miami Performance International Festival, Anatomy Collective, IN>Time Symposium, Abrons Arts Center, the Chicago Park District, the Performance Philosophy conference, AUNTS, Read/Write Library, No Media, and Radius. Acosta has collaborated with artist Miguel Gutierrez on multiple projects, including *Cela nous concerne tous* (This concerns all of us), commissioned for the Ballet de Lorraine in Nancy, France, and *This Bridge Called My Ass*, which premiered at the 2019 American Realness festival with a dynamic cast of Latinx performers. Their collaborative curatorial experiment *Sunday Service* ran live for six seasons. Recently Acosta redirected their multi-platform work *Good Day God Damn* at the Chocolate Factory Theater in Long Island City, NY, as a solo exhibition curated by Alexis Wilkinson in May 2021, which was accompanied by a mini-series talk show titled *Apocalypse Talks*, speaking with artists on themes of multi-crisis making and radical hope found in art practices.

Melissa Lozada-Oliva is the author of *Dreaming Of You* (Astra House 2021). Her work has been featured in *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *NPR*, *Vulture*, and more. She sings in a band called *Meli & the Specs* and she lives in Brooklyn. You can follow her everywhere except in real life at @ellomelissa.

Kimberly Alidio is a poet, historian, educator, and the author of three books and two chapbooks of poetry. Her latest manuscript is "Teeter," a hybrid book of poetry and essayistic prose that arrives at a proposition for auto-historiography through theorizing time, the ambient, and the affective inherence of the tonal prosodies of a mother tongue one does not understand. "Teeter" is also a collection of collaged field recordings of speech & diegetic sound from an interval of stationing: a temporary stopping, holy place, assigned sentry point, or start of an accounting. Selections from "Teeter" appear in *Harriet*, *Academy of American Poets Poem-a-day*, *Anamorphoseis*, *Apogee*, *Bæst*, *Foglifiter*, and *Pleiades*; and received the *Bill Waller Award in Creative Nonfiction*.

Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves is an artist guided by metaphysics, network science, ethnobotany, and the granular analytics of poetic inquiry. Supporters include *Rauschenberg Residency*, *Artists Space*, *Issue Project Room*, *Montez Press at Matthew NYC*, *The Poetry Project*, *4Columns*, *Hyperallergic*, *Belladonna**, *Kore Press*, *Ugly Duckling Presse*, and *Brown University*.

imogen xtian smith is a poet and performer. Their debut collection, *Stemmy Things*, is forthcoming from Nightboat Books (2022). They are an Emerge Surface Be Fellow at The Poetry Project and served as Nora Khan's Editorial Fellow at Topical Cream. imogen lives and works on Lenape land, NYC.